**Private Lessons**

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**Private Lessons**

by [Chosha_Hoshiko](http://archiveofourown.org/users/Chosha_Hoshiko)

**Summary**

Shizuo Heiwajima is not the best student in the world. He tries his best but nothing ever seems to work out when it comes to his schoolwork and there's the annoying flea on top of everything else distracting him from getting anything done and leading him right into trouble nearly every day. One day, the principal's had enough. He tells Shizuo that if he keeps failing all his assignments, he won't be passing into the next grade level. That is, unless he accepts help from a student tutor who will meet him at home every day and help him with his work. This is his last chance, so Shizuo agrees. But he had no idea that the tutor who would be saving his career as a student is the same annoying flea that helps thrust him into the worst situations of his life.

Izaya Orihara is a top student with the worst behavior and a horrendously worse family life. He takes care of his two sisters while their parents are away 24/7 and balances his school and budding interest in humanity alongside the little she-devils. His parents rarely contact them and Izaya is left to raise himself and the twins single-handedly. When he's offered a paid tutoring job by the principal, he readily agrees. But he never planned on tutoring his worst enemy.
So this is my first fanfic ever! I hope it all turns out okay and that it's not an atrocity among men! I just love these two together, and I really think they ought to just hit reverse on some magic switch controlled by the shipping gods and start over from day one. Well, maybe not that far but if you're reading this then you probably get what I mean. Anyway, hope you enjoy!

See the end of the work for more notes.
The Cat Gets Away and the Dog Gets a Last Chance

“IZAYA!”

There was a loud crash from behind the raven as he flew down the halls of the school once more. Just like every other day whenever he took that fateful little stroll past the classroom next door. Whenever he passed by that one classroom’s door, something about his presence would seep through the tiny cracks in it and reach the ultimate guard dog hiding within. Izaya could never escape detection when he walked by that room. That was the monster’s den, after all. It was only natural that something would happen when a monster smelled its prey.

Izaya risked a glance over his shoulder to look back at the aforementioned monster.

Yep, there he was, as beastly as ever. Looming height like a redwood tree converted into a lanky human for a day, bright dyed-blond hair sticking out like a beacon on his head, angry scowl that dusted his normally frustrated features into absolute rage, and rough hands riddled with the signs of scuffles and fights clutched around his chosen projectile: in this case, the teacher’s new desk.

Shizuo was a beast to be feared.

And that was precisely why Izaya never feared him.

“IZAYA!” The angry roar came again and Izaya nimbly skipped to one side of the hallway, letting the desk fly past him into the wall just ahead of him, smashing itself a good foot into the poor wall.

“Shizu-chan, you really ought to work out a schedule for how often you go around committing property damage.” Izaya purred, turning around and flashing the beast the grin that he knew would get his monster blood pumping even faster. “It’s just downright inconsiderate to the poor city maintenance men who keep coming in here to fix everything, you know?”

“Downright inconsiderate? I’m doing the school a service right now!” Shizuo snarled, his honey-gold eyes flashing as he punched an arm blindly into a wall at his side and ripped out a chunk of plaster, hurling it towards the smaller boy who’d invoked his rage.

Izaya laughed and twirled out of the way, putting a finger thoughtfully to his lips as though Shizuo hadn’t just tried to commit murder-by-self-made-rubble. “Are you now? I suppose that’s true. I hear the school district will be giving Raijin a discount on reconstruction and repairs! Because of all the loyalty points they’ve been racking up with the construction companies!”

His red eyes twinkled as a vein popped in Shizuo’s forehead, the blond boy growling and just full-on charging at Izaya instead of trying to throw something else. Izaya swiftly spun around and bolted down the hallway, high laugh ringing out with a crystallic quality down the halls as he fled his pursuer. These chases that they had every day…yes, they were a deep mark on his behavioral record and not overly helpful for his uniform budget, but to Izaya they were worth it. They were an escape from the everyday dullness of the academic rigor surrounding him. He could watch his humans all day, no problem with that, but once those teachers put work assignments on his desk with those imploring eyes saying “this time, I want you to do it in class”, he was done.

The work was too easy. There was no challenge for his mind involved at all in the infantile worksheets the school provided. He enjoyed the reactions his classmates had to the work – all different kinds, as usual – but that was the biggest gain from being in class at all. He could watch the interesting expressions that crossed their faces, and examine the methods they took with each scenario they were presented with, and even offer the slightest bits of change to the situation just to
see what would happen. A slip of paper with a few answers scrawled on it during a test, for example. Who would keep it to themselves and who would pass it to their friend? Would anyone tell the teacher? Would anyone just throw it away? The reactions were endless and bountiful and never ceased to cause delight in the young boy, but soon enough a teacher would come along and ask him to please finish his work.

Just like that, with the presence of the teacher, many of the reactions were dulled down into more subdued natures, like mice moving quieter in the pantry once they heard the human shuffling about in the kitchen. The actions and intents were still there, but they were quieter and harder for the cat to notice. That was what Izaya was. He was a cat, observing the mice that were humans, and there would be the occasional distraction to scare his beloved toys into a watered down version of what they were. Ah…and then there was the dog that would chase him away.

“Izaya, I’m telling you to stop so I can kill ya!” The roar echoed down the hall, and a smash followed soon after the shout, alerting Izaya to the fact that Shizuo was now back to his earlier tactic of throwing then chasing.

Izaya grinned and kept running, yelling some kind of taunt back at the beast that he didn’t really hear as his inner dialogue kept running. Yes, the chases were an escape from the cage of academics. They were also an extension of the cat’s study of mice. He could see their scared faces as he ran by, and log their reactions to danger and overwhelming violence. If a monster ran down the halls of your school, what would you do? Not many people could set up a good study for that scenario. Thankfully, Izaya had a lovely attack dog that worked just fine. If Shizuo couldn’t scare these students, then nothing could. Ooh, that guy just looked bored when he saw Shizuo coming. Maybe Izaya should look into him later. He could have some kind of psychosis that removes fear from the brain! Or he could live in the slums and be used to violence in many different forms! Or he could be stoned. The ragged pupils might attest to that. Hm. Izaya hoped that last one wasn’t true.

The raven took a sharp left around the corner of the hallway and ran out of the building he was in, bursting into the sweet sunshine of just-before-lunch, ignoring the startled looks of the teachers who were milling about in the school gardens, already taking their breaks before the class even technically ended. He darted past them all and ran deep into the garden, losing himself in the small maze of bushes and flowers that the school had started growing about a year ago to cover up the permanently embedded flagpole that used to stick out of the ground right there (a memento of one of Izaya and Shizuo’s earliest fights). He was able to wind past a row of rose bushes and duck down into a little space right between two of the thorny hedges, squeezing back into it until he hit the stump of a tree behind him. He reached a hand forward and carefully shifted the branches of the hedges around in front of him, expertly hiding himself within the rose bushes, and waited.

Sure enough, the monster burst into the garden full force, growling gutturally and snarling as he spun around to look for “the flea”. Izaya smirked in his little hiding place as the growls of the beast grew even angrier and his walking turned into vicious stomps around the garden. The scents of the various flowers around here, Izaya had learned, did quite well to cover up his scent whenever Shizuo pursued him into here. The roses seemed to work especially well. When Izaya hid inside of them, he’d have to either purposefully jump out or sneeze at something for Shizuo to find him. He was as good as invisible tucked inside the dark, thorny depths of floral vegetation. All it took was a little bit of patience as the beast plodded around the garden, frustrated that he’d lost the scent. He really was like a dog, chasing a cat that had vanished in front of him. Soon the dog catchers would be here to stop him.

“Heiwajima-san!” A voice yelled in the air. Izaya heard Shizuo’s footsteps freeze and was able to see the very top of his blond head dip guiltily down as a second person strode into the garden. “Causing trouble and skipping class again!” The voice scolded. Izaya recognized it as the voice of the principal
himself. He’d forgotten that the principal’s office was in full view of the garden.

“I’m sorry, sir.” Shizuo muttered.

“Sorry won’t cut it this time, Heiwajima-san. Come with me.” The principal snapped. Izaya heard the two sets of footsteps fade away into the distance and an evil smile slipped onto his face.

The dog was in the kennel. He he.

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“Heiwajima-san, I don’t know what to tell you.” The principal sighed as he folded his fingers and looked at the guilty boy from across his desk. “This is the seventh time you’ve been in here this month. And it’s only the 13th! Your behavior is concerning to say the least.”

Shizuo ducked his head even further, feeling the guilt claw around inside of him like an animal. It wasn’t like he enjoyed destroying school property, or skipping the classes he was already failing, or coming to the principal’s office every other day. He just…whenever he saw that damn flea, he just lost it. He couldn’t control his rage. And he screwed up just like always.

“You are aware that your grades are below the marks required by the school system to pass you, correct?” The principal asked, dragging Shizuo’s attention back up to him. Shizuo flinched at this statement of fact. Yeah, he was aware. He’d had the conversation with his parents already. The thing was, Shizuo didn’t know how to bring his grades up. He tried his hardest in class. He studied at home. He called Kadota or Shinra for help on homework. He even asked the teacher for help, which was something everyone knew only the nerds ever really did. But he was still failing tests. He was still turning in 50% correct homework assignments. He was still struggling with each new concept that came his way. Nothing he did helped. He was so frustrated with himself all the time. And then there was the flea on top of things…It all felt so pointless.

“I’m aware.” Shizuo mumbled aloud. “And I try. I do.”

“I know you do, Heiwajima-san.” The principal sighed, leaning back in his chair and studying Shizuo carefully. “Your teacher Yamamoto-sensei came and talked to me the other day. He says you try harder than almost any of the other kids in class, that you come see him nearly twice as often, and that you turn in everything when you’re supposed to. He doesn’t know what else he can do, and frankly, neither do I.”

Shizuo felt his heart sink in his chest. So that was it. Even the school system was giving up on him now. There was no point in teaching someone that was unteachable, after all. He was just too stupid to learn. He’d end up as some kind of drop-out, more likely than not. Doing who knew what for the rest of his life. He tried. He just couldn’t do it.

Shizuo let his misery overtake him as he rose to his feet, ready to walk out of the office once the principal gave the word. He didn’t even look the older man in the eye. He couldn’t. Not when he felt so much like a failure.

The principal seemed surprised by his actions. “Why are you standing up? I’m not done yet. Please sit down.”

Shizuo glanced up in shock, wondering what the principal could be waiting for. When the older man gestured for him to sit down again, he did so, wondering what could be going on.

The principal watched Shizuo for a bit, tapping his finger on the desk. “I decided on a tutor.” He finally said. “A student tutor, to be precise. One who understands the material being taught in class from your point of view and who can empathize with your situation as a student. Someone closer to
Shizuo’s gold eyes snapped wide open. “A tutor?” He blurted out, standing up again. “You can find one for me? Really?” Excitement coursed through his veins at the thought. He had a chance! He had one last chance to get this right!

The principal seemed encouraged by his enthusiasm. A smile crossed the older man’s face and he nodded. “Yes. A student tutor will be assigned to you to help you with your assignments and classwork for the rest of the year. You’ll only get one for the entire year, because I can’t ask a bunch of students to take all their time and teach you. He or she will meet with you at your home and help you with whatever you need it on.”

Shizuo paused at that. “My home? Why there? Why not here?” He asked slowly, thinking of the awkwardness in bringing home some stranger every day to help him study in front of his family.

“Because the school can’t stay open for long periods of time like that, Heiwajima-san, and I think you’d need quite a bit of time to both get to know your tutor and get help from him or her on all your things.” The principal explained.

Shizuo shifted back and forth on his feet, unsure of the idea now that it involved taking the problem home to his family. What would they think of him? A student who was such a failure that he needed a personal tutor from the school to help him with everything?

The principal saw this hesitation and a stern look crossed his face. “Heiwajima-san, this is your last chance.” He said flatly, dragging Shizuo’s attention back to him. Dark eyes stared into gold ones, neither one moving. “You won’t get another one. Unless you take this tutor, you aren’t passing into the next grade level.” The final statement came, shaking Shizuo to his core. So this was it. This was his only option. But…he still had an option.

His family would understand. He knew they would.

“Yes sir.” Shizuo said aloud, bowing deeply to the principal. “I understand. I’ll take the tutor. If you can find one. Thank you so much for not giving up on me.”

The principal felt a smile skip over his lips at the blunt honesty of this student. It was refreshing to see in a kid his age. Honesty and effort. Good qualities combined with a bad mind. He hoped he could find a way to help.

“Don’t mention it. The tutor will be sent to your house tomorrow evening at 6:30. Please leave your address for me here so I can give it to them when I pick one.”

He slid a piece of paper and a pen across his desk. Shizuo hastily picked up the pen and scrawled down his address, hoping it was legible enough to read, bowing once more to the principal before walking out of the office.

“And clean up your behavior!” The principal called after him just as the office door shut.

He watched Shizuo exit the building, heading back to his class most likely, and smiled at the thought of helping him out. He was a good student, Heiwajima Shizuo. Just with a bad mind for learning.

Now he needed to find a tutor for the boy. A different student who had a good mind for learning, and hopefully one for teaching. Hm…

A thought suddenly crossed the principal’s mind. He had a good mind for learning, alright. But he was a very bad student. Even if he understood all the classwork better than his teacher probably did. Still…
The principal glanced out the window towards the garden. From there, he could see a figure sitting next to the rose bushes, having emerged from his hiding place now that the danger was gone. It was a rather small figure, all things considered, curled up and reading a book to itself contentedly in the quiet of the garden. No doubt, it would head back to class soon, if only to watch the other students who were there. That was all he seemed to go to class for: people-watching.

He liked people. He knew how their minds worked. He was smart. He seemed like he would have a lot of free time. And maybe, just maybe, some of Shizuo’s enthusiasm and effort would rub off on him. In the same light, perhaps some methods of learning would rub off onto Shizuo. He might be killing two birds with one stone here.

The principal bit his lip, and looked at the address scrawled onto the paper on his desk. He had promised a tutor by tomorrow evening. He hoped it wasn’t a mistake.

The principal leaned forward and grabbed his phone from off his desk, calling one of the classrooms. He waited for a bit before a feminine voice picked up. “Higurashi-san? Yes, it’s the principal. I’m calling about one of your students. Orihara-kun? Could you send him up to my office when he gets back to class? Thank you. Yes. It’s very important.”
The Cat Cares for His Kittens and the Dog Sees a Treat He Can’t Have

Chapter Notes

Okay, so I’m really going to try and work out the timing on when the chapters will be coming out, but since I already have the first seven chapters written out, I just can’t resist putting out number two. I think that once I’m in a rhythm, I should be releasing a chapter once a week. But for now, here’s the second chapter! Hope you enjoy!

“I have somewhere I need to go today, girls. I can’t stay.” Izaya sighed, looking at his sisters with a look that was a step south of disdain and a hop north of paranoia. He couldn’t leave them on their own for too long – they were liable to destroy something if he wasn’t nearby. But he’d helped them finish everything they needed help with already so it would be fine if he left, right? In theory?

“Iza-nii can’t go yet!” Mairu whined, clutching his arm with a desperate look on her face. Or…was it Kururi? It was one or the other, there were only two. Come on, he’d invested a good 70% of his life into these demons, he had to be able to tell them apart by now. “I have to go, Mai-chan.” Izaya told the little girl, taking a chance on which one it was as he slipped his free arm into the sleeve of his coat. “I need to be somewhere.”

“Iza-nii stay.” The second one came forward and grabbed the arm that he’d just got into his coat. Izaya sighed and looked at her. “Kuru-chan. I can’t stay tonight.” He insisted, shaking his arm slightly in an attempt to get her off.

“Iza-nii is leaving us! He doesn’t love us!” Most-likely-Mairu wailed, putting all her weight into holding onto Izaya’s arm. Izaya groaned and glared down at the tiny girl. “Iza-nii loves you. He just really doesn’t like you right now.” He growled out, prying her fingers off his arm and pushing her back into the house.

Most-likely-Mairu stomped her foot and wailed some more, big tears welling up in her eyes as she flew into a famous tantrum. Most-likely-Kururi watched her counterpart silently, copying her tears even though she elected to skip the stomping and wailing.

Izaya grabbed his hair in his hands and tried his best not to yank it right out of his head. “Girls! Your art project from daycare is all finished for the night. Your pajamas are laid out on your beds. Bedtime is 8 o’clock. Dinner is ready on your table in the kitchen whenever you get hungry. Cartoons are available on the TV until you need to go to sleep. What more can I do for you?” He demanded, the words actually a silent plea to one of his never-ending questions.

How was he supposed to take care of these girls? He was 17 years old, which was not a good age to be a parent. He hadn’t had much parental influence throughout his childhood to base his actions on. He couldn’t afford child development books along with food and clothes for the three of them, and the school library only had one. He’d read it three times and officially declared it to be a piece of trash. How was he supposed to care for two young toddlers? No one was here to help him.

Most-likely-Kururi sneezed, and that switched the attention of the situation instantly. Most-likely-Mairu pointed at her sister like she’d just spotted a murder, eyes wide and demanding as she looked at Izaya. “See? Kuru-nee sneezed! She’s dying and you’re leaving her to die!” She screeched,
hopping up and down urgently. “Kuru-nee is dying! Kuru-nee is dying! You don’t care! Iza-nii is letting Kuru-nee die!”

“So that one is Mairu.” Izaya thought absently as he set his books down and turned his attention obediently on the silent girl. Maybe this would be his ticket out. He studied Kururi’s face with all the intent of a doctor, tilting her head up and down, left and right. He checked the inside of her ears. He had her stick out her tongue and say ah. He felt her throat and checked her pulse. He asked her how many fingers he was holding up. He put a hand to her forehead. Mairu watched him nervously, fluttering about like a butterfly that wasn’t sure which flower to land on.

He had no idea what he was doing.

Izaya honestly just did everything he ever remembered a doctor doing to him, waiting to see if Kururi sneezed again. When she didn’t, he stood up. “I believe that you are well.” He declared, grabbing his books again. “I’ll see you later.”

Just as his hand landed on the handle, Mairu came up with something else to wail about. “What if she starts dying again and Iza-nii isn’t here?!” She cried frantically, wrapping her tiny arms around his waist.

“Izaya thought to himself, glaring at the small child’s arms. But he turned around and marched as quickly as he could into the kitchen, dragging the child with him and letting the other one waddle along behind them. He walked right up to the medicine cabinet and flung it open, red eyes scanning the shelves in lightning quick motions.

He found some grape-flavored children’s medicine (the last bottle so that was one more thing for the grocery list) and grabbed it off the shelf. He walked over to a small table in the kitchen – one he’d made himself, painstakingly, at some family workshop event – which served as the twins’ personal dining table until they broke the magical four foot tall barrier to let them eat at the grown-ups’ spot. He plopped the medicine down on the table and bent down so he was eye-level with the two girls.

Izaya jabbed a finger at the label on the bottle. “Read this. Drink what you have to.” He said sternly to Kururi (it was Kururi, right? He hadn’t lost track of which one was which?) and stood up to go again.

“When will Iza-nii be back?” Mairu whined in a final attempt to trap him in the house forever. Izaya glared down at his sister. “No later than 8. I’ll be here to tuck you in. Or chase you into your bedrooms. Whichever ends up happening tonight.” He said flatly, marching back to the door and grabbing his books again.

“I made ramen. Mai-chan’s has a few spices and yours is bland.” He answered.

You can watch any of your normal channels. And the DVD player is off-limits since you can’t work it.” He supplied, shifting the books in his arms.

“I believe in you.” Izaya sighed, tapping his foot as he waited
for the tide to ebb.

“Clothes?”

“If you get yours messy, leave them in the dirty laundry pile and grab some from the blue hamper on the balcony.” He instructed, glancing at his watch to see if he was about to make the train or go for a nice run.

“Bedtime?”

“8 like usual. Be in bed or on your way by the time I get home. And brush your teeth before you head off. Comb your hair, too. Put some lotion on your hands while you’re at it. They’re getting dry.” Izaya spun around, deciding that question time was up. He flung open the door and winced as the wind blew right into his face, gritting his teeth against it as he headed out.

“Bye Iza-nii.” Kururi’s quiet voice called after him. “Be safe and come back on time and tuck us in and have fun and say hi to whoever is unlucky enough to have you visiting them!” Mairu screeched cheerfully.


“I no longer feel bad about locking you into a house away from the rest of humanity.” He muttered, turning around and slamming the door shut, jamming the key into the hole and locking the two demons in tight.

He dropped the key in his pocket and dashed for the train station, hoping he could still catch the 5:30 track to Sunshine 60. The address that the principal had given him was in that area, so all he had to do was make it there and wander around for a bit til he found it. It was around a thirty minute ride so he’d have about half an hour to find it once he got there. Should be enough. It would have been better to make the 5:00 train like he’d intended but alas, the gods of child care forbid ever leaving the house on time.

Izaya ran down the street, wondering about two things. The first was if the twins would destroy the house before he got home. As much as he called them demons, he still loved the little brats and would do anything for them. He wanted them to be safe, even when he wasn’t around. They were his precious angels, despite their less than pleasant quirks, and he hoped they would be okay while he was gone.

And the second thing was something he’d been wondering about since yesterday when the principal called him to the office. A tutoring gig. A paid tutoring gig. The school was going to pay him to tutor some kid from his grade who was behind on his lessons. Which kid? Who would the school system care about so much that they’d literally hire a student to teach another student? Was it some rich kid who was failing and his parents had stepped in to force the school to do something about it? Maybe it was the principal’s nephew who’d just transferred schools? But Izaya heard that he was a decent student with average grades. No tutoring required there. Who could it be?

The fact that Izaya didn’t even have a solid guess was the biggest factor that inclined him to accept the offer. Normally he could make an assumption based off of several factors. The face of the person he was talking to, the scenario he was in, the events and rumors circulating the school. Hardly any matter was brought to his attention that he couldn’t trace the origin of and describe each detail of without needing to be told. The fact that he couldn’t tell anything about the situation was enticing enough to get himself deeper into it.

The incentive of money also helped. Izaya’s budget was dangerously tight what with the twins going to daycare now, and the monthly salary from his parents becoming more of an every other month
thing. It was still quite a bit of money when it did come – his parents were very successful at their overseas business – but it did run out once all the food, medicine, clothes, and toys had been bought up and brought home, not to mention his supplies and uniform for school. Dry cleaning and Laundromats sucked up money, too, and eating out whenever he couldn’t think of something to make was a saver’s nightmare. The money from the tutoring job could help immensely.

So now Izaya was sprinting for the train, ducking into a closing slit of doors and squeezing into the disgruntled people around him, thanking the gods for his skinny frame, and heading over to Sunshine 60. He hoped this tutor thing was going to work out. It was bound to be interesting, no matter who it was.

…

Dear god had he left the stove on after he made ramen?!

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Shizuo paced around nervously in the living room, looking occasionally between the books on the table and the front door. He was waiting for the tutor to arrive now, whoever it was, for the first lesson. Was it someone he knew? Did they know about him? Would they be scared of him the entire time? He had no idea what to expect from this encounter. It wasn’t like he ever even brought friends over, and this was totally different.

“Calm down, honey. You’ll be fine.” His mother, Namiko, smiled at him from her spot in the kitchen, making dinner for tonight. Kasuka was helping her since Shizuo was going to meet his tutor, carrying pots and ingredients silently around the kitchen at her behest. The younger boy looked over at his older brother and simply nodded his affirmation, providing comfort in his own Kasuka way.

“She’s right, you know.” His father, Kichirou, called from the living room, struggling with the DVD player that they were attempting to use once more for the family movie tonight. “This kid is just going to be here for an hour or so to help you out, and then he’ll be gone. And what’s the worst that could happen, anyway?”

Shizuo gulped at that last phrase and looked at the door again. He could accidentally kill the kid if he got angry. Or it could be some mean asshole that would start spreading information about how stupid Shizuo was. It could be a guy who was only coming up to mock Shizuo and then leave. There could be a thousand things that could go wrong with this tutor. But what else was he supposed to do?

“Oh, ask if he or she wants some food when they get here.” His mother called from the kitchen, grabbing a pot from Kasuka and pouring some water into it to start boiling.

Shizuo wrung his hands and just prayed that he could hold a semi-intelligent conversation once the tutor got here.

Suddenly, there was a knock on the door.

It was a soft knock, a little unsure of itself but still there. Shizuo felt his heart pound as he stared at the door, an irrational need to run to his room overtaking him and freezing him in place. He couldn’t move from his spot, could only shake and stare at the door like the harbinger of doom was right outside.

“Shizuo, get the door.” His father instructed from the living room. “I’d hate to make a bad first impression with my tutor by leaving them outside for fifteen minutes in icy wind.”

Shizuo blinked and hurried over to the door, biting his lip as he flung it open, waiting to see who was standing there.
The person was initially looking the other way, as though trying to decide if leaving was a good option since no one had answered. There was something familiar to the person that Shizuo couldn’t quite place at the moment.

“Um, are you the tutor?” Shizuo found himself asking, even as he looked the person up and down, trying to decide if he knew them. At first, Shizuo thought it was a girl. He could see that her body was curvy and shaped like an hourglass, even under the heavy jacket she was wearing. Her black hair was shorter than girls usually kept it, but that just revealed her feminine neck. She also had shapely legs that were really prominent in her black skinny jeans, and…

Shizuo felt his cheeks flush red as his eyes landed on her butt. She had the most perfect butt he’d ever seen. Holy cow. It was bubbly and rounded, but not crazily so, just bigger than average and obvious enough to stare at, but not disgustingly massive or plastic-surgery style huge. It was still toned, though, like the girl went running a lot to keep her butt in good shape instead of just letting it all be flab. The skinny jeans hugged her ass perfectly, pronouncing her gift to mankind in stark black that was impossible to miss. Never before had Shizuo been overcome with the urge to grab someone’s ass, but this girl was challenging his restraint right now. The tiny waist right above her bottom begged him to wrap an arm around it and pull her close to him, press her body against his… Yep, this was going downhill fast.

Shizuo dragged his eyes almost painfully up to the back of her head, just in time for the girl to turn around…

Shizuo’s eyes widened and his jaw dropped.

This. This could not be happening.

Ruby red eyes stared at him in equal shock to what he was feeling. Raven black hair brushed over alabaster skin that was dusted the lightest shade of pink from the cold. Pink lips that normally shaped such annoying and frustrating taunts were dropped open in disbelief. Lithe frame that twisted and turned so gracefully whenever he was avoiding Shizuo’s destructive missiles was frozen in place where it was. And perfect ass that he’d just noticed for the first time was suddenly very noticeable among the rest of the features that Shizuo thought he had memorized from the day they’d met.

“I…Izaya?” Shizuo asked in disbelief, gaping at his mortal enemy. And now, his last chance to pass the grade.

Big middle finger to you as well, universe.

Chapter End Notes

So like I said, I'm working on the timing of everything and since I have those first seven chapters written, number three might be updated into the story real soon! We'll just see how everything plays out! Thanks for reading! Please comment below and let me know what you think and if you have any suggestions! <3
Chapter Notes

So here's Chapter 3! From now on, I'm going to try posting every Sunday, and if I have plenty of chapters, then one on Wednesday as well. So two a week, unless I just have one for Sunday. That should be all for this time! I hope you enjoy this chapter and the awkwardness that shall ensue from the interactions between Izaya and Shizuo! <3

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Shizuo stared at Izaya, wondering what he’d done to deserve something like this. “You’re the tutor?” He asked in disbelief, looking into the red eyes to see if there was any hint of mischief there. Any evidence that this was some cruel prank. But Izaya crossed his arms over the books Shizuo hadn’t noticed before, and glared at Shizuo.

“Yes, I am.” He said stubbornly. “I’m your tutor. I’m getting paid. And I’m cold so let me in, protozoan.”

Shizuo stumbled out of the way, too numb to do anything else as Izaya strode past him, looking around the house with cautious red eyes. Shizuo stared at Izaya’s back, eyes slowly dipping down to his ass before shooting back up again. Please don’t let this be happening to him.

Izaya walked around in a circle, looking nervously around the house like he was worried it was going to attack him. He glanced into the kitchen and spotted Shizuo’s mother and Kasuka, both watching him, and took a few steps back with an almost queasy look on his face. He saw Shizuo’s father in the living room, having finally given up on his DVD endeavor and walking over to meet the tutor, and he took even more steps backwards.

Shizuo blinked at the odd behavior. Izaya seemed so…out of his element. It was just a family. Was that really so odd to him?

Izaya noticed Shizuo watching him and cleared his throat, straightening up a bit as he fiddled with his books. “So Shizu-chan,” He began, red eyes looking up to lock with Shizuo’s gold ones. “Where are we going to do this? I don’t know your house as well as you.”

Shizuo was jolted out of his reverie by that. “Oh. Uh, yeah. Just over here is fine. There’s a table we can use and…yeah.”

“I'll try not to throw it at you.” He added silently in his head as he led Izaya over to a small table and some chairs that were set up right next to where he’d been pacing. He pulled one out for Izaya without thinking and took the other one, watching Izaya as the smaller boy set his books down and took his seat, scooting in with little jerking motions. It was kinda cute.

Shizuo mentally slapped himself. Cute? What the hell was he thinking?! The flea was not cute. Not even remotely! He was an annoying little bastard that ought to be wiped off the face of the earth! And here he was, parading about in his house! This was Shizuo’s home territory! By all means, he should feel violated and pissed off beyond all reason that the flea was the one who was meant to save his grade.
Still... when Shizuo saw Izaya shifting anxiously in his seat, a small blush over his cheeks like he wasn’t sure of what to do next, he had to admit that the flea seemed a lot more innocent and tolerable than he did at school.

But only barely.

“Ah, Shizuo?” His father’s voice cut through his thoughts and he quickly looked over, noticing the man beckoning him over. His dad’s eyes flicked over to look at Izaya a few times as he called Shizuo over, and there was a bit of an urgent look on his face.

Shit, that’s right. His family was still here. “Must act civil and decent in front of family members. Must not accidentally commit murder in front of family members.” Shizuo thought to himself. “Be civil!”

“Um... excuse me.” Shizuo said awkwardly to Izaya, standing up from his chair. Izaya nodded, perhaps a little too quickly. “It’s fine. Go ahead. I’ll wait.” He said swiftly, looking out the window right after the words left his mouth like he was too embarrassed to keep looking at Shizuo. Maybe he was trying to fake polite civility as well.

Shizuo walked over to his dad, wondering what was up. “Yeah, Dad?” He asked, looking at his mother and brother who were gathered into their little family circle as well. Maybe he could play this off as no big deal.

“Why no, family! I have never seen this boy before in my life! He goes to my school so apparently he knows me! But we don’t know each other well at all. As a matter of fact, he’s never even spoken to me before today. We have a very formal and distant relationship.” Shizuo nodded to himself. Yes. That would work. He could make this work.

“No, don’t look at him! His mother was an expert at deducing what he was thinking. What if she figured out how close he and Izaya were? Well, they weren’t close in a good way, per say, by most people’s standards. His family did not need to see this aspect of his life! This annoying, slimy, narcissistic, flea-bitten aspect of his life!

“Do you know this boy? Very well?” His mother also pressed, eyes a little wide as she studied Shizuo’s face. No, don’t look at him! His mother was an expert at deducing what he was thinking. What if she figured out how close he and Izaya were? Well, they weren’t close in a good way, per say, by most people’s standards. His family did not need to see this aspect of his life! This annoying, slimy, narcissistic, flea-bitten aspect of his life!

“And if you aren’t close to him in the way I believe, is he single?” Kasuka asked in a flat voice, looking at Shizuo.

Shizuo nearly choked at that last comment, looking at his little brother in total disbelief. What in the world was with that?! Was Kasuka, his own younger brother, asking if Izaya was single?! Okay, he did not have the mental stamina to cross that bridge right now.

Shizuo looked back at his father and mother. “Uh, we know each other. But, not like that. He’s... well he’s... he’s my...” Shizuo wasn’t sure how to describe their relationship.

‘Enemy’ was the truth, but would that concern his parents at all? Bringing an ‘enemy’ into the house? Daily? Or should he go with something nicer like ‘the bane of my existence’? That sounded...
“He’s my…” Shizuo tried again, but still couldn’t come up with anything concrete and normal.
Yeah, definitely going downhill fast. Stupid perfect-assed flea. Why did it have to be him?

“Frenemy.” Izaya suddenly blurted from his spot at the table, cutting into their conversation.

All the Heiwajimas looked over at Izaya in unison, staring at the uncomfortable boy with piercing
gazes. Izaya glanced shyly up at Shizuo’s father, looked over at his mother, and back at his father
again. “We’re frenemies.” He repeated in a bit of a softer voice. “We fight sometimes, like I tease
him and he chases me around, but we know each other pretty well.”

Shizuo thought about that. It was like a toned down version of the truth. Good enough for him.

But his parents and brother looked at him again. “You chase that sweet, little boy around?” His
mother asked with a shocked look on her face. Shizuo winced. If only she knew what he was trying
to do as he chased the damn brat. Or better yet, what that “sweet, little boy” did to deserve it.

“Yes, but it’s all in good fun!” Once again, Izaya cut in, saving Shizuo from an awkward answer.
“He never hurts me, and I enjoy it. Really.” He insisted, but turned red when he realized how that
sounded. “I-I’m not masochistic or anything!” He stammered, waving his hands frantically. “Uh,
it’s like tag! Um, j-just tag! So…so yeah! Fun? Normal! Normal fun!” He seemed like he was about
to explode from the attention being placed on him, squirming around in the chair so much that
Shizuo thought he would tip over any second.

Kasuka seemed intent on just watching Izaya squirm, flat gaze not moving from his delicate form,
while Shizuo’s parents seemed a little sorry for freaking him out so much. “Yes! Just normal fun.”
Shizuo decided to try and support Izaya, stepping in between his family and his…frenemy. “So that’s
that. Any other questions? I, uh, really need to start studying.”

His mother clapped her hands. “Oh! Of course! That’s why you’re here after all.” She said to Izaya,
who just nodded once and ducked his head, face completely red. She smiled a little at the behavior,
and Shizuo could tell her maternal instincts were kicking in as she watched the small boy. “Would
you like any dinner?” She asked in a gentle voice.

Izaya looked up in shock, and as if to answer her, his stomach rumbled loudly from across the room.
He ducked his head once more and clutched his stomach, looking like he wanted to apologize for his
stomach. But Shizuo’s mother just laughed and smiled at Izaya. “Well, I guess that settles it! I’ll go
make some dinner, okay honey?” She glanced down at her “helper” Kasuka, who was still staring
unblinkingly at Izaya. “Come on, you.” She muttered, grabbing his arm and dragging him into the
kitchen with her. “Let’s get a move on.”

Shizuo’s father looked at Izaya one more time, like he was trying to make a final judgment on what
kind of person he was, and eventually he shrugged and grinned. Shizuo knew Izaya had passed the
family tests. Not that they were too terribly difficult to pass, but that was one obstacle cleared…right?

Shizuo’s dad clapped him on the shoulder, disrupting Shizuo’s nervous train of thought. “You two
work hard, now. I’m going to attack that DVD player again and see if I can get our movie set up.”
He said cheerfully and walked back into the living room, leaving Shizuo all alone with Izaya in the
room.

He could already smell the flea’s stench invading his nostrils, tempting him to grab the table at his
side and hurl it right at the raven’s head. But the image of Izaya’s…lower region…kept permeating
his mind at the same time. Anger and desire were mixing as one, filling Shizuo with confused
feelings that he’d never felt before. He could feel his fingers twitching at his sides, itching to grab onto something, and he wasn’t sure if it was the table or Izaya’s ass. And neither option was exactly going to help him raise his grades.

This was just going to be terrific.

Shizuo gulped and looked back at the oblivious raven, who was opening one of the textbooks now and furiously flipping through it like he was attempting to forget where he was. His ruby eyes ripped over the pages, intensely focused yet jittery at the same time. Somehow, seeing Izaya so nervous made Shizuo calm down. The flea was human, just like everyone else. He had his moments of insecurity, too, despite how he acted at school. This similarity allowed Shizuo to walk back over to his tutor without grabbing the nearest piece of furniture (or reaching down for something else) and take a seat across from him, opening his own book to the lesson from class that day.

Okay, pretending to be civil might not be so bad. He’d made it over here without doing anything, right? Providing that the flea stayed like this the whole time instead of reverting back to his crazy, psychotic self, Shizuo would be able to handle this lesson without making a fool out of himself.

“So…can we start with history?” Shizuo asked, looking up at Izaya. Izaya’s gaze snapped up to lock with his, the red still dusting his cheeks and making his already ruby-like eyes seem to glitter in his perfect face. He looked at Shizuo for a few seconds, as though trying to guess if Shizuo was messing with him or not. But a small smile settled over his taunting lips and he nodded. “Sure, protozoan. Let’s see how much of the modern times you can comprehend with that caveman brain of yours.”

And again, for reasons unknown to Shizuo, the taunting that came from Izaya about his intelligence calmed him down more. He even laughed.

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Izaya was fascinated by the way Shizuo learned. That is to say, he didn’t. It was like every piece of information that went flying towards him entered his mind and took the quickest route it could find right back out again.

Izaya would give him a ten minute lecture on just one person from the lesson, ask one question about the guy, and Shizuo would crumble instantly. He just couldn’t retain anything Izaya told him. It was fascinating. Izaya found the entire situation of tutoring Shizuo to be fascinating, in fact. His worst enemy was sitting right across from him, trying his best to be absolutely civil in the presence of his family. He was relying on Izaya to pass the grade, struggling to reign in his famous temper, and he hadn’t even thrown a single piece of furniture towards Izaya’s head yet. Yet.

Izaya could see his hands twitching every now and then, like he wanted desperately to grab something, and he figured that this situation was every bit as challenging for Shizuo as it was amusing to Izaya. The poor guy could probably barely keep his hands from hurling the table right now. Then again…the protozoan might be just a tad bit preoccupied with how the lessons were going so far.

Shizuo groaned and slammed his head on the table. “I’m doomed to be a drop-out.” He said miserably after the fourth failed attempt to name one accomplishment of Emperor Hirohito.

Izaya giggled a little at the melodramatic behavior. “You aren’t.” He promised, looking down at the textbook again. “We just need to figure out what type of learner you are.” He tapped his lips thoughtfully, wondering about what he should do.

Shizuo looked up at him curiously. “What type of learner? What do you mean by that, flea?” He
asked curiously.

Izaya glanced at him and grinned. “Well I shouldn’t be surprised that an uncultured swine couldn’t comprehend the fine points of education.” He purred, taking great joy in the scowl that crossed Shizuo’s face. It seemed softer than usual, though. Almost like an off-hand reaction rather than an example of rage. Strange.

“There are multiple ways to learn, Shizu-chan.” Izaya said, looking back down at the textbook. “Some people learn by seeing, others by hearing, and others by doing things with their hands. It’s all a matter of who you are. Clearly, you don’t learn by hearing.”

Shizuo frowned. “And what’s that supposed to mean?” He growled.

Izaya looked back up at him. “I mean I just lectured you for ten minutes on Emperor Hirohito and I would safely bet the rest of my month’s budget that you couldn’t name which major war occurred during his rule.” He said flatly.

Shizuo glared at him fiercely, but both of them knew it was true. “I get it. I can’t follow instructions or take anything in. Stupid is as stupid does.” The blond snarled angrily.

Izaya smiled again. “I didn’t say that, Shizu-chan. You can’t take in information when someone talks your ear off. That’s totally fine. Plenty of people can’t. But no one’s tried to help you find a different way and you keep trying to force yourself to listen to lectures from your teacher and learn that way.”

Shizuo’s frown seemed to deepen. “Are you saying I should ignore my teacher?” He asked in confusion, scratching his head.

Izaya laughed at that. “No! Definitely not! But don’t think of it as your main learning tool. Your teacher is more of a supplement to your education. You have to be the main tool.”

He hummed a few times, mind racing to figure out something to try. An idea sparked in his brain. “Do you like reading, Shizu-chan?” He asked excitedly, leaning over the table a bit.

Shizuo looked startled by his question, but he slowly nodded. “Y-Yes…but I really read detective novels and stuff like that. Mysteries and a few classics. Nothing mainstream or contemporary.” He mumbled, looking embarrassed that he read intelligent literature instead of trash like other kids his age.

Izaya stared at him for a few seconds, feeling a bit of a flutter in his chest at the thought of a smart Shizuo, curled up and reading Sherlock Holmes or something like that. No one else he knew did that. Not even Shinra.

“That’s great!” He said aloud, interrupting his own train of thought before it could go somewhere he didn’t want it to. This was the monster he was looking at. Not one of his usual precious humans. Get a grip, Izaya!

“If you remember what you read, then you’re probably a visual learner of some kind. So if you see something on your own, then you’ll retain it easier. A movie or a book of some kind.” Izaya told his pupil.

Shizuo pointed at the textbook. “But I read this thing and I still don’t remember crap!” He complained, raking a hand through his dyed hair in frustration.

“Don’t worry about that!” Izaya assured him. “I’m your tutor, so I’ll help you find different things that will let you remember the material.”
He grabbed the textbook, feeling some excitement rush through him now. At what exactly, he wasn’t sure.

“Let’s try this. I’m going to re-enact something Hirohito did, or even just re-enact this section of the textbook. Watch me and answer the questions I have for you at the end.”

Izaya read the segment quickly and took a few minutes to plan out his little skit, tapping his finger hurriedly against the table as his mind raced. Then a grin split his face and he jumped out of his seat, ready to perform.

Shizuo watched him with doubtful but still focused gold eyes, each movement Izaya made being catalogued in the monster’s brain. Izaya talked and acted, and pretended to be different people, summing up short conversations in his own Izaya way and practically prancing around the room in front of Shizuo as he performed. He hopped from one spot to another, forming a conversation with himself, and pretended to fall over at different parts of his little play to represent the deaths of different people. He did a little marching dance and sang a short song at some point to represent the entering of American troops into Japan (Yankee Doodle was his chosen ballad), and the entire treaty signing between the two countries was summed up with a clicking sound of the tongue, some snappy dialogue, a few strokes in the air, and a big thumbs-up. Throughout the skit, Izaya narrated a few extra facts here and there that he couldn’t quite act out, making sure he had everything covered. It was quite an informative little play, if he did say so himself.

Shizuo laughed at some bits, mostly Izaya’s special conversation and peace treaty summaries, but he seemed interested and intent on remembering whatever Izaya did. That was an extremely good sign as far as Izaya was concerned.

When Izaya had finished, he came over and sat down across from Shizuo. “So, what major war was going on when Emperor Hirohito was reigning?” He asked calmly, looking expectantly at Shizuo.

“World War II.” Shizuo answered instantly, and his gold eyes widened in shock.

Izaya felt a huge grin cross his face. Before Shizuo could say anything else, Izaya asked: “What was the name of the period that Hirohito ruled over?”

“Shouwa. And he was rechristened the Shouwa Emperor after his death instead of his benevolent emperor name because Japan ended imperialization with his demise.” Shizuo was able to say.

“What year did the Allies come and occupy Japan and who were they led by?” Izaya shot next.

“1945 was the start of the Occupation and it was led by General Douglas MacArthur.” Shizuo responded.

“When was the reformed Peace Constitution drafted and ratified?” Izaya quirked an eyebrow up.

“1947 under the supervision of the Allies.” Shizuo recalled.

“What was the largest restoration that Japan underwent during the Reformation after World War II?” Izaya asked in delight, leaning forward in his seat to watch Shizuo eagerly.

“The Economic Miracle. We went from an economy worse than Italy’s to the third best in the world in under a year.” Shizuo said in disbelief, staring at his own hands like he’d switched bodies with someone else temporarily.

Izaya jumped up in his seat, accidentally knocking over his chair, but not really caring. “See?” He grabbed Shizuo’s hands happily and pulled him away from the table, dancing around in the small study room. “You can learn! You just need something else alongside the lectures!”
Shizuo seemed stunned by this revelation, but a huge grin crept over his face and he grabbed Izaya in a hug, lifting him off the ground and spinning him around. Izaya squealed at the human contact and wriggled a bit, face turning red as he was spun around like he weighed nothing at all.

“Thank you! Thank you! Thank you, Izaya!” Shizuo said cheerfully, either not noticing or not caring about Izaya’s discomfort with the touching.

Izaya saw Shizuo’s mother had exited the kitchen and was holding two trays with bowls of miso soup and rice, with a few pickled vegetables on the side. She spotted the two boys hugging in the room (or rather Shizuo hugging and Izaya being helplessly swung around) and her jaw dropped in shock. But a smile quickly replaced the shock and her eyes sparkled happily as she walked further into the room.

“I take it studying is going well?” She asked, getting Shizuo’s attention as she smiled at him and set the food on the table.

Shizuo finally stopped spinning and set Izaya down, turning to face his mother but leaving one arm wrapped absently around Izaya’s waist. “Yes! It is! I actually remembered something! Several things!” Shizuo said excitedly, happy grin still in place.

His mother seemed overjoyed at that. “Really? That’s great, Shizuo! I’m so proud of you, baby!” She truly seemed happy for her son’s little accomplishment, her eyes shining with what could be unshed tears and her smile wide on her face. Izaya felt a pang in his chest at that look of pride and happiness. His parents congratulated him for his work and accomplishments in school, yes, but… never like that. It was more of a “job well done, eldest child. Keep succeeding or you will lose our support” sort of thing. He received bare minimum praise, and sometimes a pat on the head if he was really lucky, then they’d be out the door by tomorrow. If he had ever struggled with something, he doubted he’d have the sort of support that Shizuo seemed to have from his mother. He’d get the cold shoulder for sure. He’d become a failure just like that. But with Shizuo…they were just happy to see him succeed. That must be nice.

Shizuo’s mother looked at the arm Shizuo still had wrapped around Izaya’s waist. One of her eyebrows lifted and a bit of an odd look crossed her face as she looked at Izaya. Izaya felt his face flush as he realized what it must look like to have her son holding onto him so familiarly. Probably like they were…together…

Izaya quickly shook out of Shizuo’s embrace and took a few hasty steps away from him. “Ah, yes, it’s going well.” He said quickly, trying not to come across as too awkward when both Heiwajimas looked at him. “So…I’m going to eat real quick and then leave.”

He sat down at the table and looked at Shizuo’s mother. “Um, thank you for dinner. Itadakimasu.” He clapped his hands and started eating hurriedly, very aware of their confused gazes. He felt like he had when he’d walked in for the first time. Like he was a loner who’d stepped into a family community. He didn’t belong. They were all close and caring and so warm, and he was some distant, lonely, cold boy living on his own and taking care of his baby sisters. He felt so out of place. That feeling was coming back now as Shizuo and his mother stared at Izaya, watching him scarf the food down like his life depended on it.

“Honey, you don’t have to eat so quickly.” Shizuo’s mother said gently, her tone a little worried. “You can take as much time as you want. It’s barely 7:20.”

Izaya glanced sharply at the clock on the wall. 7:21. He had nine minutes til the 7:30 train back to his area of Tokyo departed. The one that could get him home by 8 to meet his sisters. “No, I have to be somewhere by 7:30.” Izaya said hurriedly, shoveling more of the rice down his gullet and drinking
the soup intermittently. “I really don’t have time to stay but thank you for the offer.”

Shizuo’s mother looked like she wanted to say something else, but she nodded slowly. “Well… alright, dear. Just know that you’re welcome here anytime.” She told him with a kind smile. “If you want to stay longer tomorrow, then just say the word.”

Izaya glanced up at the woman, shocked by how friendly and open she seemed to be. And with a total stranger at that! Was this what mothers were usually like? Caring and loving towards not only their children but others’ kids as well?

It wasn’t like his own mother, Kyouko was the sparkling example of motherhood.

Izaya managed a nod and shoved a few more bites down his throat, snatching up some pickled vegetables with the chopsticks and hurriedly choking those down, too. “I’ll think about it. I will.” He said around the food in his mouth, swallowing and glancing at the clock again before standing up from the small table. He quickly grabbed his books, very aware of the eyes of the Heiwajimas set firmly on him, and turned to grin at them both, hoping the grin didn’t seem awkwardly huge.

He didn’t want to look like the Cheshire Cat here.

“Thank you for dinner, Heiwajima-san.” Izaya said respectfully, bowing to Shizuo’s mother quickly, but elegantly. Expert bowing, at least, had been one thing his parents had taught him when he was young. It was important in case they brought over some random guest from overseas without alerting him beforehand.

Shizuo’s mother seemed a little astonished by the formality of the bow. “Oh! You don’t have to call me that.” She assured him, waving a hand at him to stand up straight. Izaya did so, although he was a little confused that she seemed to prefer him acting informal. “Okay…um…what should I call you then?” He asked hesitantly, cocking his head to one side.

Shizuo’s mother thought about it for a bit. “Namiko-san is fine.” She decided. “You can use my first name. I like it better than ‘Heiwajima’ anyway. Much easier to say.” She winked at him and whispered her next words conspiratorially. “But don’t tell Kichirou that! He gets all fussy when I complain about taking his last name.” She laughed, and a fond twinkle entered her eyes as she glanced in the direction of the living room.

Izaya assumed then that ‘Kichirou’ must be Shizuo’s father. He still didn’t know who the boy that was hanging around the kitchen watching him like a stalker was, but he seemed to be either Shizuo’s little brother or a random demon child that Namiko had found in the street and decided to nurse to blooming adulthood. He wouldn’t put it past her considering the kindness that she had already displayed so far. She must have a soft spot for children.

Izaya looked over at the living room and spotted Shizuo’s father, groaning and glaring at the DVD player that was holding their future family movie hostage. He was still working on that thing? It almost reminded Izaya of his sisters. They were so not technologically competent either.

Izaya glanced at the clock on the wall. 7:24. He had 6 minutes left. That was enough to fix a DVD player, right? He wanted to repay the Heiwajimas for their kindness somehow. Maybe this could ease his conscious.

“Do you want any help getting that set up?” Izaya asked, setting his books down by the door and jogging quickly over to where Kichirou was in the living room.

The man looked surprised that Izaya had actually approached him, but he eagerly moved aside and
gestured grandly at the DVD player with a swooping arm. “Be my guest, oh child of the technology age.” He said dramatically, face covered in a helpless expression. “Make this devil work.”

Izaya laughed at his words, but swiftly turned his attention on the machine at fault, wanting to get this done and be out of the house as soon as possible. It was actually the same exact company that his DVD player at home was from, albeit vastly different models. His had Blu-Ray and HDMI ports and enough cables to form a stairway to heaven along with a ton of other junk features that never got used. Theirs had a nice slot for a DVD, a play button, a pause button, and an eject button.

He liked theirs a lot more.

“Well, I think something that would help a lot would be if the cables were plugged in the right way.” Izaya told Kichirou, walking over to the TV and looking at where the AV cords from the DVD player were plugged in. Sure enough, the visual cord that let you actually see what was going on was plugged into a spot for audio, and the left audio cord was shoved in the visuals port. They were color-coded for a reason. Why did no one ever get this?

Izaya set his nimble fingers to rearranging the cables, and asked Kichirou to turn on the DVD player again.

When the man dutifully did so, but nothing showed up on the TV, Izaya (with the patience of the god that he was) calmly asked him to switch the source on the TV from cable to AV.

After that, with a blank screen still appearing along with an error message, Izaya hopped back over to the DVD player and ejected the disc, to find that it had been inserted upside down. He cleaned it with his shirt first then flipped it, slipping it back into its rightful place in the DVD player.

When the menu for the movie showed up (it was one Izaya had never seen before. Something called “Titanic”, which he assumed had to do with the cruise ship.), nothing happened when Kichirou hit play on the remote. Izaya sighed and grabbed the remote from him, asking if the Heiwajimas owned multiple remotes for the TV. He responded no, so that ruled out him using the wrong remote. The solution was simple: Izaya changed the batteries.

When the old batteries were thrown out and Izaya had cleaned out the plasma that had begun to form in the battery slot before replacing them (seriously, did this family even know how electronics worked?!), he hit the play button and wonder of wonders, the movie began.

“Oh my gosh, you’re a god!” Kichirou cheered, giving Izaya a big hug before pausing the movie real quick and gleefully looking at the working screen. “I know.” Izaya said coolly, squirming a little from the unexpected human contact. He really was going to have to get used to all this, wasn’t he? The Heiwajimas were apparently a very touchy-feely family.

“Thank you for your assistance.” A flat voice said from behind him.

Izaya spun around and spotted Creepy Stalker Boy, standing right there behind him with an apathetic expression to rival Kururi on her best days. Izaya stared at the boy, for a few seconds not comprehending his thanks. “Oh! Uh, you’re welcome.” He finally snapped back into the present, sheepishly taking a few steps to the side to allow the boy to pass him and enter the living room.

The boy watched him instead though, not making a move to head further in.

Izaya just stared right back at him. Did he need something else? Did he want a hug, too? Izaya was good at figuring people out, but he wasn’t a mind reader.

“Kasuka.” The boy finally said.
Izaya blinked. “Huh?” He asked dumbly, still staring at the boy. “My name is Kasuka. You may call me Kasuka, Kasuka-kun, Kasuka-chan, or Kasuka-sama.” The flat-faced boy said, face and voice both dead serious the entire time.

Izaya was totally silent as he stared at the boy some more. Sama. Yeah, that wasn’t happening. “Nice to meet you…Kasuka-kun.” Izaya finally said, deciding that no honorifics was too rude and personal for the stage they were at, but all the other offered honorifics were…questionable at best.

Kasuka accepted his decision with a simple nod, apathetic gaze firmly in place. “Nice to meet you as well, Izaya-chan.” He said flatly, turning and walking into the living room. Izaya stood, frozen in place and staring at the spot where Kasuka had been. Izaya-chan. He had just been chan-ed. Two minutes after speaking for the first time, and he was chan-ed. This family had no boundaries, did it?

A strong hand clapped his shoulder, causing Izaya to jump and look up in shock. Shizuo was standing there, scratching his head sheepishly and looking around like he wasn’t sure where to look. “Um…thanks for the help today, Izaya.” He got out, gold eyes flickering slowly up to look at Izaya’s red ones. “I really appreciate it.”

The two of them just stared at each other for a long time, looking into each other’s eyes without speaking or moving. Izaya gazed into those golden, honey orbs and felt like he was melting into them. He could stare into them and find all sorts of secrets that he’d never imagined. There wasn’t just rage now, as he looked into those surprisingly stunning eyes. There was curiosity. There was intelligence. There was kindness. There were a thousand other things that Izaya couldn’t identify in the brief paradise of time that he was allowed to stare into his enemy’s eyes. He felt like if the eyes really were the window to the soul, then Shizuo’s was one that he’d never tire of exploring.

“Izaya-kun.” Izaya said out of nowhere, his voice a little too breathy for his liking.

Shizuo blinked and stared at Izaya in confusion, not sure what the smaller boy was talking about. Izaya felt his cheeks flush red as he ducked his head down. “Um, Izaya-kun. Call me Izaya-kun.” He said in a smaller voice than he normally used, eyes fixed firmly on the floor.

He couldn’t tell what Shizuo’s face looked like, but the silence was enough to make Izaya uncomfortable yet again. “Okay!” He snapped his head back up to grin brightly at Shizuo, who stumbled backwards in surprise at the sudden movement. “I should be leaving now. Ah, thank you for working so hard and proving that you weren’t as much of a protozoan disaster as I thought you’d be.” Izaya babbled on, slipping past Shizuo with the same grin in place, once again hoping it didn’t look suspiciously huge or bright.

“I’ll see you tomorrow, Shizu-chan! At school and for our next lesson! Keep studying! Bye!” He shot out in quick succession, grabbing his books, coat, checking his watch for the time, and yanking open the door all in the seconds he took to speak.

“Oh, bye!” He heard Shizuo call after him as he stepped out into the brisk wind from before, not even bothering to put on his coat in favor of making it to the train as quickly as possible. He glanced at his watch again. 7:29. He had less than sixty seconds to make it to the train station or he’d be running home.

As he took off, heading blindly for the train station at top speed, he almost didn’t hear the next thing that Shizuo called after him through the howling wind from the safety of his nice, warm home.

“Be careful, Izaya-kun!”
Izaya almost didn’t hear it. He also almost stumbled and fell when he did hear it. Izaya-kun. He’d just been kun-ed. By Shizu-chan.

Despite the wind biting at his cheeks and the growing promise of arriving home later than he had thought, a smile spread over Izaya’s lips.

“Shizu-chan…My Shizu-chan…”

Chapter End Notes

Thanks for reading! The next tutoring sessions get even more hectic from here, as poor Shizu-chan deals with more and more…inner strife. Please comment below! <3
Okay! Here's the next chapter! I'm pretty sure I'll be going one on Sunday, one on Wednesday for the foreseeable future. I will keep you all notified if that changes! Thank you for reading! I can't believe all the nice comments I've been getting and the support that I've received for this work. This chapter is a little less funny and a little more thoughtful than the others have been so far, but I hope you still enjoy it!

When Izaya finally got home that night, to say he was tired would have been an understatement. He was physically drained from a crazy run through the wind to get to the train station, which ended up being in vain anyway because he missed the train by thirty seconds, and he’d had to keep running and take the long way home through the streets instead, hoping against hope that he could make it at least by around 8:30. It was a 30-minute ride home on the train, and an hour run home by foot. Not exactly “fun”. On top of that lovely prospect, Izaya had had to wade himself through the pedestrian traffic that had gathered to ogle in the busy intersection near his neighborhood at a woman who’d been attacked in the street.

Some gangs had been flaring up in the main Ikebukuro area lately. They seemed to be gathering in cohorts based on color. At another time, Izaya might have stayed to observe the scene, maybe get his hand in with the teenagers who were standing by and watching, clearly involved as members of the gangs themselves, but he was too tired from the frantic run he’d been on and the terrifying prospect of his baby sisters at home by themselves to care.

He finally made it back to his street when the sky was inky black, stumbling over to the stupidly big house that his family resided in and all the way up the fancy stone pathway to the front door, pulling his key out of his pocket as he went. He tiredly checked his watch once and noted that it was 8:31 before jamming his key back into the door and entering the house.

The lights were all off aside from one in the living room, a small lamp that gave off a bit of a pathetic glow, but the flashing colors from the TV that was also in that room made up for it. The lighting scenario more than anything else told Izaya where his sisters still were. In bed or heading to bed, he had said. Brushed teeth, combed hair, and lotioned hands, he had requested. Were any of those things real and either occurred or occurring? Probably not.

Izaya tiredly slipped out of his coat and let the article of clothing fall to the floor, dropping his books heavily on the ground next to them. He could get them later. For now he had to get the twins to bed.

“Mai-chan? Kuru-chan? Iza-nii is home.” Izaya called into the house, turning towards the living room even as he started talking.

Instantly, he could hear some scuffling from the room that sounded like two cats fighting to get off a couch first, and he crouched down and braced himself for what was coming. A few seconds later, two figures burst out of the living room and rocketed towards him at full speed, heading straight for his outstretched arms.

“Iza-nii!” Most-likely-Mairu wailed dramatically, tears flooding her eyes as she threw her arms
around her older brother’s neck. “You’re late! We were worried! Where were you? Why are you late? Is Iza-nii okay?” The toddler babbled, sobbing into his neck as she clung to him tightly. “Worried. Iza-nii missing.” Most-likely-Kururi whispered, voice shaky from the tears spilling down her cheeks as she buried her head in Izaya’s chest, wrapping her tiny arms around his upper body the best she could.

Izaya felt pangs of guilt shoot through his chest. He’d left his baby sisters all alone for over two hours. They weren’t used to that sort of thing, even though he often ran errands without them, and even if he had only been a minute late, it would still be pretty scary for two four year olds when their only guardian wasn’t where he said he was going to be. And in this case, he had been just over half an hour later getting to where he was supposed to be.

Izaya wrapped his arms tightly around his baby sisters and squeezed them close to him. “I’m so sorry, my darlings.” He whispered, rocking them back and forth as they cried on him. “Iza-nii is sorry. He won’t do it again. Okay? Calm down, alright? Iza-nii is right here with you.” He soothed the two young girls as best he could, holding them close and rocking them back and forth while they cried softly.

“We thought…maybe Iza-nii didn’t love us anymore.” Mairu (it was definitely Mairu) sniffled, wiping at her eyes with one pajama sleeve. Izaya felt his heart squeeze at that. “What? Why would you think that?” He asked gently, wiping her remaining tears away with his thumb when she couldn’t get them all. “Iza-nii gone. Like Mommy and Daddy.” Kururi said softly, hugging Izaya tightly like she was afraid he was going to leave. “Iza-nii might not come back. Like them.”

That struck Izaya even deeper than the tears had. He stared at his two sisters, looking back and forth between the two of them as a heavy feeling entered his heart. They felt abandoned. It was all they were used to, after all. They didn’t know that in normal families, people came back when they said they were going to. They showed up to birthdays and brought presents. They were actually there when you were sick and cared about things like school and your friends. They could be depended on. Like...like in Shizuo’s family.

Izaya made up his mind then and there. Even if his brief truce-like-thing with Shizuo was only temporary, he was going to go to his house as much as possible. He was going to try and interact with that touchy-feely family, and learn about how they operated. He was going to see if he could learn to fit in with the dynamic, and pick up on the patterns of their interactive behavior. Because by hell, he didn’t want Mairu and Kururi to grow up in a cold, dead household where no one was ever around and they had to fend for themselves and they felt like no one loved them. He didn’t want them to go through what he had gone through. No, they were going to feel loved and warm and feel like they belonged in the house that they were in. And it wasn’t going to be just a house – it was going to be a home. If it killed him, he’d give his sisters the sort of family life they deserved. A Heiwajima sort of family that filled a whole restaurant with noise and laughter. Not an Orihara party of one sitting in the corner alone.

“You two look at me, okay?” He said gently, and the two sniffling girls both looked up at him. Their wide brown eyes looked into his soft red ones, and he made sure he switched his gaze between the both of them as he spoke. “I’m never going to leave you. I love you two. I’m going to be here for you no matter what happens. Even if Kyouko and Shirou are never around, I’ll still be here with you. We’re a family.”

He squeezed their tiny shoulders and gave them a smile. A genuine smile. One that not many people ever had the privilege to see on the face of Orihara Izaya. “Family sticks together through everything, irrationally and without cause. That’s what makes a family so strong. They don’t need a reason to be together. They just need each other.” He whispered softly, closing his eyes and pressing his forehead
to both of theirs. “Do you understand, my darlings?”

He knew they were each only four, but they understood so much more than most kids their age. He prayed to god that they understood what he was saying to them now. Because he meant every word of it.

“Understand.” Kururi finally said, wrapping her arms tightly around her brother and hugging him. “We understand.” Mairu echoed her twin’s sentiment, squeezing Izaya from his other side.

Izaya held them both close to him for a few minutes, eyes closed and just feeling their little bodies pressed to his, their shaky shoulders slowly evening out as their tears stopped, and their tiny hearts slowing down to steady beating in their chests. Once they were calm, he pulled back and gave them another smile. “Now let’s all get to bed, okay? Big day at daycare tomorrow, right? You guys are presenting your project. You need sleep.” He said cheerfully, standing up and holding one hand of each twin, leading them towards the bedrooms upstairs.

The subject of their project cheered the twins up immensely, and they immediately began to chatter about their project and how hard they’d worked on it and how happy they were with it and so on. Well, Mairu did most of the chattering. Kururi added in a few words for emphasis here and there. But it was their way of speaking. It was his precious little sisters. He loved them more than life itself sometimes.

As he walked them to their rooms, he squeezed their tiny hands just the smallest bit. And he couldn’t be positive, it could be wishful thinking on his part, but he was pretty sure that they both squeezed back.

***

Shizuo was nervous when he went to school the next day. After one cutely awkward session with the flea, during which he was probably way more focused on the louse’s…lower area than he should have been, Shizuo had developed many confused feelings.

He’d watched the family movie after Izaya left, which was his mother’s favorite movie of “Titanic”, but he hadn’t been able to focus on the film as much as he usually could. Which was pretty bad considering he usually fell asleep about 45 minutes into the dang thing. He’d stared at the screen way too many times, his mind overlaying Izaya into the movie itself and oddly most of the time as the female protagonist, Rose. He drifted off at some point during the movie, probably around the party scene where Jack took Rose off to hang with the third class people, because he fell into a dream about taking Izaya dancing in a nightclub. The dream revolved prominently and distinctly around Izaya in a short black dress that hugged all of his feminine curves way too well.

He’d woke up with a start, accidentally knocking the popcorn out of his father’s hands right at one of the big romantic moments in the movie. His mother had glared daggers at him for interrupting “her number one ship in all of history”. The whole movie was literally nothing but those two making goo-goo eyes at each other and falling in love til the guy died at the end! There really wasn’t that big a problem with spoiling one of ten thousand romantic moments in the 3-hour film! At least not in Shizuo’s mind anyway. But did Shizuo have the authority of being mother of the household? No. No, he did not.

And after the riveting showing of “What Would Happen if Izaya snuck onto the Titanic”, Shizuo was finally allowed to go to bed. Not that it helped his state of mind much. This time, he was plagued by a rather disturbing dream about Izaya sitting in a tree and teaching a pack of squirrels how to read. Except for some reason (and Shizuo had no idea what the reason could be) he’d been naked while he did it.
He was picturing his tutor – who also happened to be his worst enemy – naked in a tree and teaching squirrels to read.

Shizuo decided upon waking that his father had probably slipped drugs into the popcorn to help keep himself awake during “Titanic”.

He knew his father didn’t do drugs, but it was the best thing he could come up with after a messed up night like that.

And today he was going to school, not only to face the music of class and see if the lesson he’d had yesterday was going to pay off, but also to see Izaya for the first time since yesterday. The first real Izaya, anyway. Instead of Izaya on the Titanic or Izaya cross-dressing in a club or Izaya sitting naked in a tree. He was thinking way too much about Izaya.

Would Izaya have been thinking about him? He’d acted all cute and shy right before leaving, what with the whole “call me Izaya-kun” scene that left Shizuo red in the face and hoping Izaya hadn’t seen him. But did that really mean that Izaya was going to be thinking about Shizuo just as confusingly as much as Shizuo seemed to be thinking about him?

Probably not.

And yet for some reason, Shizuo’s heart was full of an odd bout of hope as he glanced furtively around the halls, waiting to spot Izaya and see the evidence of a night spent thinking about Shizuo on the flea’s face.

But when he finally did see Izaya again that day, nothing of the sort happened.

The flea walked jauntily by Shizuo’s classroom when it was nearing lunchtime, as usual, but instead of a shy little smile or a fleeting glance with some kind of meaning to it, Izaya had flashed Shizuo his specialty smirk complete with demonic red eyes and annoying taunts that turned Shizuo’s vision red with rage in seconds.

He’d chased the flea, yelling bloody murder and throwing anything he could get his hands on, all around the school just like he always had. Right up until the point when Izaya slipped away, of course, escaping into the crowd of students that flooded out of the classrooms for lunch.

Which just left Shizuo even more damn confused than before.

The flea had been cute and awkward yesterday! He was sure of it! And they’d had some kind of moment at the end when they’d looked into each other’s eyes and Izaya had asked Shizuo to call him ‘Izaya-kun’. It had seemed like Izaya had warmed up to him, or at the very least liked him a little bit more than usual. But now he was back to the same routine of taunting Shizuo, calling him a monster, pissing him off, and slipping through his fingers like water. As though nothing had changed at all.

Shizuo slammed his locker shut at lunch, frustration and confusion making him even more irritable than normal as he stomped up the stairs towards the roof with his bento box. His mother had packed a bento today so Shizuo didn’t have to get a lunch tray – which he was glad of because the lunch food looked like shit this time – but even that saving grace couldn’t help his mood right now.

When he kicked open the door to the roof and sat down grumpily beside Kadota, wearing his own personal storm cloud, the level-headed boy looked at him in concern. “Something wrong, Shizuo?” Kadota asked calmly, looking his friend up and down. “You seem angrier than usual today.”

“Did Izaya-kun do something extra bad during your chase?” Shinra piped up, entering the roof area and skipping over to the two other boys. He grinned at Shizuo as he sat down beside him, looking
eagerly into his face. “I haven’t seen you this grumpy in quite a long time!” The crazy wannabe doctor chirped cheerfully. “He must have done something really really terrible!”

Kadota glared at Shinra in an effort to get him to shut up, then sighed as the doctor simply turned to his lunch and began happily munching away. Kadota looked up at Shizuo in concern again. “Did Izaya do something bad?” He asked carefully, knowing that mentioning Izaya was often a trigger for the blond.

Shizuo stared at the bento in his lap, thinking that the rice was a similar color to Izaya’s perfectly white skin. His tomatoes kinda reminded him of Izaya too, but they weren’t a deep enough shade of red to match the ruby orbs that were still glittering in his mind. Nothing could get Izaya out of his mind. Not even his food even though he was starving.

When Shizuo didn’t say anything and just kept staring at his food, Kadota’s concern for the blonde only grew. “Shizuo, are you feeling okay today? You’re not sick, are you?” He asked next, glancing at Shinra and wondering if this was the day that the crazy boy would finally get to practice his “doctor skills” on Shizuo.

The mention of sickness (and accompanying threat of Shinra’s presence) snapped Shizuo out of his daze. He looked over at Kadota and quickly waved his hands in front of him. “No! No, I’m not sick!” He swore, looking nervously behind him at the overly eager Shinra, who then looked put out by Shizuo’s denial of sickness.

Kadota simply nodded, taking another bite of his lunch, but still watching Shizuo out of the corner of his eye. “Well then what is it?” He asked next, and Shizuo looked back up at him.

Shizuo bit his lip, shifting nervously in place where he sat, and looked at his tomatoes again. Yeah. They weren’t red enough to be Izaya’s eyes.

“Um, I’ve been thinking…about things I don’t normally think about.” Shizuo said dumbly, not sure how else to open the conversation.

Kadota raised one eyebrow, but said nothing, waiting for Shizuo to continue at his own pace. Shinra, on the other hand, squealed in excitement. “Ooh! Did Shizuo-kun find a lucky girl at school to fit his secret desires?” He teased suggestively, elbowing Shizuo in the arm and wiggling his eyebrows with a wide grin. Shizuo glared at his friend and scooted a little bit away from him, closer to Kadota and farther from the crazy.

“No.” He said hotly, looking pointedly down at his food. “Not like that.”

Except it was like that, wasn’t it? But…but he’d still gotten mad earlier and felt that same old hate that he always felt for the flea! So it couldn’t be like that at all! He was so damn confused!

“Have you ever liked someone but hated their guts at the same time?” Shizuo finally blurted out, looking at Kadota more than Shinra (because everyone knew there was only one person that Shinra really liked). Kadota seemed surprised by the question but he thought about it carefully. “Well…” He said slowly. “I suppose if I was choosing someone I both liked and hated…then I guess Izaya.”

Shizuo felt his jaw drop as he stared at Kadota. “W-What?” He croaked out, eyes wide as he stared at his friend in shock. “Izaya?!”

Kadota sighed and ran a hand through his messy brown hair. “I know you wouldn’t understand, considering all you’re capable of feeling for the guy is hatred, but overall…I have to admit that I’ve seen Izaya a few times when he wasn’t being a manipulative bastard.”
Kadota stared out into space as though recalling those incidents vividly in his mind. “Like this one time early in the year, I saw him working the pet booth at the animal festival.”

Shizuo remembered that festival. It was one of the more fun events that their school had put on, in his opinion. A bunch of booths had been set up, each run by student volunteers, that celebrated animals in different ways. The pet booth was the really popular one that everyone wanted to be on because you were surrounded by adorable puppies, bunnies, and kittens. Literally all you had to do was play with them and help them get adopted. Everyone signed up for that booth, it seemed, but only a select few were allowed to work it. Naturally, Izaya had finagled his way into being one of those lucky few.

Shinra suddenly chimed into the story, jumping excitedly in place and nodding his head at Kadota. “Oh yeah! I remember that! Izaya-kun was in charge of the cat portion of the booth on the far side from the dogs. Like the way far side…you know, I don’t think he likes dogs very much…” As Shinra trailed off and drifted into a thoughtful side conversation with himself, Kadota took over the story again and Shizuo turned back to him.

“Izaya was with the cats, like Shinra said, and I happened to walk by and catch him working.” A soft smile passed over the level-headed boy’s face, and a look that could almost be described as fondness entered his eyes. “He was so cute when he was playing with them. He had this big goofy grin on his face, and he kept giggling and laughing as the cats climbed all over him. He gave them all names and played little games with them. Whenever someone came up to the booth to adopt one, Izaya would jump up and chatter away about the cats he thought would be good for them, talking about their personalities and such. He was really good at convincing people to take the cats home. And I remember that he always seemed so happy whenever someone promised to take one home to a good family and treat it with love and care.”

Kadota sighed and shook his head, tapping his fingers against his knee. “Izaya is a confusing guy.” He admitted, frowning a bit as he thought about it. “Sometimes he’s super cute and innocent, and I bet you ten to one he could pass for a shota, but then the rest of the time he’s annoying and trouble-making and a cold-hearted manipulator of everything around him.”

“Very true.” Shinra piped in once more, and both of the other occupants on the roof looked at the wannabe doctor to wait for him, Izaya’s only real friend, to speak. Shinra played with his food a bit before continuing what he had been saying. “I’ve known Izaya-kun since middle school. He’s always been that sort of bi-polar kind of guy. He’s rude and coldly intelligent and manipulative most of the time, but there are a few times in between where he seems like a totally different person. I think it’s when he’s allowed to lower his walls a bit that he shows the other side.”

“Lower his walls a bit?” Shizuo repeated curiously, trying to think about how that could apply to his situation with Izaya.

Shinra nodded. “Yeah. Izaya-kun is always on the defensive. He’s a fragile person. One that doesn’t understand humans the way we all do. I think that to him, emotions are something he was never able to allow in his life. They interfered with his thought process and messed with how he did things. They scared him, and so he locked them away.” Shinra waved his hand dramatically in the air as if to emphasize his point before continuing, with an almost sad smile on his face. “Izaya-kun can’t feel emotions like us, or rather, he won’t allow himself to feel the same things we do. He’ll let himself understand them, even study them so that he could emulate them if necessary, but he doesn’t allow himself to feel things like jealousy, extreme joy, excitement, sadness, regret, or love. To him, those emotions are a threat to his existence. His own heart is too fragile to carry them with him, and so he abandoned both it and the emotions that came with it altogether.”

Shinra looked over at Shizuo and Kadota, an unnaturally serious look on his face. “Izaya-kun gave
himself the personality of a “god” without personal attachment to the things around him because with
his intelligence and sharp perception of people, he was easily able to attribute himself in the lofty
position of a god. He could see into people’s minds, predict or control their reactions, and nothing
affected him unless he wanted it to. He claimed this to be akin to the state of a god, and so in his
mind, he’s become one. The manipulative, human-loving, distant god is what we all see on a daily
basis. But…” Shinra paused here, and the wind whistling around the roof made the moment even
more dramatic. Everything was silent as Kadota and Shizuo watched Shinra without a word. Finally,
when the pressure was so high that Shizuo thought he was gonna reach over and shake Shinra til
words came out, Shinra finished.

“When he lowers his defenses and doesn’t have to or doesn’t remember to separate himself from his
emotions, we see more of what he doesn’t allow himself to be. We see him acting cute or awkward
or scared or sweet, and it is those brief moments that remind me why I’m still friends with Izaya.”
Shinra smiled as he looked right into Shizuo’s gold eyes. “Because deep down, Izaya is human just
like the rest of us. And I think his human side isn’t half bad.”

After that conversation, all three boys simply returned to eating, each of them lost in their own
thoughts about the topic at hand. For Shizuo, the conversation had put several things into
perspective, even if not everything made sense.

For example, why had Izaya’s defenses been lowered in Shizuo’s home? He seemed more nervous
and scared than any other time Shizuo had ever seen him. Perhaps the strangeness of the situation
threw him off so much that he wasn’t able to keep the “god” persona in place. Maybe the friendliness
of Shizuo’s family had gotten to him and let him be a little more relaxed than he was at school. If his
defenses really had been lowered in Shizuo’s home though, and with those defenses down he’d
asked Shizuo to call him Izaya-kun, then maybe Izaya’s true self didn’t hate Shizuo as much as this
“god” version of him did. Maybe Izaya was just as confused about the situation as Shizuo. Heck, he
could be even more confused. He was practically two people in one tiny body.

Shizuo wondered how Izaya did that. How he faked who he was 24/7, to the point where even he
believed it was his true self. How he never let himself be who he was unless he was completely
thrown off or surrounded by something that he felt safe around. Shizuo wasn’t sure he could ever do
that. Izaya grappled with way too many concepts and scenarios and decisions that would probably
overheat Shizuo’s brain if he switched bodies with the flea for a day.
Like if Izaya was two different people at once…then which one was going to end up being the real
him? Which one was he going to turn into once he was let into the real world? Who was the real
Orihara Izaya? Did the small boy even know that himself?

Shizuo clutched his bento and looked back down at the not-quite-red-enough tomatoes still rolling
around in his box. He wasn’t sure what would happen with Izaya now that he had this new
perspective of him. But…if Izaya was going to keep switching between these personalities, maybe
he would be trying to decide which one was the real him. And maybe Shizuo could help him decide.

If Izaya became comfortable enough to lower his defenses with Shizuo in Shizuo’s home, perhaps he
could become comfortable with Shizuo in other places too. Maybe Shizuo could change their
relationship for good, and help Izaya for the better.

Heck, if the universe decided to stop screwing with him, he might even find a way to stop staring at
Izaya’s butt all the time once they were actual friends instead of “frenemies”. With that goal in mind, Shizuo looked determinedly at the tomatoes in his lunch and grabbed one
with his chopsticks. He held it up in the air, examining the weak red color of them, and thinking of
the tutoring session that he was going to have tonight. Izaya wasn’t going to be the only one giving
private lessons anymore. Shizuo would be teaching him how to be himself at the same time. How to
free himself.

Even if Izaya wasn’t aware of it.

Shizuo nodded and popped the tomato into his mouth, chewing with relish as he thought of what the evening would bring. He was ready. Whatever the universe had in store for him, he was going to be ready for it.

Chapter End Notes

So that was that! The next chapter brings us back to our wonderful dorks and the usual funny atmosphere of their interactions. I just thought I had to include a few of Izaya's troubles and insight into the characters here before I dove in deeper. Please comment below and let me know what you think and if you have any suggestions for what happens next!
Shizuo was not ready for Izaya walking in with what seemed to be an entire kitchen’s worth of baking utensils, a cute little apron that read “I LOVE HUMANS” (probably homemade), and an English grammar book big enough to make Shizuo’s ancestors cry for the threat of homework that was looming from it.

Shizuo gaped as the small boy marched over to the little study table, purpose in his eyes, and dumped it all on the poor piece of furniture with relish.

“Geez!” He breathed out once he had dumped it all down. He planted his hands on his hips and bent backwards, stretching his back like an old man who’d been hunched over for too long. “Do you know how hard it is to carry 15 baking utensils, an apron, and a grammar book on a packed train at rush hour? My god, I think the guys at the station didn’t want to let me on! I took up the space of about three me’s!”

Shizuo tried to stifle his laugh at Izaya’s form of “measurement”. He measured space in Izayas. Cute.

It was moments like those that reinforced Shizuo’s earlier decision to help Izaya find himself. He wanted Izaya to be like this more often, because he was fairly sure that the real Izaya was closer to this cute, innocent, but still mischievous person, than the vicious, backstabbing, manipulative jerk from school. He wanted Izaya to see that, too. And he wanted him to see the kind of human he could be, instead of the god he had forced himself to become.

But as honorable as Shizuo’s mental goals were, they wouldn’t exactly help him with the educational goals that Izaya seemed to have set out for him.

“Um, so what’s all this for?” Shizuo asked, eying the baking things skeptically and the book with fear. “I thought you were my tutor for core subjects, not home economics.”

Izaya rolled his ruby red eyes (god, Shizuo had missed those) and started arranging the tools on the table. “Ha ha, Shizu-chan. Very funny. We went over some history yesterday, right? Well I want to hit all the big subjects that you need help on first to see how you learn with each of them and try a bunch of learning tactics with you to see what works.”

Shizuo nodded slowly, his eyes still looking doubtfully at the materials Izaya had brought. “That makes sense but…one, what could the baking tools be for? And two, why did you bring an English grammar book? We’re Japanese.”
Izaya sighed, shaking his head with a mock look of pity in his eyes as he kept tidying up the table. “Poor poor Shizu-chan. No wonder the school is paying me to help the caveman.” He said sadly, and Shizuo was tempted to smack him over his cute little head. Or…

His eyes trailed down Izaya’s back to the generous curve at the base of his body once again, locking on the perfect appendage that he couldn’t seem to get out of his mind.

…Maybe he wanted to smack something else.

“…learn English as a second language because it is the language of business.” Izaya’s voice suddenly drifted into Shizuo’s mind and he realized that Izaya was explaining something to him. Oh crap.

He snapped his eyes up quickly to look at Izaya’s head, which was thankfully turned away from him as he put the finishing touches on his little baking set-up, stepping back and humming with approval before spinning around to face Shizuo.

“It is the most commonly spoken language around the world, it’s used in practically all business transactions, and it’s a required portion of our school curriculum.” Izaya finished, nodding once and picking up the massive grammar textbook, showing it to Shizuo. He tapped on the portion where it said “ENGLISH” in big and frightening letters of the English alphabet. What was with that loopy shit in the middle anyway? Who made a freaking spiral into a letter? What was it called…G? Ah, who cared.

“Are you listening to my reasoning, Shizu-chan?” Izaya demanded, his eyes glaring at Shizuo like he expected him to say otherwise.

Shizuo jumped in place and scratched the back of his head. “Uh, yes! Of course I am! Language of business. Commonly spoken. Uh…required by…our…our…”

“Our school curriculum.” Izaya finished for him, a bit of an amused look in his eyes despite the frown on his face. “It’s required by our school curriculum, protozoan. And I’m pretty sure you’re failing English, too.”

Shizuo groaned. “What am I not failing? That should be the real question here.” He muttered, huffing as he looked dejectedly at the neatly organized baking utensils spread among…index cards? Just what did Izaya have planned here?

Izaya giggled a little at Shizuo’s comment, and Shizuo felt something in his chest flutter a bit. What the heck was that? Cut it out, chest. Or lungs. Or whatever was messing with him at that moment in time. Odious flea, remember? Odious flea who needed to become less odious semi-human. Don’t get carried away, here.

Shizuo watched Izaya walk over to the table and grab the apron from where it lay, expertly slipping the loop over his head and tying the waist strings behind his back with nimble fingers, turning to face Shizuo when he was done. There was a beaming look on his face as he planted his hands on his hips, proudly showing Shizuo his baking apron. “Well? What do you think?” He chirped, gesturing at it.

Shizuo stared at the apron. It was surprisingly…pink. There were little flowers and hearts lining the edges of it that Shizuo hadn’t noticed before, and the lettering saying “I LOVE HUMANS” which he had thought was red earlier was actually a dark shade of hot pink. There was a big heart stamp right underneath, with the Kanji for “Orihara” spelled right in the middle of it. Definitely handmade and customized. Still strangely pink.
"I think it’s nice…but a little pink for my personal tastes.” Shizuo finally said, trying not to pay attention to the way the strings were pulling against Izaya’s waist and emphasizing his hourglass figure.

Izaya smiled at the comment and looked down at the apron himself, fingering the name “Orihara” with a fond look in his eyes. “Yeah…me and my sisters made this apron at one of the family night events for their daycare. They wanted to use pink, pink, and more pink and I was too tired to argue so I let them. I did all of the stitching and the actual sewing: they designed it.” He pointed proudly at the “I LOVE HUMANS” sewn right across his chest on the apron. “They even designed that phrase! Just for me! My sweet little angel-demons.”

There was a really happy look in Izaya’s eyes as he talked about his sisters, but it quickly faded when he turned back to face the table. “Right! So we’re gonna get started with the lesson. I leave here to be somewhere else by 7:30 just like last time, okay? But this time…I actually need to leave on time.”

Shizuo nodded hastily, readily agreeing to Izaya’s conditions, but his heart was pounding in his chest. Shizuo had probably been reading too much Sherlock Holmes the past few days, but at least it had helped him latch on to several pieces of information in Izaya’s speech just now.

Number one: Izaya had sisters. Shizuo had never heard Izaya even mention his family at school, so this in itself was a big shock and a huge step in the right direction for his plan to get Izaya to lower his defenses around Shizuo.

Number two: they were young. He’d said the apron was made at an event at his sisters’ daycare. Daycare was for kids four and under in this area of Japan at least, so his sisters had to be toddlers at the most. That said a lot about Izaya’s character at home that he probably didn’t show at school.

Number three: his sisters were smart. Now this wasn’t too surprising considering the level of intelligence of their older brother, but Izaya had specifically pointed out that the girls had designed the entire apron, even taking the care to plan out “I LOVE HUMANS” just for Izaya. No normal toddlers were that perceptive and considerate when designing things. Shizuo probably just would’ve splashed a bunch of paint handprints all over the cloth and called it good.

Number four: Izaya was family oriented. If he had attended family night at his sisters’ daycare, not to mention participated in the arts and crafts session with them, then he was highly focused on his family and highly devoted to his little sisters. Most brothers would probably not be willing to make a hot pink baking apron with their sisters, let alone wear it afterwards, but Izaya seemed to wear his with pride, happy that it was from his “sweet little angel-demons”.

Which led him to number five: Izaya adored his little sisters. He looked fondly at the childish apron he’d make with them, talked about them with a soft look in his eyes and a smile on his face, and spoke about them using endearing terms like “sweet” and “angels”. Yes, “demons” was mixed in there, too but that seemed to signify that Izaya was well aware that his sisters were not all pureness and delight, but had mischievous and unpleasant streaks within them as well. Yet he loved them anyway, and that added to the heavy evidence that he cared greatly for them.

And grand number six: Izaya baked. If not often, then at least in copious amounts when he did bake. There was flour caked on the edges of his apron, and the expert way he’d put it on spoke of him using the thing quite often. There was a bit of fraying at the points where his fingers would grab the strings and at the points where they tied together and rubbed up on each other. It was common for him to grab it and tie it on himself, then. And unless Izaya just liked modeling aprons in his spare time, the only reason for him to be doing that so often was to bake or cook. When Shizuo glanced at the huge number of baking utensils laid out ever so neatly on his table, he figured that it was a safe
bet that Izaya was cooking or baking.

From just a few seconds of conversation and observation, Shizuo had gleaned six facts about Orihara Izaya that he was willing to bet most people at his school would never dream of. Thank you, Sherlock Holmes.

“Okay Shizu-chan, are you ready?” Izaya looked up at him with a happy grin on his face, ruby eyes sparkling with eagerness to begin whatever lesson he had planned.

Shizuo felt that same flutter in his chest again at the happy look on Izaya’s pretty face. That was the look he wanted to see more often, instead of the “godly” one he put on at school.

Shizuo nodded, moving into place on the opposite side of the table from Izaya. “Yes I am, Izaya-kun. Let’s get started.”

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“He called me Izaya-kun! He actually called my name with a ‘kun’ at the end!”

Izaya happily picked up a wooden spoon and handed it to the confused-looking Shizuo with a barely suppressed giggle. Honestly, Shizu-chan got so confused so often. It was a wonder he wasn’t constantly getting lost at school and winding up in the wrong classroom. It was a good thing that they only had one classroom in Japanese schools. The teachers moved from room to room for them. Poor Shizu-chan would be like a lost puppy if he had to navigate between multiple classrooms.

Not that Izaya liked puppies at all. In fact, he quite hated them, and the species of dog in general. If ever asked, Izaya would deny being scared of them. He wasn’t scared at all! But if he was, he would have good reason to be! They were unpredictable, violent, gross, and overly physical creatures. And if there was one thing that could turn Izaya away from something in an instant, it was physical contact. He wasn’t comfortable with that sort of thing outside of his sisters and sometimes Shinra. The friendly nature of the Heiwajimas didn’t seem conducive to that ideal, however, and Izaya suspected that he would be subjected to far more physical contact in the near future.

But setting aside that problem for now, Izaya needed to turn his attention to the one at hand: teaching Shizuo English. English and languages in general weren’t things that could be learned with a bit of studying and a few assignments. They were different than most other classes in that they had to be reinvigorated with constant repetition and practice. Language doesn’t tend to stick right away in most brains: it needed to be repeatedly thought about and utilized. This was hard when you were in an environment that didn’t use the language you were learning. At school, you repeatedly used math and writing and science and history all throughout the day, and you used them at home sometimes as well. But with languages, how often did you go home to your parents speaking fluently in a foreign language that allowed you more contact with it? Language required vigorous, independent practice and study. Probably the reason that most kids hated language classes and just took whatever was required, then ditched the language entirely upon graduation.

Izaya was a little bit different in that aspect. He viewed it this way: language was like a code stamped on every human. It was their way of communicating; it was the definitive point of their culture. Even if you couldn’t read or write, chances were you could speak in your native tongue. The spoken word was one of the most powerful forms of manipulation and identification of information. To learn as much about his precious humans as possible, Izaya needed to learn their codes. He needed to be able to understand the ways they spoke and the strings that came with those preferences of speech.

This fascination with language had begun when a Russian exchange student had come to their school for a semester just last year. Izaya had been fascinated by the way the student could mutter
something under his breath with no one able to understand him, or would write little notes in his home language in the margins of his papers so he could translate it to Japanese later. He had his own way of doing things, and his own thoughts to go with them that no one else in the school could pinpoint or understand. Rather than treat it as an annoying barrier that prevented him from understanding one of his humans, Izaya had treated it like a learning opportunity. He’d asked the student to start teaching him Russian, and practiced it religiously on his own in his spare time.

He hid them from his sisters because of the violence so often involved, but he even had Russian movies that he sometimes watched at home to help him practice. Izaya wanted to learn the codes that others tried to keep hidden from him. And he found out that it was actually really fun. It was fun to be able to say things to people’s faces, and have them not understand a thing you were saying. It was fun to take notes on classes talking about how boring the teacher was, but have everybody think he was just a really smart, dutiful student. Izaya found this hidden knowledge to be a fantastic skill in his toolbox.

English was no different. Since it was used by so many people, it was the ideal code to learn next if he wanted to understand as many of his precious humans as possible. Izaya would never admit it, but he had a secret passion for learning English that went far beyond grammar lessons and drills in class. He liked reading the English books in the library, he liked watching English movies (particularly those from America), and he liked being able to walk up to all the tourists on the street and hold a conversation with them when no one else his age could. Plus, it boosted the amount that those tourists trusted him by about ninety percent. If you spoke someone’s language, if you knew their code, they gravitated towards you naturally.

For some reason, Izaya liked the idea of Shizuo learning the language as well. It wasn’t like he wanted Shizu-chan to be exactly like him or something along those lines, but the thought of being able to talk to the blonde secretly when no one else knew what they were saying was…exciting to say the least. For the first time ever, Izaya entertained the thought of sending little notes to Shizuo-chan’s class, using grammar concepts and vocabulary far beyond what the other students would know, and having a secret conversation that no one else could ever decipher. It was sort of like having a pen pal!

Sort of.

In any case, Shizu-chan also needed serious help in the English department. The principal had called Izaya to the front office today and let him take a look at the protozoan’s grades. That in itself had been surprising to Izaya (wasn’t there some kind of rule about showing around kids’ grades?) but the results that he was seeing on Shizu-chan’s report card was even more startling. There literally was not a single subject that Shizu-chan wasn’t failing. Even Home Language – the class where you read Japanese literature and learned how to analyze it and write it – was set with a solid ‘D’ right beside its name. This one surprised Izaya the most because he knew now that Shizuo liked to read. Not only that, but he read actual books and novels like Sherlock Holmes and mysteries by Kanae Minato or Keigo Higashino. Shizu-chan was smart when it came to his reading…so how could he be failing the one class that was all about reading?

Izaya shook his head to try and get himself out of his speculations on Shizu-chan. He was focusing on English right now. And he was pretty happy with the strategy he’d come up with to teach it to Shizuo.

“Okay, so here’s how I’m gonna help you with your English!” Izaya said happily, tossing Shizuo the huge grammar book with ease. Shizuo caught it one-handed (big showoff) and stared at it in absolute horror. “Do you want me to read this thing?” He asked with wide eyes, looking back up at Izaya with something akin to fear in his golden orbs. Wow. The guy could get hit by a truck and shake it
off like it happened to everyone, but give him a grammar book and he’s shaking in his boots.

Izaya would never understand Shizu-chan.

“No, you don’t have to read the whole thing,” Izaya told his pupil, rolling his eyes and shaking his head like the very notion was ridiculous. “That’s just a reference guide for you in case you need help during the activity.”

Shizuo’s ears almost seemed to perk up at that. “Activity?” He repeated, eyes flicking down to look at the neatly arranged baking utensils all over the study table. “What sort of activity?”

Izaya grinned. This was the fun part.

“English is like a recipe!” He declared, grabbing an empty bowl and a wooden spoon from the table. He tapped the bowl with the spoon to make sure he had Shizuo’s attention before he launched into his great spiel. “All languages are like recipes, actually, and you need to put their words together in the right formula in order to learn it and make it edible.”

He pointed out the index cards spread all over the table. They were set up in piles of ten, with eight piles total. “Each of these eight stacks is made up of ten different index cards. Each index card has an English word on it. And each stack of words falls under a different grammar rule category of English. Do you understand?”

When Izaya looked up at Shizuo’s face, the blank look in his eyes was enough to tell him that he was going to have to start at the very beginning. Izaya sighed and shook his head. “Okay, amoeba-brain. There are eight basic categories of English grammatical words. Two of them aren’t considered by some to be categories, but I consider them as such because they open up many more possibilities for your English than having just the main six.”

He jabbed the wooden spoon at the first stack up in the top left corner of the table. “This is a stack of nouns. A person, animal, place, thing, quality, idea, activity, or feeling. They can be singular, plural, or show possession.” He moved his spoon to the next pile, which was right of the nouns. “This is a stack of pronouns. Pronouns are words that take the place of a noun; typically things like ‘I’, ‘you’, or ‘they’.”

Izaya glanced up at Shizuo to see if the blonde was following along. A dim light had entered his golden eyes, and he was nodding slowly. Good. The light was dim, very dim, but still there. So at least Shizuo remembered some of these basic concepts from class.

He moved the spoon to the third stack. “This is a stack of verbs. Verbs show action and can stand on their own or link other words together. They can also be modified into present, past, and future tenses.”

Izaya now pointed to a row of cards below the first one, starting back over at the left under the nouns. “This is a stack of adjectives. Adjectives modify nouns or pronouns. Their only job is to describe the noun or pronoun, either by quantity, quality, or just details.”

He moved to the next pile over, trying to keep up a steady pace. “Here we have a stack of adverbs. Not to be confused with adjectives, adverbs modify verbs and tell us more about them, in either the way the verbs are being performed or reasons that caused the verbs.”

The next stack he moved to was going to be a bit complicated to describe. “This is a stack of something called prepositions. Prepositions show relationships between nouns and pronouns. They’re often used to show locations of nouns like with the words ‘beside’ or ‘in’ or ‘on’, but they
can be used to show time, direction, motion, manner, reason, or possession. They’re a little tricky to manipulate.”

He glanced at Shizuo to see if the guy was trying to run away yet. So far Shizuo seemed focused on what Izaya was saying. He was gritting his teeth and glaring at the cards like they had offended his mother, but he was squeezing his knees tightly and nodding slowly, clearly trying to reign in his temper and pay attention. No matter how frustrated he was getting with all these concepts being thrown at him, he was still trying. How admirable.

Izaya swiftly continued to the next stack, stopping his thoughts right there in their tracks. Nope. Not going down that road. Been there, done that. Never again.

“This is a stack of conjunctions. They’re pretty simple. They just connect two words or phrases. Like ‘and’, ‘but’, and ‘or’.”

He moved his spoon down to the two stacks that were all by themselves at the bottom of the table, separate from the grid-like layout of the first six.

“And these two stacks are the ones that I’m throwing in for you. Like I said, some people don’t consider them grammatical categories, but I do.” He said firmly, hoping Shizuo didn’t mind the extra work. He wanted Shizu-chan not only to pass his classes, but to excel in them as well. Learning these extra categories would definitely help shoot him up past the levels of the other students. Provided he worked hard enough to learn them of course.

Shizuo was nodding firmly, glaring at the cards as if daring them to show their faces. Izaya smiled at the hostility being directed at poor, innocent index cards. Oh well. It was cute, in its own monstrous way.

“Here is a stack of interjections. Interjections are words that display emotion. Things like ‘yahoo’ or ‘hurray’ or ‘uh-oh’ are all considered interjections.”

He moved to the final stack and finished up his brief lecture on grammar categories. “And this stack is a stack of articles. Articles are very useful, in my opinion. They’re the words ‘a’, ‘an’, and ‘the’. The first two are your indefinite articles and the third is English’s only definite article. There are only these three articles total, but they get skipped over quite often in classes teaching English. I have no idea why. They just aren’t deemed as important.”

Izaya leaned back and stood up straight, his lecture now finished, and gestured grandly over the table with his wooden spoon, bowl tucked into the little curve that his waist made right above his hip. “All of these grammar categories are known as parts of speech. What I’m going to have you do is select words from each stack and make a sentence with them by combining them. You have to follow the rules of grammar and make sure your sentences are all coherent.”

Shizuo’s eyes widened and his jaw dropped open when Izaya finally revealed his little activity. He stared at each stack of index cards like they were going to come out and bite him. “I have to make sentences using all of these?!” He asked in disbelief.

Izaya huffed at him and tapped the wooden spoon against his thigh. “Believe it or not, Shizu-chan, but you use these parts of speech frequently in every sentence you make.” He hummed for a bit, thinking about how to demonstrate that.

“Shizu-chan,” He finally said, his ruby eyes glittering with excitement. “Say a sentence. Any sentence at all.”
Shizuo looked confused and a little nervous at Izaya’s request but he scratched his head and tried to follow it. “Uh…my dog is jumping over the fence in the backyard, but he’s not really good at it and he keeps crashing into it instead of clearing it.” He said lamely, looking at Izaya with confused gold eyes.

Izaya grinned at him and pointed the spoon at him. “In just that sentence,” He began smoothly. “‘Uh’ is an interjection, ‘my’ is a pronoun, ‘dog’ is a noun, ‘jumping’ is a verb, ‘fence’ and ‘backyard’ are both nouns, ‘in’ is a preposition, ‘but’ is a conjunction, ‘he’ is another pronoun, ‘not really good’ is an adverbial phrase, ‘crashing’ is another verb, ‘instead’ is a conjunctive adverb, and ‘clearing’ is another verb. Plus, nearly every time you used ‘it’, you were using a noun and every time you used ‘the’, you were using an article.” Izaya finished smugly, throwing a smirk at his pupil as Shizuo gaped at him like he’s just grown a second head.

“In fact, the only part of speech you didn’t use was adjectives.” Izaya decided to add, placing the bowl in front of Shizuo but keeping the spoon for himself.

He looked at the blonde and the blonde kept staring at him. “How…how did you come up with all that stuff right there in that instant?!” Shizuo cried, shaking his head like it was impossible. “How can your brain possibly process all that without even seeing my sentence or something. Do you just hear words and go like ‘oh! That was a preposition!’?” He seemed at a loss for what to say beyond that, and he looked desperately at Izaya for an answer.

Izaya just shrugged. “Honestly, sometimes I do analyze sentences for grammatical points, but I normally just speak Japanese like the rest of you.” He told Shizuo, smiling a bit at how the blonde seemed to relax now that he knew Izaya wasn’t a total freak.

“These grammatical concepts are in every language across the world.” Izaya said next, adjusting his apron a bit since it had come a little loose during his speech. “But each language tends to organize them in very different ways. Here in Japan, we tend to organize our speech by putting bigger things first and working our way to more specific details. Like we’ll say the country, then the state or region, then the city, then the building and stuff like that. Time always goes after the subject, and particles tell us where each portion of the sentence is divided.”

Izaya looked Shizuo right in the eyes. “Trust me when I say that English is not like that at all.” He said in a warning tone. “In fact, it seems almost random.” He reached over and tapped the grammar book in Shizuo’s hands with a happy grin. “But lucky for you, you have that handy dandy grammar guide in case you screw up!” He chirped cheerfully, crossing his arms and grinning even wider at the poor boy across from him.

“So…let’s get cooking!”

Chapter End Notes

Aaaaaaaaand that's the end of that lovely tutoring intro! The next chapter will contain the actual, wonderful act of Shizu-chan attempting to practice English. Please let me know if I killed your brain too badly with this chapter! I apologize in advance if I did! I promise that there shouldn't be too many murderous spils from now on. Let me know if you have any idea for funky tutoring methods of your own! I have a few more, but I'm totally open for ideas! Thanks for reading! <3
“Hey Shizu-chan.”

“Yes?”

“Remember how I said you were trying to make a sentence that was edible?”

Shizuo growled under his breath but managed to get out a single, “Yes” through gritted teeth.

Izaya rocked back in his chair and sighed at the blonde. “Well right now, you’re making hockey pucks.” He said bluntly. “Not cookies.”

Shizuo slammed down the spatula he was using to move some of the index cards around on the table. He sent a fierce glare the flea’s way, but it didn’t even seem to faze the smaller boy who just shrugged and kept looking at the way Shizuo was arranging the index cards.

Shizuo looked helplessly down at all the stupid English letters swimming around on the table in front of him, some of them not even recognizable at this point, and some of the words way beyond him. He had no clue what to do, and the grammar book was open to the correct page but since the stupid thing was all in English, he couldn’t really use it for help.

“Am I even making burnt cookies?” He asked miserably, looking at Izaya with a little bit of hope.

Izaya shook his head. “Nope!” He said happily. “Just plastic circles of failure that even a blind, senile grandpa would be smart enough to avoid!”

Shizuo groaned and slammed his head on the table next, wondering how this was going to get him anywhere in class.

He felt a small hand patting the top of his head, surprisingly gentle considering who the hand belonged to. “Don’t worry, Shizu-chan. We’ll get through it.” Izaya’s voice promised, lulling and sweet like some seductive serpent. A serpent trying to get him to spell out sentences in English.

Shizuo managed to pull his head up, planting his chin on the table and looking at Izaya with squinted eyes. “Can I ask for help at all from the master baker? Since I’m only a poor little apprentice?” He asked, cocking his head a little bit at the red-eyed boy.

Izaya laughed at that, retracting his hand from Shizuo’s head and looking down at the index cards thoughtfully. “Well…I guess I can use words when you’re using the wrong utensil to move the
cards…” He said slowly, and Shizuo nodded gratefully. That didn’t sound like it would be a lot of help to someone who was just passing by, but Shizuo had picked up on a pattern of Izaya’s while trying this stupid activity.

He had been asked by his oh-so-wonderful tutor to use a different kind of utensil on each stack of cards (explaining why there were so many tools on the table) and Izaya had watched carefully each time Shizuo selected a tool, making this weird buzzer sound most of the time when he picked one up and tried to use it. Since he would buzz sometimes when Shizuo used it on other stacks, but remained silent when he used it for a certain one on the table, that led Shizuo to believe that there were certain utensils that corresponded with the parts of speech laid out on the table. At this point, all the index cards were mixed around somewhat, and Shizuo had lost track of which was which. If Izaya could tell him in words which ones were for nouns and prepositions and all that shit, then he’d have a much easier time trying his luck at making sentences.

Shizuo grabbed the spatula and moved it over to a random card, staring at the word on it in confusion. He think it said ‘I’, but he wasn’t totally sure. Then again, how many one letter words did English have? The only other one he could think of was ‘a’, and he at least had that letter memorized. So this one had to be ‘I’.

Hesitantly, he placed the spatula on top of the card and looked at Izaya.

“That spatula is for pronouns. You have selected a pronoun with it. Good job.” Izaya smiled, his ruby eyes glittering as he looked at Shizuo. Shizuo knew that it wasn’t such a big deal that he now knew ‘I’ was a pronoun and that the spatula was for other pronouns, but he couldn’t help but feel proud of himself when that happy smile came over Izaya’s face.

He looked down at the table and decided to use ‘I’ to start his next attempt at a sentence. He moved it to the bottom of the table and waited. Izaya sometimes buzzed when he selected words, meaning that Shizuo had picked the wrong thing to put in position, like a verb or a conjunction to start the sentence. According to the little things Izaya said here and there, it was okay to use those to start sentences sometimes, but only in specific situations and in later grammatical concepts. For now, he just wanted Shizuo to make independent clauses: full sentences that stood on their own.

When Izaya didn’t buzz or say anything, Shizuo sighed in relief and looked at the cards to try and find his next one.

It was hard to figure out which ones to pick since he couldn’t remember a few of the letters and he couldn’t read all the words. He frowned and grabbed a whisk, pointing it at a new word that he thought would go well after the ‘I’ and looked up at Izaya.

Izaya glanced at his card and shook his head. “The whisk is for verbs. You have selected a noun.” He said calmly, pointing at the letters on the card. “See? Sound it out. English isn’t phonetic all the time but you can still try to sound out basic words. C…A…T. What sound does ‘C’ make?”

Shizuo thought about it for a bit. “Kuh?” He asked helplessly, scratching the back of his head. But Izaya’s face lit up like a Christmas tree. “Exactly!” He said happily. “And ‘A’?”

Shizuo pursed his lips. “Ah (as in cat), or ah (as in caught), or ay (this one should be easy to tell)?” He tried. Izaya smiled once more. “Good, Shizu-chan! Your protozoan brain is catching on! So tell me the last one: ‘T’.”

Shizuo remembered this one. “Tuh.” He said flatly, and Izaya clapped his hands in delight. “Yep! Put those sounds together!”

Shizuo sounded it out first in his head, then said it out loud. “CAT.” He got out, hoping his pronunciation was decent. Izaya giggled. “Perfect! Do you remember what a ‘cat’ is?” He asked
cheerfully.

Shizuo thought some more, then the Japanese equivalent popped into his mind. “The opposite of a dog.” He said simply, moving the whisk to find something that would work in his sentence.

Izaya laughed at his “definition” and leaned back in his chair, crossing his arms and watching Shizuo with a happy look on his face.

Shizuo was surprised that Izaya was so happy, considering how slow this was going. He needed to sound stuff out and remember basic vocabulary from elementary school when they’d first been introduced to English. But…well, at least he was getting something done.

Shizuo began absently reading and moving cards around, changing utensils when Izaya told him to, and not even realizing it when the instructions and buzzing from his tutor suddenly came less and less, softer and softer, until he wasn’t saying anything at all. He didn’t notice Izaya smiling at him, red eyes reading the sentences Shizuo was making – coherent, plausible sentences – without any input from the small boy.

He just absently read the cards, somehow started to recall which parts of speech they were and pick up on their patterns, then moved them into place on the table. Finally, he had used all the cards. Shizuo set aside the whisk he’d been using (for the verb ‘running’) and looked at Izaya.

“Um…” He said awkwardly, scratching the back of his head. “I think I’m done.”

Izaya hopped out of his seat and walked over to Shizuo’s side of the table, reading the sentences once more with the intent of an English professor.

When he had finished reading them all, he turned to Shizuo with a big grin. “You did it!” The smaller boy laughed happily, throwing his arms around Shizuo and hugging him tightly. “You made a ton of independent sentences!”

Shizuo was stunned that Izaya had initiated physical contact. But…he wasn’t going to complain. Slowly, he wrapped his arms around the raven, trying not to blush as he held the tiny boy to him, the two just standing there in an embrace as Izaya chattered away about how next time they would practice actually speaking in English, but after trying math and science lessons of course.

Shizuo just nodded numbly along, his gold eyes skittering down Izaya’s back to land on…what seemed to be the main focus of his time these days. Gosh, why couldn’t he just keep his eyes to himself and away from that…perfect…oh so perfect butt.

Izaya just kept talking, his smooth arms wrapped securely around Shizuo’s neck, oblivious to his pupil’s inner struggle.

“…and then maybe we could go out on the streets together and practice talking to tourists!” The boy chirped happily, squeezing Shizuo’s neck a little in his excitement. “This is going to be so much fun!”

“Fun? This is fun to him?” Shizuo wondered in his head, but the bubbly happiness radiating from Izaya made him simply shrug and go along with it. He guessed it was kinda fun to know that he could make real sentences, ones that even Izaya approved of, and that was ten thousand times better than whatever he’d been doing before.

Oh right: guessing on the multiple choice quizzes and praying that the teacher didn’t call on him to read during class.
After a few more minutes of hugging, Shizuo felt someone’s eyes on his back and he turned his head, arms still wrapped around his tutor but head looking behind him. His father was standing there, watching the two of them with an incredulous expression on his face and a remote in his hand. Shizuo felt his face flush red and he quickly turned his head back around. “Um, Izaya-kun?” He cut in gently, interrupting Izaya’s happy babble of thoughts and plans.

“Hm? Yeah?” The smaller boy asked curiously, tilting his head and smiling at Shizuo as he pulled back a bit to allow Shizuo to look at his face. Shizuo felt his cheeks flush even more. God, he was too cute like this. Why was he so cute here, and so horrible at school? Oh well. All the more reason for Shizuo to try and push Izaya into being this version of himself rather than the other one.

“Uh…my dad is watching us.” He whispered, not sure what else to say. Izaya’s red eyes flickered over Shizuo’s shoulder and widened upon spotting the older man, body tensing a bit as he saw him. Quicker than Shizuo had ever seen him move before, Izaya dropped his arms from around Shizuo’s neck and hopped maybe three feet away, coughing nervously and looking anywhere but at Shizuo. His alabaster cheeks were tinged pink and he bit his lip nervously as his eyes went straight to the floor.

“I-I’m sorry.” He stammered, and Shizuo was overcome with the urge to hug him again.

“Hey! No problems here!” Shizuo’s dad said breezily, striding calmly into the room and glancing once at Shizuo with an expression Shizuo couldn’t read before turning his attention on Izaya. “I wanted to ask for your technical help again.” The man said miserably, scratching the back of his head sheepishly just like his son. “I can’t get the remote working.”

Izaya slowly looked up from the floor, glancing at Shizuo’s dad, then dropping his gaze to the remote. “Didn’t we just change the batteries on that thing?” The boy asked with a frown, tapping at the panel on the back of the remote that held the aforementioned power sources inside.

Shizuo’s dad’s eyes widened. “Oh my gosh! I forgot that the batteries I had you put in were the ones with only about half the juice left in them! We need to change them again!” He cried, dramatically rushing into the kitchen with a battle cry for batteries ringing out from his throat.

Shizuo was pretty certain that if he were to look at Izaya’s face right now, he would see an expression that said: “Why in the world would you even keep or have batteries with only half a charge?” A very good question, as it happened. The blonde sighed internally as he thought of his family. Man, he wished sometimes that he had a slightly normal family. It was like bringing a girl over and having her see the worst in his genes right off the bat.

Wait…no it was not like bringing a girl over! Not at all! Izaya wasn’t his…his boyfriend or anything like that. Neither of them was even gay! Though come to think of it…

The blonde glanced over nervously at Izaya, noting his feminine frame once more and watching as he carefully gathered the index cards up, moving them all into place with graceful motions and a gentle smile on his face.

Izaya did seem kind of girly. Could he be gay? Would Shizuo be surprised if he was? Was that something that Izaya would get around to telling Shizuo about if they kept having good sessions like this?

Izaya paused and seemed to notice Shizuo staring at him. He looked behind him in question, cocking his head in that same cute manner from earlier. “Something wrong?” He asked in a sweet voice, ruby eyes boring straight into Shizuo’s.
Shizuo quickly shook his head and looked the other way, embarrassed that he’d been caught staring. It wouldn’t help his chances of gaining Izaya’s friendship much, if Izaya thought he was being stalked or something. Then Shizuo glanced towards the kitchen and noticed his brother Kasuka, watching Izaya with a dead-pan expression without blinking at all. How long had he been standing there?

Shizuo sighed, shaking his head and scrubbing a hand over his face. Well, maybe it was already too late to convince Izaya he wasn’t being stalked.

He might as well just go over and help his tutor clean up. It was getting close to 7:20. He’d be leaving soon. For some reason, it made Shizuo just a bit sad as he walked over to help Izaya get ready to leave.

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Izaya was glad Shizu-chan was helping him pack everything. He’d only technically needed a few utensils – about eight – for the lesson today, but he’d brought extras just in case Shizuo’s temper got out of control and he accidentally started breaking some. Surprisingly, that had not happened at all, and so Izaya was leaving the Heiwajima household with all 15 cooking utensils perfectly intact.

Well…the spatula had a bit of a crack in the handle now from where Shizu-chan had slammed it into the table…but that was okay! He had plenty more spatulas at home. Izaya would never admit it aloud, but he loved cooking and baking. He did it all the time in order to feed himself and his sisters, but it was something that he actually enjoyed. Making bento was pretty fun as well, and he liked to arrange the foods in the form of his sisters’ favorite cartoon characters. It had been easier early on when they just watched puppet shows and stuff like that. Now that they were making the transition to anime, Izaya found his food arrangement skills being a bit more challenged. And the characters had to be perfect.

Honestly, has anyone besides him ever seen Mairu when her favorite space princess had the wrong color eyes and a single noodle in her hair out of place? It. Was. Not. Pretty.

“Ah, thank you for the help, Shizu-chan.” Izaya said, turning a bit to look at the protozoan out of the corner of his eye. “I really appreciate it.”

“Sure! No problem.” Shizuo said in a seemingly nervous voice, hastily putting a few more utensils in the messenger bag Izaya had brought them in. “Um, just say the word and I’ll help you with your tools. Whatever you bring over.” Shizuo’s face flushed red after the comment that he’d made. ‘I-I-I didn’t mean ‘your tools’ in a perverted way! I swear!’ He yelped, jumping back a bit from the bag and looking at Izaya with panic in his eyes.

Izaya just stared at the protozoan, feeling confusion swamp his mind. “Um…how are my ‘tools’ perverted?” He asked, cocking his head curiously to the side. Shizuo’s face was as red as a tomato.

What the heck was he thinking about? A tool was just a tool.

Izaya just stared at the protozoan, feeling confusion swamp his mind. “Um…how are my ‘tools’ perverted?” He asked, cocking his head curiously to the side. Shizuo’s face was as red as a tomato. What the heck was he thinking about? A tool was just a tool.

Shizuo looked the other way, coughing a bit as he raked a hand through his hair. “Uh, n-no reason. No reason at all.” He squeaked out, avoiding eye contact as he came back over to help Izaya pack the last few spoons and whisks.

Izaya stared at him for just a bit longer, wondering if he was feeling okay, before shrugging and holding the bag open so Shizuo could pack the last few things.

“Just slip them in the hole.” He said to Shizuo, and the bigger boy’s face turned a bright shade of red once again. The blonde stumbled backwards with wide eyes, coughing and muttering and squeaking
some unintelligible words out as his gold eyes kept flicking over to look at Izaya with panic and something else that Izaya couldn’t quite place.

Now Izaya was thoroughly confused. “What’s wrong with slipping something in a hole?” He asked, brow scrunched as he tried to figure out what could possibly be perverted about that comment. “It’s like… I dunno, burying treasure in the sand. People put things in holes all the time!”

Shizuo seemed to be choking now, staring at the ground and stammering a strange combination of “uh’s” and “um’s” and “well’s. Izaya frowned and wondered if he should walk over to the protozoan and take the spoon from his hand. It was the last thing and he was going to be late leaving if he didn’t finish packing soon.

“Look, Shizu-chan.” He started gently. “I don’t know what’s wrong with you but I really just need you to throw the spoon in my bag as soon as possible. I need to leave at 7:20 and it’s getting really close to that time. So can you just hurry over here, shove your spoon in my bag, and let me finish up here?”

Okay, now Izaya knew he’d said something seriously wrong. He just had no idea what.

Shizuo officially doubled over and hit the ground, eyes rolled to the back of his head like he had passed out.

“Shizu-chan!” Izaya yelped in horror, dropping his bag and running over to the collapsed protozoan. He hit the ground and slid on his knees over to the seemingly unconscious blonde, picking up his head and looking at his passed out face in concern.

“Oh god, what’s the rhyme again?” Izaya muttered frantically to himself, looking back and forth between Shizuo’s feet and head, trying to figure out which part of the protozoan’s body he should be lifting up to help revive him.

“Um…if he’s red raise the head, if he’s pale raise the tail!” Izaya yelped, grabbing Shizuo’s face in both hands and leaning down so he could examine it and figure out which color it was.

Damn the idiot! His cheeks were still slightly red from whatever thought he’d been having before passing out, but there were a few pale splotches here and there. Which one was it?! Red or pale?!

“Gah! Why do you have to be so difficult all the time?!” Izaya cried, grabbing his hair in frustration and letting Shizuo’s head drop and slam down on the ground. He winced and grabbed Shizuo’s head quickly, shuffling around until he was sitting comfortably on the ground and then laying the unconscious boy’s head in his lap.

Izaya looked nervously down at the monster’s sleeping face, tucked in between his thighs and free of confusion and frustration for once.

Hm. That was an interesting look on the protozoan.

Izaya peered curiously at the tranquil visage before him, noting how smooth Shizu-chan’s face looked when it wasn’t creased with wrinkles of rage and doubt. He looked nicer, far more peaceful than any self-respecting monster should ever look, and… calm. For once in his life, Izaya was seeing Shizuo totally calm.

“So… I guess you really passed out, then?” Izaya asked the passed out boy, brushing some of the blond strands of hair out of Shizuo’s face. “But why? What on earth did I say that was so perverted?”
“Say it again and maybe I can tell you.” A flat voice said from over to his left.

Izaya jumped in place and looked over with an alarmed expression, relaxing the tiniest bit when he recognized Creepy Stalker Boy, er, Kasuka-kun standing over there and watching him. Like yesterday, his face was completely devoid of emotion. What had he just asked? Oh right. For Izaya to repeat his so-called “perverted” phrase.

“How about no?” Izaya suggested, turning his gaze down to look at Shizuo again.

“Okay.” Kasuka-kun said with no emotion whatsoever. “Check if Nii-san’s nose is bleeding.”

“So they are brothers.” Izaya thought to himself, dutifully trying to glance at the bottom of Shizuo’s nose to check for blood. “They aren’t alike at all, though. Well…maybe a little bit in looks. Except for Shizu-chan has blond hair. And he’s got a super tall stature. And lean muscle. And gold eyes. And strong arms. And a kind smile and a warm laugh and-” Izaya cut himself off right there. No way he was going to let that keep going. Gosh, it was already scary how many good things Izaya could find about Shizuo’s appearance after only spending two (tentatively relaxed at best) evenings together. He doubted Shizuo was thinking this much about Izaya’s appearance. Probably didn’t even notice it at all.

“Dumb protozoan.” Izaya muttered aloud, swiping a finger under Shizuo’s nose and bringing it up to inspect it. There was indeed blood on it. Oh my goodness. Oh no. No no no no no!

Izaya looked at Kasuka urgently, fear in his red eyes. He felt his heart pounding in his chest and his blood surging through his veins, all accompanied by a rush of cold over his spine that he recognized instantly as terror.

“What’s wrong with my Shizu-chan? Is he alright? Have you gone to a hospital to get him diagnosed? Have you looked for treatments? Do you need money? What’s wrong with my Shizu-chan?!” Izaya screeched, each thing he asked smashed together in such rapid succession that he wasn’t even sure if the emotionless boy was catching any of it at all. He could feel his breath becoming quick and uneven as panic overtook him. Shizuo couldn’t have any kind of illness. He couldn’t! He was the indestructible Heiwajima Shizuo!

“What’s wrong with my Shizu-chan?!” Izaya demanded again, his red eyes flashing with rage as he cradled Shizuo’s head protectively in his arms.

Kasuka watched him for a bit, and something that was maybe the flicker of a smile passed over his impassive face. But then it was gone, replaced by the flat expression that he knew so well. “There is nothing wrong with Nii-san.” Kasuka said firmly. “He just passed out from perverted thoughts. Haven’t you seen that in anime? When the character gets so perverted that he gets a nosebleed and passes out?”

Izaya froze in shock, thinking about that possibility. They had been discussing apparently perverted things before Shizuo’s unfortunate collapse…could that be it?

“I’ve only seen that in anime!” Izaya protested, nervously brushing some more blond hair out of Shizuo’s face that had fallen into it at some point. “In some really questionable ones that I make my sisters stop watching immediately before changing the channel.”

“What are we changing the channel for?” Kichirou came out of the kitchen, remote in hand (and batteries presumably replaced – again), frowning at Izaya. He glanced down and saw Shizuo, passed out on the floor with his head on Izaya’s lap, and Izaya felt his face go red once more.
“U-Um, this isn’t what it looks like!” Izaya tried to say, waving his hands frantically in the air in front of him.

“Really? Because it looks like Shizuo passed out because he was thinking something perverted and you just put his head in your lap because you were concerned about his well-being.” Kichirou said cheerfully, crouching down and smiling at Izaya with warm eyes.

Izaya stared at the man, not looking away for a few seconds. “Okay.” He said finally. “It’s exactly what it looks like. I think.”

Kichirou laughed and grinned as he looked at Shizuo’s sleeping face. “Gee. Kasuka’s always been the closet pervert in this household. Who knew Shizuo had it in him, too?” He laughed again, patting his son’s cheek with a firm hand. “Shizuo. Shizuo, get up. You need to get off your poor friend here so he can leave on time today.” His father said, poking at Shizuo’s cheek and waiting for a response.

Izaya looked down as Shizuo started to grumble and move. He seemed like he was starting to push himself up a bit and Izaya got excited that he was going to get off…but then he just flopped over, pressing his face in between Izaya’s thighs and making no move to go anywhere else. “Ten more minutes.” The muffled voice came from in between Izaya’s legs.

Izaya felt his face blush red at the position Shizuo was now in. “Sh-Shizu-chan!” Izaya hissed, shoving at the blond head while his cheeks burned with embarrassment. “Get off me right now! I need to go! It’s,” He glanced at his watch and yelped, renewing his efforts to get Shizuo’s head off his lap. “It’s 7:22! I only have eight minutes to get to the train station!”

Shizuo grumbled something and pressed deeper in between Izaya’s legs, forcing them apart with his monster head and butting his forehead against Izaya’s crotch. Izaya’s face could probably cook an egg for the burning embarrassment that had overcome his cheeks. He leaned away from Shizuo and started bashing on his head with both his fists, red eyes squeezed tightly shut as he bashed away, hoping that maybe this would get the protozoan to get away from his…private area.

“Get off, protozoan! Amoeba-brain! Three-legged troglodyte! Caveman! Ruffian! Hooligan! Get off now!” He yelled, continuously hitting the hard head with his fists.

Kasuka was watching him in amusement, cocking his flat face to the side with that flicker smile ghosting over his lips for a few seconds. “Weren’t you all worried about him thirty seconds ago?” He asked in that same monotone, yet Izaya swore there was some mockery under those words.

He shot the younger boy a death glare, red eyes directed right at Shizuo’s little brother. “That was before he shoved his head in my crotch!” He argued, continuing to pound on Shizuo’s head. “Get off me, you pervert!”

Kichirou laughed at the sight – a tiny feminine boy bashing away at his inhumanly strong son’s head with no repercussions so far – and grabbed Izaya’s hands in the air, gently pushing them away. “Hey!” Izaya yelled in protest, sending his death glare the father’s way instead.

Kichirou grinned at him, warm eyes sparkling good-naturedly. “Relax. I’m just going to help you.” He promised, and Izaya wondered how this technologically-challenged man could possibly help.

But Kichirou surprised him, as it seemed all Heiwajimas were capable of doing, and bent down next to Shizuo’s ear, taking a deep breath before screaming right into it: “THIS IS YOUR FATHER SPEAKING! YOU WILL BE GROUNDED IF YOU DON’T GET OUT OF BED!”

At that message, Shizuo’s head suddenly popped up, his gold gaze looking around wildly as if
searching for the embodiment of groundment so that he could beat it up. Izaya took his chance and bolted up from his spot on the floor, quickly taking the spoon from Shizuo’s hands and throwing it into his bag, zipping it up in one smooth motion. He slung the bag over his shoulder, grabbed the English book and his coat, and yanked open the door once more to go running for the train station at full blast.

“Thank you, Kichirou-san!” He yelled right before dashing out into the wind.

“No problem, Izaya-chan! See you tomorrow!” The cheerful voice called after him, barely reaching Izaya’s ears through the wind.

Despite how cold it was as he ran for the station (the watch on his wrist telling him he had a whopping three minutes to make it there before the train left) he still felt extremely hot in the face and extremely warm right in the spot where Shizuo’s head had been just a few moments before. The protozoan sure gave off a lot of body heat. Izaya blushed as he thought of how close the monster’s head had been to his…nether regions. No one had been that close to him in that intimate a way since…

Izaya quickly drove that thought from his mind. No reminiscing on that right now. He had to get to the train station!

As Izaya ran, he couldn’t help but think of how much Shizuo seemed to like cuddling and physical contact, even though everyone was afraid of him. And then he thought of how he deplored any and all forms of touch or intimacy, even though everyone thought he was the cutest, most huggable thing ever. Yep. Shizuo was like a big snarling bulldog that was really some kind of puppy at heart, and Izaya was a cute little cat that still had its claws and knew how to use them.

Shizuo had been very right with his comment earlier during the grammar lesson.

A cat is the opposite of a dog.

Chapter End Notes

So now we know that Shizuo definitely has a problem! Or it could be the entire Heiwajima family, if we go off of Kasuka. In any case, important things are going to start happening in the next few chapters. I wonder if anyone caught the hint at what it involves...

So the reason this chapter is being posted a little later is that I had to take my little sister to the doctor’s office today since her stomach has been hurting for the last few days. Turns out: she has appendicitis! I took her to get an ultrasound and then to the operating room to get her appendix removed. I left her with my mom because I needed to turn in finals for school. I’m worried for her because it’s her first surgery and she has a phobia of medicine being injected into her. And medicine is kind of required before they take out a part of her body...

Fingers crossed that her surgery goes well. I’ll find out in a few hours.

As usual, thanks for reading and please let me know what you think!
The Cat Isn’t Wanted and the Dog Doesn’t Know What He Wants

Chapter Notes

Hi everybody! So first I have good news about my sister: her surgery went really well and she was able to come home the next day. Right now, she can’t walk on her own or sit up without assistance, and she can’t carry anything heavier than 10 pounds, so I’ve been helping her with going to the bathroom and getting her food and homework and such. She wants to go to school tomorrow and so we might have to borrow a wheelchair from the school nurse to push her around. I told her she could borrow my Izaya jacket and pretend she was Izaya after Ketsu.

T_T Still so sad about that...

Anyway, I also decided to release a Christmas one-shot for these characters instead of a Christmas chapter (after much deliberation) because it didn’t quite fit with the timeline. So be on the look-out for that on the 24th! Okay, and now into the story! <3

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

The day after the Great Incident of Perverseness, Izaya decided that he wanted to talk to an expert to see just what had made Shizuo go berserk over his comment about holes and spoons. So he needed to find an expert pervert that he could trust, who he knew would never be interested in him, but would still know everything there is to know about the art of perversion.

So he decided he would skip up to the roof today during lunch where he knew his one and only friend Kishitani Shinra ate every day.

He saw Shinra on the roof alone, eating his own bento happily between the occasional murmurs of ‘Celty’ that always seemed to be coming out of the lovestruck boy’s mouth.

Izaya grimaced a little as he watched his friend from behind. He knew that he was rarely welcome when he was not expected. Heck, half the time he was expected he wasn’t even welcome. Shinra was typically not an exception to that rule, even if he did seem to somewhat care about Izaya more than others did. They had a bit of an unspoken agreement that outside of class, they wouldn’t have contact. They sat next to each other in class, chatted and acted like friends in those hours, and then ignored each other’s existences for the rest of the day. It was something that Izaya preferred. Shinra didn’t ask questions or nose his way into Izaya’s life. And perhaps that was the reason that Izaya considered Shinra his only true friend. He understood boundaries and would never pry into something that was not meant to be looked at. For Izaya, this essentially meant his entire life outside of school. And while that was a hard thing to overlook for most people, Shinra could care less. He was focused 100% on Celty outside of school, and he had never once tried to ask Izaya any questions about anything else.

Izaya liked that about him. He really did. And so he felt extremely guilty about waltzing onto the roof like he belonged there just to shoot out a few questions that technically he could have asked in class. The thing was…he didn’t feel totally comfortable with asking those questions in front of the other members of his class.

He had seen the way some of the boys in class ogled him, despite knowing that he was a boy and knowing just how much of a “winning personality” he had. They didn’t care about that, oh no. They
only cared about looking right at his butt and whistling over the curves of his body. Izaya hated his body sometimes. It drew too much attention, and too much of the specific kind that he absolutely despised. If he started talking about perverted things or asking about perverted things in class, who even knew how that attention might spike.

Izaya was well-aware that there were a few rumors circulating the school about him and his love life. None of them were too terribly flattering, and none of them were accurate in the slightest. If he started talking about perverted things – even if it wasn’t intentional and it was simply because of some confusion from the day before – then even more false rumors could spread and that could seriously damage his somewhat anonymous persona. He’d become even more noticeable than he already was, and that was bad for observation. Gossip shed a limelight on a person that Izaya did not desire. So…he had to ask Shinra privately.

And the roof seemed like the best way to do it.

Izaya took a deep breath, planted a cocky grin on his face, and marched over to where Shinra was sitting on a small bench. Who put a bench on the roof? Oh well.

He hopped over the top of the bench and dropped down next to Shinra, plopping himself casually in the seat and staring out at the view from the roof, like it was totally normal for him to be there. Unfortunately, Shinra did not spare Izaya the trouble of explaining himself and play along. “Izaya?!” The aspiring doctor gasped in astonishment, pushing his glasses up to hide (in vain) the way his nervous eyes began darting all over the roof. Looking for something. Or someone. Interesting.

“How are you doing up here?” Shinra asked next, having not spotted the item of his interest and turning his shocked attention back on Izaya. Izaya sighed and turned his head to face Shinra, bat his eyelashes innocently and putting on a mask of purity over his ruby-eyed gaze. “Do I really need a reason to come visit my only friend at his lonely anime protagonist hangout spot on the roof?” He asked in the sweetest voice he could manage, giving Shinra a pouting lip, and locking his big, pitiful red eyes directly with his friend’s.

“Yes.” Shinra said bluntly, not falling for the act in the slightest bit. “I thought we had this unspoken thing where we don’t communicate outside of class.”

Hearing it out loud somehow caused a pang in Izaya’s chest. He knew it was true, and he’d expected as much…but it still hurt to hear it out loud. To hear that he wasn’t wanted.

“Yes, yes, I know that.” Izaya laughed, waving a hand in the air like it didn’t matter. “But I really need to ask your advice on something. And I do believe you would be the expert in the field that I am inquiring about.”

Shinra looked confused for a bit before slowly nodding, turning to face Izaya with a curious look in his eyes. He was probably only accepting Izaya’s presence out of sheer curiosity: out of wanting to know what in the world would make Izaya seek social interaction.

Izaya glanced around the roof for a bit, making sure they were alone, before stating his question. “How can you tell if something’s perverted?” He asked, stating it as plainly as he could without revealing details.

Shinra’s eyes seemed to bug out of his head, and the future doctor coughed in shock, choking on his own air as he tried to comprehend the unexpected question. Izaya patted his back, waiting for him to calm down and recover, red eyes locked on his friend’s choking face. “Wh-What makes you ask something like that?!” Shinra asked in shock, finally recovering enough air to speak as he turned his wide-eyed gaze on Izaya.
Izaya shrugged, and his finger slowly made its way up to his raven-black hair, twirling it absently. Shinra eyed his finger, still waiting for a response, but with a look of patience on his still-shocked face. They both knew that whereas many girls twirled their hair when they were flirting or lovestruck, Izaya twirled his whenever he was extremely nervous and had nothing else in his hands. Many of his habits came across as girly and feminine, but they really had different meanings than what most people associated them with. Shinra had come to learn a few of Izaya’s secret habits, such as this one, and so he waited as Izaya twirled his hair, to let the red-eyed boy gather his courage.

Finally, Izaya blew out a sigh and his hand dropped from his hair, falling instead to clutch his knee as he looked over at Shinra. “Apparently, I might have said something perverted yesterday.” Izaya tried to make it come across in a nonchalant way, like he didn’t really care about it, but the look on Shinra’s face said he knew Izaya was nervous about what he’d said. “And I want to know what was so perverted about it because I don’t want to say something else in that ballpark and cause the person I’m talking to to pass out again.”

Shinra’s eyebrows shot up. “You made a person pass out?” He asked in surprise. “Wow…that guy must have one, dirty mind. Or…” He tapped his lips thoughtfully. “You might just have one really pure mind and crappy luck with words.”

Izaya shrugged and felt his cheeks go a little red at the thought of Shizuo having dirty thoughts. About him of all people. “Maybe a combination of both.” He admitted, reaching up and twirling his hair again.

Shinra watched him curiously, noticing how fast Izaya’s finger was going around in his hair. He was really nervous about this, wasn’t he? It was odd for Izaya to let something affect his emotions this much. Maybe that was why he needed Shinra’s help. He wanted to prevent something like this that caused emotion from happening again.

“Well,” Shinra said, and Izaya’s head snapped up to look at him. The brunette looked thoughtful, but there was a bit of a smile on his face that told Izaya he was either up to something or thinking about Celty. Hm…you know what, it was probably both.

“Tell me what you said and I’ll help you figure it out.” Shinra told him, and Izaya felt his eyes light up with excitement. Thank goodness! He was going to be able to prevent this! Just as Izaya opened his mouth to tell Shinra all about it, the door to the roof opened again.

“…don’t know why you always have to grab every kind of milk that’s offered.” A deep voice was saying as its owner came onto the roof. “It’s just milk. And it took the lady ten more minutes to find the strawberry kind. Why did you need that so badly?”

“Milk is a necessity of life.” A gruff and slightly deeper voice retorted, the much taller owner of its voice also making its appearance on the roof. “And strawberry milk is the best kind.”

Both voices stopped abruptly and everything fell silent. Izaya didn’t need to look over to see why. He could recognize both of those voices from miles away. Particularly the one of the milk lover. After all…it was his pupil.

“Flea?” Shizuo asked in disbelief, his golden eyes locked on Izaya’s back and practically boring a hole into it with their intensity. “What the hell are you doing up here?!”

Oh, this was going to be interesting.
Shizuo stared at Izaya’s back more in shock than in true anger, mind stuck on figuring out any reasons that the flea could possibly have for being up on the roof. How was this fair?! He had literally just been in PE class, watching Izaya from a window in the gym he was in as the flea’s class practiced outside. And it wasn’t even him being stalkerish or creepy! His teacher always asked five kids in the PE class to watch the other class during practice so that they could analyze their strengths and weaknesses whenever Sports Day came around and crush them easier.

Just Shizuo’s luck, he happened to be picked for the ONE JOB that would have him watching Izaya’s class, for the ENTIRE HOUR that PE was going on, on the ONE DAY that Izaya’s class was practicing volleyball. Volleyball. With the school volleyball uniforms and everything. What did the volleyball uniforms look like? Oh they were fairly normal. Just long-sleeve jerseys with bright numbers on them and the school logo splayed across the chest, proudly declaring where they were from. Running shoes with grips on the bottom to help the agile players run across the grass where they were practicing. Knee pads for when they slid to the ground to save the ball.

Oh, and one more thing:

Skin-tight short shorts made of figure-outlining spandex in stark black that enunciated each and every curve of the lower regions of the wearer of said spandex.

Shizuo couldn’t decide if he hated or loved the universe in that excruciating hour of time.

Normally only the girls wore spandex, but this time the school apparently didn’t have enough shorts to go around for the boys, so Izaya ever so kindly volunteered to wear spandex short shorts. They ran barely six inches down his creamy white thighs, hugged the generous curve of his bottom, enunciated the smooth hourglass shape of his waist when compared to his butt, and apparently had eye-magnets in them because no one in the class could take their eyes off of Izaya’s ass.

He was working on a team of four other boys, against another team of five boys, but each and every one of those boys was too busy drooling over Izaya’s rear end to get anything done. Izaya was running frantically all over the grass, saving the volleyball and yelling at the others before he passed it to them, jumping and spiking it over the net, and all-around being the only guy actually playing the game in the whole class. Everyone else could only look down at Izaya’s lower half, even the guy who was serving the ball on the enemy team’s side. He served it so badly, it slammed right into the net. Izaya just stared at it and sighed, bending over to do a few stretches as he waited for the next guy on his side to serve it.

Unfortunately for Shizuo, Izaya’s back was to the window Shizuo was watching from, and so when he bent to do his stretches, he presented his perfect ass to Shizuo’s eyes, allowing the blonde to see each and every movement that the raven made.

The first stretch Izaya did was bending over, holding his thighs apart and placing his head on the ground to fully extend his legs. This gave Shizuo an excellent perspective of both Izaya’s smooth and leanly muscled legs as well as his perfectly toned butt for a good minute or two. Then Izaya stood up straight and twisted his upper half from side to side, moving his curvy upper body while keeping his perfect lower body right in place where Shizuo could stare at it. When Izaya was done with that (and the team was still not done setting up), he lifted one leg behind his head and stretched it, then lowered it and lifted the other leg, both actions giving Shizuo perspectives on the way his shorts rode up a bit, revealing more and more skin from his thighs with each tantalizing leg lift. And finally, Izaya settled for a good old-fashioned toe-touch regiment, leaning over and touching his toes, standing up straight again, then leaning back down, over and over, all with a very bored look on his annoyingly perfect face. Each time Izaya bent down to touch his toes, his ass stretched the tight spandex, the curves of his butt were plainly visible even from the second floor of the gym, and
Shizuo felt his mouth watering just a tiny bit. Then he would stand up, and bend over again, and Shizuo would feel his breath hitching with each unintentionally seductive display.

Eventually, the coach just pulled Izaya off the grass and relegated him to the bench for the remainder of the period. Izaya didn’t look happy about not being able to play, but the coach couldn’t get the other boys to play with him on the field. And as it was, whenever the pouting boy crossed one leg over the other and his sinfully short shorts rode up those thighs, the entire game would suddenly be paused as its players stared unabashedly at their teammate.

“Damn.” One of the boys sitting next to Shizuo had whispered, whistling at the raven down below them. “I had no idea Orihara-kun had such a…luxury seat in the back of his car, know what I’m saying?”

“Definitely got some junk in the trunk that I wouldn’t mind going through.” Another agreed eagerly, licking his lips as he stared down at the bored boy in question.

“Junk? Hell no, that’s buried treasure!” Another protested, and the other four boys readily supported the statement.

Shizuo felt a twitch in his forehead and the beginnings of anger rise up in his body. “Oi.” He growled, and the four other boys he was with all froze instantly, turning to look at him in fear. “Y-Yes?” One of them whimpered, gulping a little as Shizuo’s gold eyes locked on him immediately.

“Shut up!” Shizuo snarled, and they all jumped, scooting far as far away from him as they could and falling into total silence for the rest of the class.

It calmed Shizuo down somewhat, and he was pretty sure they attributed his anger to their mentioning of the flea. After all, normally just a single mention of Izaya was enough to piss him off. But this time his anger was stemming from something different. Shizuo wasn’t fully sure what but… he felt like he was jealous of hearing them talk about Izaya like that. He was angry at them for slandering him in that way. Something in him just wanted to shut them up, and get their eyes off the sexy raven sitting down there, oblivious to the comments being made about him.

This on-edge feeling persisted all the way until the end of PE, when their classes were finally released to go to lunch. Shizuo had been enormously grateful for the end of the torture and the opportunity to go to lunch and wipe his mind of the sight of Izaya’s perfect bottom wrapped in skin-tight spandex. It had taken a little longer than he thought to get through the lunch line; he ordered every kind of milk every day, and today the strawberry milk had run out before he’d gotten to the front of the line. He’d waited for the lunch lady to come back with some (which inclined Kadota to wait with him) and when the two had finally gotten everything they needed, they came up to the roof. They were about ten minutes later than they normally were, but that was okay. Shizuo was finally going to get to relax.

But then…this happened.

Izaya was right there! On the roof! Why was he here?!

“Shizu-chan.” Those tauntingly pink lips said, and a small smirk arranged itself on his face. “Well, well. I forgot that the beast was one of Shinra’s closest friends.”

Shizuo felt his teeth clench at the hurtful nickname that he had grown so accustomed to. Anger flared in his veins, despite whatever other feeling had been coursing through them earlier, and he clenched his fists into the food tray. He could feel the metal tray bending under his grasp, leaving finger indents in the poor tray, but he could hardly concentrate on that now.
“What do you want, flea?” He snarled, not trusting himself to walk towards Izaya just yet. He might grab the damn brat and hurl him off the roof.

“Me? Little innocent me?” Izaya asked in mock surprise, covering his mouth with his delicate fingers and smirking before turning around to face Shinra again. “None of your business!” He sang, waving a jaunty hand at Shizuo without even glancing at him. “I’ll be leaving once I’m done though, so don’t worry.”

Shizuo snarled again, and his eyes flickered down to their new favorite spot. Izaya’s butt was right there, much closer than it had been less than twenty minutes ago, and Shizuo was overcome with the urge to touch it. Now he definitely didn’t trust himself to walk over to Izaya. He might hurl the damn brat off the roof, yes, but he might also just turn the raven over his knee and spank his perfect ass. Which form of violence would get to the flea’s brain quicker? That was a question Shizuo wished he had the answer to.

“Just go away, flea. I’m sick of seeing your stupid face.” Shizuo growled, and he felt a warning hand land on his shoulder. Kadota, holding him back from attacking Izaya. Ha. If only he knew the inner struggle Shizuo was going through right now.

Izaya turned back just long enough to stick his tongue out at Shizuo and then he looked back at Shinra. “Don’t care! That’s your problem. Not mine.” He called sweetly, and Shizuo practically felt like his body was being pulled over there by magnets. The problem was that he didn’t know if he was going to attack Izaya or…something else.

“As I was saying, Shinra,” Izaya purred, ignoring Shizuo entirely now. Shizuo could see Shinra’s eyes looking nervously from him to Izaya, as though wondering when whatever delicate wall between them was going to break.

“I was talking to this person yesterday, and he passed out after I said something. Apparently the aforementioned something was perverted and I need you to tell me how, so I can avoid saying such things to this person in the future. Since he has such a dirty mind and all.” Izaya’s red eyes looked back at Shizuo, locking with his golden ones, and Shizuo felt his face flush red.

Oh shit.

He was talking about Shizuo.

And the mischievous glint in Izaya’s eyes told Shizuo that he did not intend to stop, either.

“So here’s what I said!” Izaya said cheerfully, looking back at Shinra and pointedly turning his back on Shizuo. Was he leaning forward intentionally? Was he trying to show off his ass? Or was Shizuo’s brain just really addled right now?

Shizuo dragged his eyes up from Izaya’s butt with a low growl, taking a single step in the direction of the flea and his friend. “Whoa, Shizuo.” Kadota said nervously, stepping in front of him and blocking his view of Izaya. “I know you hate the guy, but just let him get whatever advice he needs from Shinra and then go.”

Shizuo glanced down at Kadota, then leaned around him so he could glare at the flea.

“…shove his spoon in my bag.” Izaya was saying, making motions with his hands as if to explain what had been going on as he said these things. Shinra was watching Izaya with a shocked look on his face, as though he couldn’t believe how naïve his friend could be.

“And I told him to do it quickly, since we were short on time.” Izaya recalled, his eyes looking over
at Shizuo briefly before going back to Shinra. “Then the big pervert passed out, crashing on the floor like a tree in the forest, nosebleed and all. So…” He shrugged helplessly, and looked at Shinra with a hopeful look. “Can you tell me what on earth I said that was so wrong?”

Shizuo wasn’t sure if the look on Shinra’s face meant he was thinking about how to answer Izaya without corrupting his innocent mind, or whether he should run off the roof to end his pain.

The future doctor coughed a bit, glancing at the waiting Izaya, then looking back down at his lunch tray. “Ah…well…you see, Izaya…” He started, looking anywhere but at Izaya.

Then a light suddenly entered his eyes and he spun around to face the raven with enthusiasm.

“When a mommy and a daddy love each other very much,” He began, and Shizuo felt like the world was going to stop spinning.

“What the hell, Shinra?!” He roared, unable to stop himself as he took another two steps forward, eyes narrowed threateningly. “You’re starting all the way back there?! Just get this over with!”

“Calm down, Shizuo!” Kadota yelled, shoving on Shizuo’s chest in a vain attempt to push him back. It may not have worked to push the angry blonde back at all, but the pressure from Kadota’s hands did help remind Shizuo that he needed to just wait this out. Despite the fact that he was the pervert they were talking about.

Shinra looked in fear at Shizuo, noting the anger undoubtedly covering the blonde’s face, then back at Izaya, who looked rather impatient. “Just finish up!” Izaya told his friend, glaring at him with ruby eyes. “They love each other very much and then? How do spoons and bags work their way into there?”

Shinra gulped and scratched his head. “Uh…do you know how people get babies?” He asked Izaya, and the roof fell silent.

Izaya just stared at his friend. There was an awkward space of silence where everyone just seemed to be staring back and forth from Shinra to Izaya.

“Yes.” Izaya finally said, breaking the silence. “You find them at the convenience store in the baby section, pick one that looks just enough like you to pass as something with your genes, bring it to the counter, pay, and take it home.” He said sarcastically, rolling his eyes at the crazy boy in front of him. “And if you find a matching one in the street, what the hell! Grab that one too and call them twins!”

Before anyone could fully react to the clearly sarcastic statement, Izaya suddenly reached forward and grabbed Shinra’s shirt, bringing the doctor right into his face.

“But how do spoons and bags relate to that?!” He demanded, fire flashing in his eyes.

Shinra yelped at the murderous look in his friend’s eyes and waved his hands frantically in the air.

“Anything that can be represented as a, um, a phallic object can be taken into a perverted light!” Shinra said quickly, eyes darting all over the place like he was looking for a bolt hole. “So if it can be inserted into something else, then it can represent a…well…you know.”

Izaya seemed to ponder this concept for a moment, his brow scrunching as he thought long and hard. Finally, a light seemed to enter his ruby eyes and he looked down at Shinra excitedly. “Oh! I see! So when I said to shove his spoon in my bag, then that sounded like I was asking him to…” Izaya suddenly trailed off, his eyes slowly moving over to lock with Shizuō’s.
Shizuo just stared at the smaller boy, and the raven stared right back, neither one moving from their spots on the roof. A small dusting of red covered the alabaster cheeks as a blush entered Izaya’s face, and his red eyes widened the tiniest bit. Shizuo could feel his eyes straining to look down at his favorite part of Izaya’s body, but he kept them locked with the red orbs of his enemy, refusing to be the first one to break eye contact.

Even if it was super awkward.

“N-Not that I was!” Izaya suddenly screeched, and every other person on the roof jumped in fright at the unexpected shriek. Izaya reached a finger up into his hair and began twirling it, his finger moving in such a fast spiral that it looked like a blur. Holy cow. How fast could Izaya move?!

“I-I just wanted the spoon in the bag.” Izaya stammered, his eyes flicking from Shizuo to Shinra to Kadota to back to Shizuo like he wasn’t sure who he should be talking to. “And that was it! So, uh, c-clearly when I see the person again today, I should, um, t-t-tell him as much.” The red eyes flickered back over to look at Shizuo again, and Shizuo felt his own face growing red with embarrassment.

“Er, yeah! Just tell him that you didn’t mean it that way at all.” He found himself babbling out loud, getting swept up in Izaya’s panic.

Kadota and Shinra both looked at him in shock, stunned that he would say anything that could be remotely defined as supporting Izaya.

“Oh, I will!” Izaya shrieked in return, and the heads all turned to gape at him, equally stunned that he would accept support from Shizuo. “I’ll definitely tell him!”

“Great! I’m sure he’ll understand.” Shizuo bit out next, feeling the eyes back on him.

“Without a doubt! I totally agree!” Izaya babbled, still looking right into Shizuo’s eyes with a panicked and embarrassed expression.

“Fantastic.” Shizuo choked out.

“Marvelous!” Izaya responded.

“Wonderful.” Shizuo countered.

“S-Supercalifragilisticexpialidocious!” Izaya blurted, and the conversation halted in place.

Everyone stood frozen where they were. No one really knew what the hell was going on at that point. Not even the two boys who knew where the conversation had sprung from.

Everyone just stared at Izaya, the last person who had spoken, and waited for reality to catch up with them and force the universe to make sense again.

Out of nowhere, Izaya’s phone started to ring.

Everyone jumped again as the annoying clinging of old-fashioned telephone lines filled the air, practically sending Shizuo into cardiac arrest with the stress levels already high enough. Izaya fumbled around in his pocket, clearly grateful for the distraction, and hit answer on his phone, bringing it up to his ear before turning away from everyone else on the roof.

“Moshi moshi?” Izaya chirped, his voice somewhat normal, despite the red cheeks and panicked eyes that everyone present could plainly see. “Hm? Yes, I’m Izaya. Yes, that’s me.” Suddenly he
paused, and a strange look passed over his face. “I…see. No. No, they’ve been on the border of sickness for a while now.” He started to pace in a small circle on the roof, seemingly lost in the conversation that he was having on the phone. The red had faded from his cheeks, being replaced by his usual paleness, but worried creases were forming in his forehead.

Shizuo, Shinra, and Kadota all looked at each other, then back at Izaya. What was going on?

Izaya bit his lip, red eyes looking off the roof distantly as he listened to whatever the other person was telling him. “No, they won’t be able to come in. Ah…they’re…at work right now. Mm hm. Uh…not for a while.” He reached a finger up into his hair and began twirling it again, chewing away at his lip all the while.

Shizuo began to wonder if the hair twirling (which normally signified flirting, right?) meant something other than its usual connotation with Izaya. He also began to wonder if something was seriously wrong when Izaya’s face went from pale to pasty, and his eyes were filled with anxiety.

“Um…no! No, don’t trouble yourselves! I’ll come in. Yes. Yes, right now. Thank you for calling me. You have a nice day, too, ma’am.”

The nervous raven hung up and slipped the phone into his pocket, at last turning to look at the other three people on the roof staring at him. He was silent for a bit, red eyes unreadable, then he grabbed his backpack from where it had been next to Shinra and swung it over his back, giving them all a happy little salute. “Well, I’d best be off!” He sang in a cheerful voice, but somehow it sounded forced. “I’ve gotten my answers and I…I have somewhere I need to be so bye!”

He glanced briefly at Shinra. “Tell Sensei that I’ll be gone all afternoon, okay?” He asked.

Shinra looked confused and opened his mouth to say something, but Izaya quickly skipped away from him, past Kadota and Shizuo, and through the doorway to the roof without saying another word.

The three remaining boys stared after him, and Shizuo was even more confused than before. What was that phone call all about? Who had Izaya so worried?

Whatever it was, it must be extremely important for the flea to go rushing off like that without so much as an offhanded taunt to Shizuo.

Very important indeed.

Chapter End Notes

I feel so bad for Shizuo. He's having so many problems. But what could Izaya's problem be? No one knooooows!

:) Anyway, I'll release the next chapter on Wednesday like usual! See you then and thank you for reading! <3
The Cat Avoids Problems and the Dog Crashes into Them

Chapter Notes

Alright! So here's the next chapter! I just want to thank all of you real quick for the support you showed, not just for me but for my little sister as well. It seriously means a lot that you guys all sent get-well comments for her in the last few chapters. Thank you so much for that! <3  
Alright, and now we get to see what Izaya's big problem is! Dun dun duuuuh! Enjoy! :) 

Izaya hadn’t expected to get a call from his sisters’ daycare, telling him that the girls were very sick. They had seemed fine when he dropped them off this morning; maybe a bit clingier than usual but he attributed that to the new schedule he had with tutoring Shizuo that caused him to be gone for a few extra hours a day. They certainly hadn’t given any indication of stomach bugs or fevers. But now Mairu was reportedly throwing up nonstop in the bathroom and Kururi was laying in bed, miserable, with a 39 degree Celsius (about 102 degree Fahrenheit) fever. How had that happened?!

Izaya rushed out of Raijin, not even bothering to worry about the security guards yelling behind him about ditching class. It wasn’t like they could catch him anyway, and his sisters were far more important than sitting in a class listening to things that he already knew.

“I’m coming, girls.” Izaya muttered, red eyes locked ahead of him as he reached the gate ringing the school. He bent his legs and sprung off the ground, grabbing the top edge of the gate with his hands and swinging himself up and over it like a gymnast on a bar. He twisted in the air above the gate as he let go, landing gracefully on the other side and taking off in a direct run for the daycare.

It wasn’t far from Raijin, thankfully, otherwise Izaya never would have been able to take the girls there and get to school on time.

He dashed down the street, keeping an eye out for the low building with the colorful handprint on its roof that signified daycare. He was surprised to reach it in less than a minute (it usually took him at least ten to run to school from the daycare) but he was probably freaking out way more than he ever did when he was late to class, and adrenaline was probably helping to spur him along because of that. He briefly entertained the idea of what he looked like – probably a blur of black racing by like an evil version of the Flash – but worry for his sisters quickly overpowered his imagination, and he yanked open the door to the daycare, running inside.

The lady at the reception desk looked up when he charged over, jumping back in fright when he practically slammed into the little glass box she was hiding in, and panted heavily. “Orihara.” He breathed out, and a look of understanding entered her eyes. “Oh, you’re the brother!” She realized, and she stood up immediately, walking out from behind the desk.

“You got here fast.” She remarked, looking him up and down in amazement. “I thought high school was still in session.”

“Sensei let me out early because I’m ahead in everything.” Izaya lied, tapping his foot impatiently on the ground as he glanced in the direction of the back rooms where the children were. “Now can I see
“Oh of course!” The woman looked a little doubtful at Izaya’s reasoning for being here, but she led him to the back anyway, pushing open the door and revealing a cute little foam-padded room full of stuffed animals and toys and toddlers. There was scribbling in crayon on many of the walls, and the walls themselves were painted bright shades of green and yellow, with babyish blue and red furniture decorating the room itself. Multi-colored cabinets of drawing supplies and other gizmos were spread around the room, being raided by the older children, and the baby toys like rolling strollers and self-moving caterpillars were dominated by the younger ones. Several kids were chewing on their selected items of interest (including the crayons) and there were a few children getting into little fights over in the corners.

“They start so young.” Izaya thought, looking at one boy as he slammed his “opponent” into a foamy wall with relish. The other boy whined but kicked out at his attacker’s shins, lunging at him after he was freed and continuing the battle. Izaya wondered how long that had been going on.

“My sisters.” He said again, looking at the receptionist. “Where are they?”

“In the infirmary area.” She replied, glancing at him as she waved a nurse over. “We can’t exactly keep sick children in with all the other ones.”

Izaya’s eyes narrowed. “You quarantined my sisters?” He hissed, red eyes flashing in anger. The receptionist stepped back in fright, looking at Izaya in terror. “W-Well it’s standard procedure!” She yelped, flinching when a snarl rose up from Izaya’s throat.

“Calm down, Yumi-san.” A deep voice said gently from behind Izaya, and a strong hand patted his shoulder. “This is Orihara Izaya. He’s notorious here at the daycare for being overprotective of his sisters.”

“I am not overprotective!” Izaya snapped, spinning around to glare at whatever nurse had come over to patronize him. “Any person would be concerned if their relatives were quarantined!”

The man standing in front of him laughed, dark eyes sparkling warmly in a tanned face, white teeth shining as he smiled at Izaya. Izaya recognized him as Suzuki-san: one of the few male nurses in the daycare. Izaya would never admit it, but whenever he looked at the older man’s lean muscles and friendly face, taking into account his perfect brown hair and relaxed demeanor, he couldn’t help but feel a slight attraction to the guy. He was pretty hot.

“Any mother might be concerned, perhaps, but typical brothers don’t really care.” Suzuki-san pointed out, smiling at Izaya with something that could be described as fondness in his eyes. Izaya huffed and glared coldly at the man, crossing his arms indignantly.

“Suzuki-san, please take me to my sisters.” He snapped, ignoring the comment.

Suzuki-san laughed again, but gestured for Izaya to follow him as he waded through the sea of children and toys, heading for a door on the far side of the room.

Little kids watched the two of them as they walked by, and a few grabbed at Suzuki-san’s legs as he moved. “Su-zu!” One gurgled, tugging on his pants with a big, toothy grin. “Play!”

Suzuki-san bent down and smiled at the child, unlatching him from his pant leg and pushing him back a bit. “I’ll play in a bit, Chi-chan.” He promised, standing up and leading Izaya further again.
Izaya glanced at the small child, who looked at him next with inquisitive brown eyes, and grinned before latching onto Izaya’s leg next. Crap. He should not have made eye-contact.

“Pretty!” The kid said happily, squeezing Izaya’s leg tightly. “Pretty play? Pretty, play with me!”

Izaya winced a little at the kid’s tight grip (it was freakishly strong – was this kid related to Shizuo?!?) and glanced down at it with a bit of a queasy feeling in his stomach. He didn’t handle touching well, and this kid was all over his leg. “Um, no. Pretty can’t play right now.” Izaya said awkwardly, bending down to try and detach the child like he’d seen Suzuki-san do a few seconds before.

The kid pouted and squeezed Izaya’s leg tighter. “But Pretty is pretty! Pretty has to play!” It whined, rubbing its cheek all over Izaya’s leg. Izaya grimaced as the sweaty child rubbed all over his clean uniform. Dang it. To the Dry Cleaners again, it was.

“No. Pretty has to get to his sisters.” Izaya tried again, looking over at Suzuki-san to see if the man would help. But the male nurse was grinning at him in amusement, eyes sparkling as his crossed his arms and watched gleefully.

That bastard! Get over here and help him detach the demonic monkey!

“Pretty has sisters? Pretty can be my sister!” The kid gurgled next, somehow increasing its grip on his leg. Izaya could actually feel his leg going numb. This was getting concerning. “No. Pretty is a boy.” Izaya got out through gritted teeth, yanking on the kid’s shirt to try and pull him away. “Pretty can not be your sister because Pretty is the wrong gender for that!”

He heard Suzuki-san stifle a laugh at that comment, and he snapped his head up to glare at the stupid nurse.

“Please!” The kid whined, pulling on Izaya’s pants. “Pretty is nice and pretty! Pretty should be my sister!”

Izaya groaned and pulled on it again. “Pretty will not be your sister! Pretty wants his own sisters!” He growled, red eyes flashing dangerously, and thankfully not in the kid’s line of sight.

Izaya heard footsteps pattering over to them and glanced over to see one of the older kids watching him with a careful look. Izaya almost choked in shock at the size of this kid. He could pass for a freaking ten-year-old middle schooler! This was a four-year old, right? My god, what were they feeding this kids?!

“Um…hello.” Izaya responded slowly, looking the kid up and down. “May I…help you?”

The boy stared at him silently for a bit, then came forward and grabbed the small child clinging to Izaya’s leg.

“Noooo!” The smaller kid wailed, trying to retain his grip on Izaya’s leg, but the older boy smacked his hands away without a care and yanked the child off with ease. Izaya had been too worried about child abuse charges to smack the kid…but it looks like that rule didn’t apply if the kids were beating each other.

“I want to go back to Pretty!” The smaller child demanded, twisting in the grip of its older counterpart as it was dragged away. “Pretty doesn’t want you near him. Pretty wants to go.” The older child said calmly, looking up at Izaya with careful dark eyes. “Is Pretty going now?” He asked in that same calm voice.

Izaya stared at the kid, but finally nodded, getting up from where he’d been crouched on the ground
for a while now. “Yes! Thank you… small… child.” He said awkwardly, scooting over to the near-cackling Suzuki-san.

The boy nodded once and dragged the other kid away, kicking and screaming, over to the corner where Izaya realized he’d just been fighting some other boy. Apparently this kid wanted a new sparring partner.

Eesh. Was Shizu-chan like this back when he was young enough for daycare? Why did Izaya suddenly have an image of baby Shizu-chan dragging ten-year-old-sized children over into a corner to meet their demise?

“Small child?” Suzuki-san snickered from behind him. “That child is bigger than you!”

“Shut up!” Izaya snapped, turning to glare at the man. “I did not see you trying to help me, Suzuki-san! What’s up with that?” He demanded, stomping his foot to make his point. He probably seemed like more of a child than that silent gladiator of a toddler had, but he was frustrated.

Suzuki-san laughed at him again and turned around, opening the door he’d been standing in front of. “Anyone ever tell you that you’re great with kids?” He asked happily, shoving Izaya inside the room and pointedly ignoring his question.

Izaya huffed but chose to ignore this breach of conduct when he saw his two girls laying on small hospital beds in the back, moaning pitifully.

“Kuru-chan! Mai-chan!” Izaya cried, rushing over to their sides instantly.

Both girls lifted their tiny heads as he came running over, and small smiles crossed their identical faces. “Iza-nii…” Most-likely-Kururi whispered. “Iza-nii is here. Iza-nii came for us!” Most-likely-Mairu said happily, right before her face turned green and she whimpered pathetically.

One of the nurses in the back quickly ran over to her with a bucket and Mairu dutifully turned her head towards it, directing her vomit right into the bucket.

Izaya winced as he reached her, placing a gentle hand over the tiny one at her side, and doing the same to the sick Kururi on his other side. “It’s gonna be okay, girls. Iza-nii is here.” He whispered, heart aching as Kururi coughed miserably and Mairu threw her lunch up with equal emotion.

“They’ve been like this for an hour now.” Suzuki-san informed him, and Izaya directed a glance over his shoulder at the attractive nurse. The man’s grinning face had slipped into a frown, and his arms were crossed as he looked at Mairu in concern. “We kept them for a bit to see if it would go away, but since it didn’t… well, we can’t keep them here and we can’t leave them anywhere else. We needed someone to pick them up.”

Suzuki-san’s expression took on a bit of a guarded look as he directed it towards Izaya. “We were expecting the girls’ parents to answer our calls…” He said slowly, and Izaya felt his stomach drop where he was crouching. The intent behind Suzuki-san’s words was clear. He wanted to know why exactly the parents hadn’t been reached and why the older brother was the only one available to contact. He could tell something was up. It wasn’t normal for parents to be missing from the scene of their children’s care.

“Yes! Well, they’re probably at work.” Izaya said vaguely, looking back at his sisters and squeezing their hands with care. “I’m the one who usually comes to pick up the girls when stuff happens.”

“I know.” Suzuki-san said flatly, and the seriousness of his tone made Izaya flinch. “You’re also the one who drops them off. And comes to their events. And comes to the parent-teacher conferences.
And picks up when we call. And is the only one that the girls talk about, draw, or can even remotely describe when we do activities about our families.”

Izaya refused to look up at the man, but he could feel his gaze boring down into his shoulders without looking away. This guy was being too perceptive and nosy. This was not good.

“I’d like to know why.” Suzuki-san’s cool voice came. “And I would appreciate knowing now.”

Izaya froze at the commanding tone, knowing that the nurse was serious about figuring out where Izaya’s parents were. If the truth came out, nothing good would come of it. At best, his parents would be charged with minor child neglect and fined. At worst, they’d be flat-out jailed for continuous mistreatment and extreme neglect. In either case and any way in between, Izaya and his sisters were nearly guaranteed to be removed from Kyouko and Shirou’s custody and sent straight to Child Protective Services. They were all minors and the government would deem them incapable of caring for themselves – no matter that Izaya had been doing it since he was five – and they’d be placed in the foster care system.

Izaya was a teenager. Teenagers didn’t get adopted very often, and he would be fine with that. He knew how to take care of himself. But knowing him, he was pretty enough to attract some creepo’s attention and wind up as the legal son of a pedophile. Again, he didn’t care too much because he could just run away and live on his own. But his baby sisters…he couldn’t bear being separated from them, and he knew that twins were often separated and adopted into different families once they were in the care system. It would kill them if they were split up forever. They physically, mentally, and spiritually could not live without each other. And Izaya could not live without them in his life.

If they were sent to foster care, they’d never see each other again.

Izaya couldn’t let that happen, no matter how badly he wanted his parents called out on their “parenting”.

He turned around and faced Suzuki-san with a cheerful smile, letting the nurse see the carefree look on his face. “Our parents work all the time, Suzuki-san.” He said matter-of-factly, as though it was totally normal. “They both have very long day jobs and aren’t ever home until late at night. They trust me to take care of the girls since I’m in high school, and so I do. Mairu and Kururi are always asleep when they get home, so they don’t really know what Mom and Dad look like. It’s not a big deal. We’re still a very happy family!”

“Yeah right.” Izaya thought to himself, keeping the fake smile in place. “So happy that you drowned yourself in an endless stream of bad relationships and jerks to feel loved. Not to mention made rivals with the monster of the school for enjoyment and started sinking into gambling rings and teenage gang manipulation. Let’s not forget the unhealthy detachment from emotions and self-induced god complex. And the good times just keep coming!”

“We’re very happy as we are.” Izaya let himself say out loud. “Sure, we’re unorthodox, but there’s nothing to worry about.”

Suzuki-san did not look fully convinced. But all Izaya needed was for him to be placated right now. Convincing could come later. And thankfully, a distraction arrived right at that moment.

“Iza-nii.” Mairu said weakly, and her tiny hands both clasped around Izaya’s. “I’m better now. Let’s go home.”

Izaya looked down at his sister, noticing her green-tinged face and weak posture, but also the determination in her eyes and the small smile she forced on her face. She was learning to be strong in
the presence of others. What a good girl.

Izaya smiled at her and leaned down to kiss her forehead. “I understand, Mai-chan.” He said softly, looking deep into her eyes. “We can go home.” When he leaned in again to kiss the side of her head, he whispered in her ear, “And then you can sleep and rest up, okay? Iza-nii will take care of you.”

Some tears of happiness filled Mairu’s eyes and she nodded, slowly swinging her legs off the hospital bed.


Izaya turned to look at his other sister with a fond smile. “Yes, Kuru-chan. Iza-nii is taking you home.” He stroked her burning hot forehead and masked his face from showing the worry he felt when he realized how scalding she was. “You’re a very sick girl.” He said softly, leaning down to kiss her forehead. “But we’re gonna go home and fix that.”

Kururi simply nodded, copying her sister’s movements and sliding slowly out of her own hospital bed.

When the two twins were standing shakily on their feet, they held their arms out pointedly at Izaya, looking up at him with tired brown eyes. They’d gotten out of bed but it looked like anything else was beyond them. That didn’t matter so much to Izaya. He was still very proud of their strength.

“Alright, girls. Let’s go home.” Izaya said gently, scooping up both twins, one in each arm, and turning to leave the daycare.

The twins were getting really heavy now, and he could barely hold both at once, but he absolutely refused to drop one of his precious angels. He would suffer the burn and take them all the way home himself.

When Mairu shifted and a sharp bolt of fiery pain shot up his arm, Izaya winced and tried to resettle the girl to cause himself a little less pain. The burning was still there when he was done – his arm already being strained – but it was a considerably smaller amount. It was going to be hurting the entire time he carried the two girls on the forty-minute walk home.

…

He was also taking the train home. Did he mention that?

“Izaya.” Suzuki-san’s voice called as Izaya tried to leave the room. He froze in place and slowly turned around, meeting the older man’s worried gaze with a cheerful grin. “Yes, Suzuki-san?” He asked innocently, batting his eyelashes at the nurse.


Izaya just looked right back at him, not saying anything.

Then he turned and left the room, giving only the sharp lines of his back as an answer.

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Shizuo was worried about Izaya. He’d left in such a hurry at lunch, and he hadn’t come back to school after that, according to Shinra. Was something wrong? Was he even going to be here tonight? Come to think of it, did Shizuo have Izaya’s phone number to call him in case he had questions or if something like this happened and he needed to contact his gorgeou-er, his helpful tutor?
Shizuo quickly checked his own phone and realized that no, no he did not. Just great. Just FANTASTIC!

“Nii-san. Please relax. You are burning a hole in the carpet.” The calm voice of Kasuka broke into Shizuo’s thoughts, causing the blonde’s head to snap over and look at his much smaller brother.

“Oh. Sorry, Kasuka.” Shizuo muttered, moving over to the chairs where he and Izaya normally sat and plopping down in one of them, huffing to himself as his mind started to wander into Worryland again.

Kasuka watched him for a bit, not saying anything in that usual wordless manner of his, before silently heading over to him and taking the seat across from him.

“Nii-san.” He said in that same flat voice, once again dragging Shizuo’s head to look up at him.

“Uh, yeah?” Shizuo asked in confusion, wondering why Kasuka was being so abnormally…social today. Normally, the boy would say something, just enough to calm Shizuo down, and split. But today it looked like he wanted to talk about something else as well.

“I have some important questions for you.” The serious boy said, confirming Shizuo’s (still rather confusing) suspicions. But confusing as his motives were, Shizuo simply nodded. If Kasuka was depending on him for something for once, then as the older brother he had to help in whatever way he could. “Shoot.” Shizuo told Kasuka, getting comfortable and secure in his chair so he could better pay attention to Kasuka’s questions.

Kasuka nodded once before looking Shizuo right in the eyes, completely unflinching, and asking: “In your opinion, what’s the best way to screw a boy?”

Shizuo thought he was dying.

His eyes bugged out of his head and his lungs tried to jump out of his chest as a violent coughing fit overtook him, and the vicious banging he was doing to his own chest didn’t seem to be helping. Air burned when he tried to suck it in, and shock was preventing him from effectively sucking in new bouts of air, anyway. He fell right out of the chair, tumbling to the ground as he coughed and choked and gasped in shock like a dying fish on land. Turns out, getting secure in his chair was totally pointless against the “20 Questions Shizuo Never Thought He Would Have to Answer” game. Had he actually heard right?! Did his own precious brother just ask about the best way to…to…

Shizuo heaved himself up onto his knees, leaning against the table, gold eyes bugged out as he openly gaped at his younger brother. “W-What did you just ask?” The older boy croaked out, not trusting himself to climb into the chair just yet in case he took another tumble of shock.

Kasuka stared right at him again. “The best way to screw a boy.” He said simply. “To have intimate relations with one. If you want, I could use the term “fucking”. In your opinion, what’s the best way to do it?”

Shizuo felt his cheeks flush red at the brazen comment. Where exactly was his little brother going with this?! The best way to…do that to a boy? Why on earth would Shizuo know that?!

“W-Why would you ask me that?” Shizuo forced out, hoping his voice wasn’t cracking (like his reality) as he climbed back into his chair. He clutched the table tightly, hoping that it would somehow keep him from tumbling again, in case Kasuka said something else that was thoroughly disturbing.

Kasuka hummed at this, and he tapped one finger on the table before responding. “I suppose because
you are the one who brought my potential lover into the house.” He said calmly. “I assumed that you
must have an opinion of some kind, or else you would not have been as focused on his butt as you
were.”

Shizuo felt like the veins in his face were going to burst from too much blood pounding through
them. He gripped the table so hard that his fingers snapped right through the wood, giving him nice
little fistfuls of table.

“P-P-P-P-P-P-Potential l-l-l-lover?” Shizuo squeaked out, his mind flashing to the only person he had
ever brought home. “Do you mean Izaya?!”

Kasuka cocked his head in a flat show of curiosity. “Yes. You didn’t stare at anyone else’s butt, did
you?” He asked bluntly.

Shizuo gulped and scratched his head nervously as he tried to think up an answer to that. The
embarrassment was killing him! Was he really that obvious when he stared?! Izaya hadn’t seemed to
notice…and hang on! How long had Kasuka been watching them study?!

“How-” Shizuo started to say but Kasuka cut him off.

“How-” Shizuo started to say but Kasuka cut him off.

“Is it through the butt?” He asked calmly, head still cocked in that emotionless curiosity position. “Is
that why you were staring at it? That would make sense. Hm…yes, I think I would like to fuck
Izaya’s ass anyway.”

Shizuo almost passed out at that comment.

“How-” Shizuo started to say but Kasuka cut him off.

“H-Huh?!” He screeched, gold eyes blasted wide as he gaped at his brother. “Y-Y-You can’t do
that!”

Kasuka looked at him, the same emotionless face as always firmly in place. “Why not?” He asked. “I
like him. He has a nice butt. And if you say that the best way with a boy is through the butt, then-”

“It’s not through the butt!” Shizuo practically yelled, jumping up in place, face hot with
embarrassment as he knocked his chair over in the passionate surge to his feet. “Y-Y-You aren’t
supposed to just…f-fuck a guy right after you meet him!” He stammered out, fists clenching so hard
that he demolished the table pieces he’d forgotten were still in his hands. “You have to g-get to know
him first! Get him to like you! Find out w-what he likes! You know? That sort of thing!” He felt so
awkward telling all this to his little brother. It wasn’t like he was a love expert or anything. Heck,
he’d never even had a girlfriend before! But…but at least he had morals and standards. He hoped
Kasuka could follow those.

Kasuka looked a little thoughtful at that. “I see.” He finally said, standing up from the table and
bowing to his older brother. “Thank you, Nii-san. I shall take your advice into account and save my
further questions for later.” So saying, Kasuka disappeared out of the room, leaving a red-faced
Shizuo standing in a cloud of embarrassment all on his own.

Today…today was a day of shame, wasn’t it?

Suddenly, there was a weak knock on the front door.

Shizuo felt his heart leap as he ran over to it, flinging it open before he even checked to see what it
was through the peephole in the door. He could’ve just opened the door to let in a serial killer and he
would never have known.

But standing on the other side of the door was a very beautiful, very tired-looking Orihara Izaya.
He seemed a little weak as he stood in place, breathing a little heavier than normal, and a bit of sweat beading the corners of his head, like he’d just been hard at work with something stressful before heading over. He looked up with those glittering ruby eyes and smiled gently at Shizuo. That smile alone melted Shizuo right where he stood. He’d never seen anything more lovely in his entire life.

“Hi. Can I come in, Shizu-chan?” Izaya asked in a quieter voice than normal, eyes flicking over Shizuo’s shoulder to glance longingly inside. Oh crap! It was all windy and cold out there and Shizuo was just standing here gawking as Izaya stood there patiently.

“Oh! Uh, yeah! Yeah come on in, Izaya-kun.” Shizuo awkwardly moved to the side of the doorway, pausing for a few seconds as Izaya entered the house, letting his eyes flick down to look at…well, what he always seemed to be looking at these days. Izaya bent over, taking his shoes off and setting them down in the entryway, oblivious to Shizuo’s admiring, and reminding Shizuo of the stretches he’d witnessed just that morning from the very same flea. Oh, he needed to put some space between the two of them before he did something really stupid. Especially after that…conversation with his brother.

Shizuo quickly moved out from behind Izaya and headed over to the study table to pretend he was checking it and getting it set up, listening to Izaya as the smaller boy slipped out of his coat and hung it on the rack by the doorway. Shizuo’s eyes landed on the chunks missing from the table and he winced, looking guiltily at the bits of table dust on his hands. Maybe Izaya wouldn’t notice.

“Gah!”

Shizuo heard Izaya yelp from behind him and he spun around in a flash, heart pounding as he tried to figure out what had startled his enemy. He nearly fell where he stood when he saw what it was.

“Hello, Izaya-chan. Welcome back.” Kasuka said flatly, standing barely six inches from Izaya and looking him right in the eyes.

Izaya had a hand over his chest like he’d nearly had a heart attack from Kasuka’s sudden appearance, but he blew out a huge sigh and bent over to collect the books he’d dropped to the ground. “Ah, thank you, Kasuka-kun.” The raven said carefully, clutching his books tightly as he stood up again, watching the emotionless boy with a wary look in his red eyes. “It’s nice to be back…although I will be coming here every school night now…you know that, right?”

Kasuka nodded once and pulled something from behind his back that Shizuo hadn’t even noticed up to this point. He noted the pleasant fragrance that drifted his way when Kasuka revealed his hidden present, and the soft colors that complimented each other so well within the gift itself. This wasn’t real. It just couldn’t be real.

Izaya gaped at the offered bouquet of red roses and chrysanthemums, his own equally red eyes widening in shock at the unexpected gesture.

“Please take them. They are to show my affections.” Kasuka said simply, and Izaya’s gaze slowly looked up to stare at him, then back down at the flowers. “Um…thank you…very much…” Izaya said awkwardly, accepting the bouquet with a tiny, nervous smile. He looked like he wanted to bolt so badly.

“Red roses symbolize love.” Kasuka said, interrupting Shizuo’s appraisement of Izaya’s discomfort levels. “And red chrysanthemums symbolize heated passion. I have both for you, so there you are. I will give you another gift tomorrow.” He gave a small wave, then turned and left the room, leaving Izaya to stare after him in total shock.
There was silence for a few seconds as neither one of the room’s occupants moved. Izaya slowly looked back down at the bright red flowers, and then over at Shizuo, his face a little queasy. “Um… your brother…” The raven began, his eyes flicking in the direction that Kasuka had gone. “He’s… quite a forward little guy, isn’t he?”

“Uh,” Shizuo scratched his head and thought about the blunt question Kasuka had posed to him not even fifteen minutes ago. “You could say that.” He agreed, hoping Izaya wouldn’t ask him to elaborate.

Thankfully, Izaya just nodded and walked over to Shizuo at the table, setting his books down on the table and carefully putting the bouquet down beside them. He looked at the bouquet once more like he couldn’t believe it was real. “I’ve…never gotten flowers before.” He said aloud, eyes wide as he looked at them.

Shizuo immediately felt something protective surge up in him at the comment. “It was my idea!” He blurted out, cheeks burning red once Izaya’s attention was placed on him. “I, uh, told him to get to know people and be nice to them before trying…anything else.” He mumbled, ducking his head down as foolishness overtook him. God, why did he even open his mouth?

Izaya was silent for a bit, and Shizuo was sure there was about to be some mocking comment about old-fashioned morals coming any second, but nothing came.

Finally, a gentle hand patted Shizuo’s head. “That was really sweet of you.” Izaya’s soft voice came, and Shizuo could picture the tiny smile he’d given at the door right there on his perfect lips. “I agree…and also I guess…thank you for the flowers, Shizu-chan.”

Shizuo felt his heart leap at Izaya’s words. He’d thanked him for the flowers. He hadn’t even bought the dang flowers. But he was being thanked for it.

“Ha! Take that, Kasuka!” Shizuo thought victoriously in his head. “I just stole your brownie points from Izaya.”

Then he froze at his own train of thought. Oh no. Was he seriously entering a love triangle with his enemy and his brother? His mortal enemy and his precious brother?!

Why was his life so screwed up?

“Let’s get started on today’s lesson, Shizu-chan.” Izaya’s voice dragged him out of his thoughts and Shizuo noticed a small bundle of clothing set beside the books Izaya had brought that he hadn’t noticed before as the raven reached down to pick it up.

The smaller boy turned to look at Shizuo with a mischievous glitter in his ruby eyes that made Shizuo’s stomach do a flip-flop. From excitement or fear, he wasn’t sure.

“Is there a bathroom to change in?” Izaya asked innocently, although the look in those eyes was far from innocent. “Today we’re doing math. And since I’m a little tired, I’m going to be teaching you in a special way.”

Shizuo was almost terrified to ask, but he glanced at the bundle of clothing in Izaya’s arms, noting a material that looked dangerously similar to spandex, and gulped as he turned back to Izaya. “What kind of “special way” could be used to teach math?” The blonde asked weakly, and the grin that spread over Izaya’s pretty face didn’t help him at all.

“Why, yoga of course!” Izaya chirped happily. “You get to see me contort my body while clad in skin-tight spandex and nothing else! Lucky you! Hardly anyone gets to see that!”
Shizuo stared at his happy, oblivious, sexy tutor and wondered the same question he had that morning during PE: did he hate the universe or love it for doing this to him?

When Izaya accidentally dropped one article of clothing and bent over to pick it up, placing his generous curves on full display in front of Shizuo, Shizuo came up with his answer.

He hated the universe for messing with his grades, but he fucking loved it for everything else.

“Bathroom’s over that way, second door on the right.” Shizuo said quickly, pointing behind him as he stared at his tutor. “Don’t take too long. I need help with math.”

Math. Right.

Chapter End Notes

So how on earth will Shizu-chan handle himself now? Yoga? What could this mean?! :D Please let me know what you think in the comments below! I hope you enjoyed the chapter! Be on the lookout for the Christmas one-shot for these wonderful dorks being released on the 24th! It should be called "Christmas Roast" with just one or two tiny spoilers for details later on in this series. Nothing major, so I think it should be fine! Well, that's all for today! Thanks for reading! <3
Alrighty then! So I was trying to decide on whether I should release only the Christmas special today, or the special and a chapter. I decided to release the special and a chapter since I have like five more chapters already written out and ready to post! XD The Christmas special is called "Christmas Roast" and I'll be posting it right after I finish posting this chapter.

Thanks for all the comments you guys have been making so far! I really enjoy responding to them and answering them if you have questions, and I'm still amazed by how much support I've been getting for this story. So thank you so much! Alright, that's all! On to the yoga lesson! <3

The way that Izaya had figured out to teach Shizuo math was apparently quite simple. The smaller boy explained that he was going to perform various different yoga poses, and Shizuo would have to measure the degrees of his body. “Since you’re in a geometry unit right now, I figured this would be a great way to start out with “real world application”.” The raven chirped, making air quotes as he flung out a yoga mat on the ground. “Although I’m not sure when you would ever need to measure the degrees of someone’s body in real life. Beyond going into the fashion industry, I suppose.”

Shizuo just nodded along with whatever his tutor said, trying desperately not to let his eyes wander to Izaya’s legs. The boy was now clad in skin-tight, black spandex that outlined both his legs and the curve of his ass that went with them. With each movement, Shizuo could see the changes in the lean muscle and the dip of the feminine curves that sucked in his attention like honey to a bear. From twenty plus feet away, Izaya had been drool-worthy. From barely three feet away, he was utterly irresistible.

Izaya did a few stretches in front of Shizuo, explaining that he was just getting ready for the actual poses and promising not to take too long. Shizuo nodded dumbly, eyes locked on the twisting form displaying itself for him, unable to look away even for a few seconds. Izaya huffed a bit as he stretched one leg behind his head, and Shizuo could now see the bits of strain on his beautiful face as he stretched. He could see the pull of his lips and the concentration that came over his temples. Small beads of glittery sweat decorated his temples, and his chest heaved with deep breaths of exertion. Each movement was connected to an expression or an exhale of effort, one stretch causing a small gasp while others caused a puffing release of breath. His whole body was involved in the warm-up, not just his legs, and the dynamic nature of his changing face and huffing breaths and twisting body was just too much for Shizuo. He looked so…alive.

By the time Izaya had finished his stretches, Shizuo’s own breath was coming short and he could barely stand for the dizzying feeling in his head. Oh…this was not healthy. Maybe he should ask Izaya to think of something else-

“Right! So first I’m going to do a simple wheel pose.” Izaya chirped, clapping his hands and smiling at Shizuo. “Study my body carefully! Use the cheat sheet I gave you to measure out the angle of my back, stomach, and arms. For arms, I want the arm-to-ground angle. For the others, measure the part
itself.”

Before Shizuo could say anything, Izaya bent over backwards, planting his hands on the ground by his head and pushing up, making a perfect arch with his body. His belly was face-up, slightly revealed when his shirt rode up, contrasting pure white skin with the black undershirt he wore. His legs were planted firmly on the ground, strong and sure and oh so tempting, and his head was just hanging in the air, totally relaxed as he waited patiently for Shizuo to get started. Started…started on…what?

Right! Math! Uh…

Shit, now Shizuo couldn’t remember a single equation. Thank god for cheat sheets.

The blonde glanced down hurriedly at the sheet his tutor had made, looking up at Izaya’s body with burning cheeks, and starting to scribble down estimations of the angles he was making. After a few seconds, his eyes drifted from Izaya’s back to his butt, landing on the perfect curve and not moving from there. He just stared right at it, unable to believe that he was getting away with gawking at Izaya’s perfect body. With no one around. Just him. “Private lessons” was taking on a whole new meaning.

Izaya seemed to notice that Shizuo’s pen had stopped scribbling, and he glanced over to look at his frozen pupil.

“Ah, Shizu-chan?” He asked, and Shizuo’s eyes instantly snapped up to lock with his. Izaya smirked when Shizuo’s face reddened at having been caught staring. “You aren’t supposed to be looking at that part of my body.” He said sweetly, wiggling his butt a little for emphasis before returning to his original still pose.

Shizuo coughed and felt the cloud of shame descend on him once again. Caught staring at his tutor’s ass. Great.

“Unless, of course,” Izaya’s sing-song voice cut into Shizuo’s thoughts, and the blonde stared up at the smaller boy in shock. Izaya’s red eyes were glittering as he looked at Shizuo once again. “You want to try measuring its curvature…” He purred seductively, batting his eyelashes and grinning at his pupil. “But I don’t think you’re quite ready for spheres, yet.”

Shizuo felt his jaw drop at the open invitation from the mischievous boy.

“How…Is that flirting?” Shizuo wondered in his mind, still gaping at Izaya. “Wait…He’s probably just mocking me!” The tell-tale glitter of delight in the ruby orbs attested to this. “Okay, so he’s definitely mocking me. Scowl! Don’t say yes, even though you want to!”

“Screw you, Izaya.” Shizuo managed to grunt out, but there was a lot less emotion behind it than normal as he returned to his scratch paper calculations.

“What happened to Izaya-kun?” The raven pouted, throwing his head back to where it had been before. “I thought we were getting along so well!”

“Fine! Bend over and stay right where you are like a good boy until I tell you to move, I-ZA-YA-KUN.” Shizuo spat out, but then paused when he realized how that phrase could be taken. “Oh shit. I didn’t mean-” Shizuo started to say, hoping he could convince Izaya that he had not meant that in a sexual way.

But it turns out he didn’t have to worry because Izaya just laughed and shook his head, still staring at the wall away from Shizuo. “Yes, Daddy. I’ll be a good boy.” The raven purred mockingly,
snoozing at Shizuo’s command.

Scratch that. Shizuo had a lot to worry about. He stared at Izaya in disbelief, wondering if the raven was even aware that he'd technically just used a daddy-kink phrase with Shizuo. And praying that the smaller boy couldn’t tell what kind of effect it was having on Shizuo.

Shizuo gulped and tried to focus on his calculations, but his mind seemed to be fuzzy as his instincts started to take over. A line of drool started at the corner of his mouth as he thought of Izaya’s words again, and he quickly wiped it off, struggling to focus on his assignment. He’d had no idea that he even had a daddy-kink. What the hell was Izaya doing to him?! There was an uncomfortable sort of heat rushing down his body, heading towards a very special place, and Shizuo was not sure how much longer he would last.

Apparently, he’d stopped writing again and Izaya could tell because the raven called out, “Hurry up, Daddy. I can’t bend over all day.”

Shizuo knew Izaya thought he was just teasing Shizuo, but he had no idea just what kind of tease he was being.

“Shut up, flea.” Shizuo snarled, face hot as he tried to start scribbling just random numbers now. “Stop calling me ‘Daddy’.”

“But why, Daddy?” Izaya snickered again, and the delight was evident in his voice even as he stared off at the wall. “Don’t you love me?”

“What idiot in their right mind would ever love you as a son?” Shizuo snapped out before he could stop himself. “If I was your actual father, I’d find reasons to be out of the house all the time because I wouldn’t be able to stand you.”

There was dead silence in the room.

Shizuo stopped and stared at the back of Izaya’s head, which wasn’t moving. Had he said something wrong? Why wasn’t Izaya talking at all? That wasn’t like the snappy King of Comebacks that Shizuo knew.

A heavy weight of dread started to settle in Shizuo’s chest. Izaya never mentioned his family at school…Could there be a reason? A very good reason that Shizuo had just blundered into and mocked?

“You didn’t have to make it personal, Shizu-chan.” Izaya finally said quietly, cutting into the thick veil of silence that had descended on the room. “I was only teasing.”

Shizuo wasn’t sure what he should say to that. How were you supposed to respond to knowing that someone’s family wasn’t…well, wasn’t something. He wasn’t sure just what was wrong with Izaya’s family, but he knew now that there was something up with it. A thing that made Izaya avoid the subject entirely, and hurt him when people mocked him about it.

Shizuo wasn’t smart enough to figure out what it was. He needed more Sherlock Holmes for that. But he thought he was getting fairly decent at reading what Izaya wanted. Izaya was tired, he was hurting, he didn’t want to talk right now. Those three things, Shizuo was absolutely certain of. And so he did the only thing he could think of that would diffuse the situation in a way Izaya would be comfortable with.

“I was only teasing, too.” Shizuo said softly. “Can I get back to measuring you now?”
Izaya would never tell Shizuo how grateful he was at the change in subject. When Shizuo made that jab about his father, Izaya felt a bolt of pain stab him in the chest, as though the blonde’s words had been an actual physical threat. He’d struggled not to say anything, and fought back the treacherous emotions that tried to rise up inside him as something that he often thought about himself was brought to light. If Shizuo had tried to pry deeper, Izaya was almost sure that he would’ve broken down crying. And Orihara Izaya never cried.

But Shizuo – his stupid, stupid Shizu-chan – had changed the subject. He’d moved back into the object of their lesson, and hadn’t brought it up once since then.

They had gone through a few more yoga poses, with Izaya teasing Shizuo every now and then, and Shizuo gruffly rebutting his taunts. Izaya noticed that Shizu-chan’s eyes tended to wander down to Izaya’s butt and stare at it for a bit before he would remember what he was doing and furiously switch back to his other work. Izaya knew that his butt was often an object of desire for people around him. He’d lived with that ever since he hit puberty and started getting curves instead of muscles. Why his body did that, Izaya would never know. Thankfully, his “winning personality” tended to distract people from the beauty of his figure and no one ever seemed to notice it until he did something to highlight it…like wearing spandex, for instance. Heck, not even Shinra had spotted the discrepancy in Izaya’s physical make-up, which Izaya was especially thankful for because he half-believed that Shinra would try to experiment on him if he ever did find out.

But of all the people that Izaya would have expected to gain the interest of had he revealed his true figure, Shizu-chan was never one of them.

Izaya glanced again at Shizuo out of the corner of his eye. They were on the last yoga pose now, and Izaya was doing something called the Lord of the Dance pose. He liked doing this one because it not only looked impressive, but he could always improve on his form with it, and it gave him one of his most satisfying stretches. He normally didn’t do this one in front of other people – for example when his class had done volleyball today, he hadn’t exactly been doing yoga poses in between volleys – because he normally felt too self-conscious of his figure to show off to others. But with Shizu-chan, he’d felt comfortable in knowing that the blonde would never feel anything towards him but hatred or annoyance. Plus, the guy had a substantive amount of morals and ethics that would prevent him from trying anything inappropriate. So he must be glancing at Izaya’s butt every now and then out of sheer coincidence. Yes, that made the most sense.

Izaya hummed to himself as he stretched his left leg above his head, holding onto his ankle with both hands and lifting it so that his leg was arched in a perfect curve, pushing out his stomach and broadening his shoulders to fully stretch his body. His right leg was kept straight and sturdy underneath him as a support, and the rest of his being was enraptured with the vibrant rigidity of the pose.

Shizuo moved around him, golden eyes raking up and down his body, lines being sketched on his paper so that he could estimate and measure the lines of Izaya’s body. Izaya waited patiently as Shizuo did so, breathing in and out and letting the breath run throughout the veins of his body. Shizuo paused at yet another point, squinting at the apex of Izaya’s hips and the beginning of his legs.
Izaya waited for Shizuo to move on, but the protozoan seemed stopped where he was.

Izaya glanced back at him once more. “Is something wrong?” He asked, and Shizuo’s head snapped over to him with a startled look on his face. “Uh, well, I just can’t get a definite estimate of this… area.” Shizuo said awkwardly, gesturing at the apex of Izaya’s hips and leg.

Izaya looked at it briefly, noting that it was indeed a strange angle as compared to the other ones he’d been having Shizuo measure out.

“Well, just use your hand to get a better estimate.” Izaya finally decided, looking back at Shizu-chan to check his reaction.

The blonde’s jaw had gone slack with shock. “W-What?” He croaked, cheeks reddening just the slightest bit.

Izaya cocked his head, a little confused that Shizuo seemed to be having problems understanding. “I thought it was straightforward.” He said, ruby eyes locked on Shizuo’s. “Use your hand to feel the curve my butt is making with the small of my back and the beginning of my leg. That’ll give you a better estimate than just looking, ne?”

Izaya wanted to turn and face Shizuo fully to try and figure out what the problem was, but that would mess up his yoga position. “Yes, I’m sure.” Izaya said, a little bit of irritation lacing his voice. “Hurry up and let’s finish this. We’re on the last pose and I really am tired.”

“I’ve been meaning to ask you why you’re so tired!” Shizuo said abruptly, his voice just a little bit higher than usual. Was he seriously avoiding this? What was the big deal?!

“I’m tired because of an issue that arose while I was at school. You were there when I received the phone call. Now hurry up.” Izaya snapped, looking back to glare at his pupil.

“A-And what issue was that?” Shizuo asked next, gold eyes still darting to avoid Izaya’s gaze.

“Not telling. Just touch my butt already!” Izaya snarled, and Shizuo jumped in place, looking at Izaya with a scared look in his eyes.

The blonde boy glanced at Izaya’s butt, gulped, and looked back at Izaya, with an almost pleading look on his face.

“What the heck, Shizu-chan? Most people would be jumping at this opportunity.” Izaya sighed, shaking his head. He would never understand the protozoan. “If you want to just make your best guess, then fine. I’ll hold the pose for a few more minutes, but then I’m done. So just-”

Izaya was cut off as a tentative hand landed on the curve of his butt, a feathery touch that was barely there, but still sent a searing jolt of heat through Izaya at the contact.

Izaya sucked in an involuntary breath as the hand slowly traveled over his bottom, trailing lightly across the top of his skin, each finger following the curves of Izaya’s body like the careful appraiser of a ship. The gentle hand moved over the mound of Izaya’s butt, dipping down into the apex at the base of the arch of his body, and gliding up the start of Izaya’s thigh, listlessly following the curving lines of his leg into the air. Shizuo’s hand was surprisingly gentle for a monster’s, and it radiated warmth that prickled at Izaya’s skin, raising goosebumps wherever it traveled.
Through the thin spandex coating his body, Izaya could feel the roughness of Shizuo’s hand and the
evidence of his life spent fighting off those who would challenge his strength. The calluses seemed to
rub Izaya’s soft skin through the spandex, and the heat of his hand created a sort of weight that
wasn’t even there from his actual touch. When Shizuo’s hand reached the sensitive point just behind
Izaya’s knee, Izaya felt his body tense in anticipation (of what exactly, he wasn’t sure), and Shizuo
let his hand hover there for just a moment, filling the air with electricity and tension.

Then he slowly slid his hand back down, sending thrills throughout Izaya’s body at the gentle
contact, his touch getting a little heavier as he applied more pressure and became more sure of
himself. Izaya could have sworn that he purred in pleasure each time the weight of Shizuo’s hand
pressed further into his skin. He was like a cat melting under the hands of its owner. This felt so
indescribably good…

Shizuo reached the apex of Izaya’s body again and pressed gently into it as his hand traced it, almost
like he was imprinting the feeling of it into his hand. He reached the curving mound of Izaya’s butt
and his hand shaped to fit it, staying there for a bit as this deliciously warm weight on Izaya’s ass,
before moving back down to the apex again.

Izaya almost whimpered at the loss of contact, but he quickly bit his lip before the sound could
escape. What was wrong with him?! He’d never wanted someone to touch his butt before. Why was
Shizu-chan suddenly an exception?

“He’s always the exception.” A voice whispered in Izaya’s mind.

He swiftly squashed it.

Shizuo moved his rough hand over Izaya once again, the blonde grunting a bit as he paused to make
some calculations on his paper with his free hand, before returning his focus to mapping out Izaya
with his touch. Izaya wasn’t sure how long this process went on. His mind was so dizzy from the
stimulating contact that he actually lost track of how long he’d frozen his muscles in the Lord of the
Dance pose. The uneven breaths he was taking didn’t add to his body’s comfort either, and Izaya
suspected that he would be sore by the time Shizuo finished his last calculation.

When the protozoan finally pulled away, removing his hand from Izaya’s body entirely, Izaya felt a
 pang of disappointment in his chest, followed by a feeling like crashing down from a euphoric high.
He…he had sincerely enjoyed that contact. He’d always hated physical contact. Hated, hated, hated it. Why did Shizu-chan always have to throw a curveball in Izaya’s plans and decisions?

Izaya quickly set his foot on the ground and stretched his arms up in the air, popping the tension that
had grown in his back and feeling the strain of his muscles pull and groan at the exertion he’d been
putting them through. Yoga helped calm him down, and after the worry of his sick baby sisters and
the necessary care of them at home before coming here, he’d really needed something to calm him.
But he’d never counted on it making him feel this alive.

Izaya shook his head to banish any more feelings of excitement, and turned to face Shizuo.

“May I check your math?” He asked pleasantly, holding out his hand expectantly.

Shizuo stared at him dumbly for a bit, a sort of cloudy look in his gaze, but he quickly realized what
Izaya had asked and handed over the paper sheepishly. “Oh, of course. Um…I dunno how you’re
gonna see if it’s right.” He mumbled, scratching his head like he wasn’t sure what else to do.

Izaya smiled at his pupil and started examining the scratch work. “I’m just going to check and see if
the math itself is correct. I gave you a cheat sheet with formulas and all you had to do was make
estimations of my measurements and plug in the right numbers. After a while, your brain should have
been able to make the connection between the criteria it was looking for in the formula and the situation in front of it. That would’ve made your work go faster, not to mention neater.” He commented, looking pointedly at some of the early frustrated scribbles on Shizuo’s paper.

Shizuo ducked his head in embarrassment but nodded once at Izaya, totally silent.

“In any case,” Izaya continued, nodding as he noted the correct answers coming up in Shizuo’s work. “This activity and my last one with English both tested to see if you could learn by doing things with your hands. It looks like you do. So you’re a visual and a hands-on learner. That will give me a lot more to do with your next lessons.”

Izaya glanced up to look at Shizuo and smiled at him, feeling happiness blossom in his chest at the thought of helping Shizuo improve. “We’ll do science and then home language after this, and then we’ll have tested out all the core subjects. From there on, I’ll tutor you on one core subject a day, probably in the same order I did this week. And we’ll just go through the year like that, okay?”

Shizuo looked up at Izaya and nodded slowly, a bit of a smile coming across the protozoan’s lips. “Okay…Izaya-kun.” He finally said, voice a little quiet but still as deep and powerful as usual.

Izaya beamed at him and handed him his math work, glancing at his watch real quick to see if he had to leave soon. Only 7:03. It had felt like longer than that. Oh well. He might as well go see his sisters early since they were sick.

“Since I don’t have anything else planned, I’m just going to head out now, okay?” Izaya said, looking back up at Shizuo.

Shizuo looked surprised when he glanced over at the clock and noticed the time. “You aren’t staying? You can stay longer.” He said, reaching out and lightly tapping Izaya’s wrist, like he wanted to grab him but knew Izaya wouldn’t like it if he did.

Izaya looked down at the hand touching his wrist. “Yes, but I have somewhere I need to be. It involves the issue from earlier. Plus, I probably need some rest.” He said, moving away from the gentle touch and heading over to the study table to gather his books, clothes, and…flower bouquet.

He had no idea what he was going to do with that thing. Kasuka-kun was so…straightforward in his intentions. Izaya just hoped it wouldn’t boil down to sexual harassment in the near future. But the little boy didn’t seem like that much of a pervert. Or…did he?

Izaya shook his head (it seemed he was doing that a lot in this household) and he finished picking up all his things. Well, if gifts like this were a normal part of the social interaction within the Heiwajima family, then he would gladly accept them. It was all a part of his study and attempts to emulate family life. Even accepting flowers from creepy boys could help.

…He wasn’t quite sure how, but Izaya was sure there was some kind of helpful aspect hidden way deep down.

And if all else failed, he could give the flowers to someone else for some random thing. He was pretty sure that a couple down the street had just had a baby. Flowers would work for that.

“It was good seeing you, Shizu-chan.” Izaya told his pupil, heading over to the door and wondering if he could make the 7:10 train out of the far station rather than the one he had taken to get here. “I’ll see you tomorrow.”

“Yeah. See ya.” Shizuo’s deep voice called after him as Izaya left the house. “Be careful, Izaya-kun. Oh! And get some rest! We can’t just do yoga every day!”
Izaya laughed at that and just waved over his shoulder, not looking back as he broke into a run for the far station. He could be home by 7:30 if he made that train. That was a whole extra half hour to take care of the twins, get them to bed, and then get to bed himself.

Maybe he would get some rest after all.

Chapter End Notes

And now both of them are in denial. They are such dorks.

After this chapter, a lot more confrontation is going to begin showing up in all the relationships in this story: Shizuo vs. Kasuka, Suzuki vs. Izaya, Suzuki vs. Shizuo, and the mysterious pieces of Izaya's past that will begin coming up. I hope you guys will keep reading to find out what will happen! Thank you so much and don't forget to comment below! <3
I hope you guys all had a wonderful Christmas! I was very excited with one of my presents which was all 4 seasons of Durarara!! (from the very first episode to Ketsu) that I plan on binging over the weekend. :)

Anyways, I was so happy that people read and liked the Christmas special for this story and that everyone thought it was hilarious! I received many comments about dying lungs and extreme laughter and while I am 5% sorry that I may have harmed your innards while you were laughing, I am 95% happy that you all liked it! XD So thank you all so much for reading that special if you read it! And don't worry; in just a few chapters the storyline here will be caught up with the special and our wonderful dorks are going to become a lot closer! <3

Anyway, that's enough rambling from me. Here's the next chapter! Please enjoy! <3

Oh, had he said rest? He meant ongoing state of torturous wakening.

At different periods of time, Izaya had been woken up over and over by cries of fevers and bouts of sickness striking his sisters in the middle of the night. It was like their baby years all over again. Waking up in the middle of the night, rushing to their bedrooms, soothing one while solving the problems of the other, putting them both back to bed once the crisis was over, climbing back into his own bed and passing out, then waking up barely thirty minutes later for the next batch of crying.

By the time the night was over, Izaya was barely able to roll out of bed when his alarm went off. He dropped onto his feet and plodded heavily down the stairs, making his slow way into the kitchen as best as he could. Once that goal was accomplished, he tiredly opened the cupboards and scanned the shelves for anything that could be made into a semi-edible substance.

He did not have the energy to make scrambled eggs, omelet squares, rice pudding, or any of the other usual stuff that he typically got up to make in the morning. He’d barely finished the anime-style bento last night as it was, and he was so tired that he just made three identical copies of Sailor Moon out of noodles, chopped veggies, and rice without even noticing that one of them was supposed to be for him until after all three were done. But by then, he was past the point of no return. He would eat a Sailor Moon bento lunch today. It wasn’t like he ever ate with anyone who would see it.

Izaya yawned as he looked through another cupboard, peering tiredly at spices and herbs destined to go unused for the day, until the ruby orbs finally landed on a nice box of old cereal.

Izaya yanked it out of the back of the cupboard where it had been shoved and grabbed three bowls from a different cabinet, swiftly pouring cereal into each of the three bowls. He paused after he filled the third, and checked the expiration date on the cereal box.

It had expired about three weeks ago.

…
Expired Fruit Loops for breakfast! Yay!

Izaya sighed and threw away whatever was left in the box, wading over to the fridge to pull out some milk (thankfully not expired since he was religious about replacing milk – a baker had to be prepared!) and wading back over to the cereal bowls, pouring it in with relish. When everything was prepared, he put the milk back in the fridge and pulled out orange juice, pouring a few glasses of that to set beside the cereal.

Izaya stepped back and observed his handiwork.

Expired Fruit Loops and discount orange juice. Breakfast.

“Mai-chan! Kuru-chan!” Izaya yelled up the stairs, wondering if his tired voice would even carry to the sick girls. “Breakfast is ready!”

As Izaya moved two of the bowls to the girls’ table, he froze in place, the milk sloshing a bit in the cereal bowls.

Wait…was it okay to give expired food to sick toddlers?

He glanced at the cereal in his hands, eyeing each colorful bowl of sugary yuckiness with suspicion. It all looked harmless enough…but then again, so did monstrous, evil puppies until they snarled and bit your face off. He could very well be about to give his sisters food poisoning when they were already sick with who-knew-what.

Izaya groaned, planting the bowls on the table and running a hand through his raven hair in frustration. What the hell was he supposed to do?! He was too tired to think of anything productive right now. He still had to get to school after this and-

Oh crap! He needed someone to watch the girls while he was at school!

Izaya frantically ran over to the house phone, grabbing it and flipping through the (admittedly small) book of telephone numbers that he kept of friends and acquaintances right beside it. The book was a grand total of three pages, and one of the pages was devoted to family members who rarely picked up the phone when he called. And two of them weren’t even in the country.

Izaya flipped the page over to reveal the list marked “Friends”, with…one number in the entire thing. That would be Shinra.

There was another number written underneath, but it had long since been scratched out. The ink that ran through it in an angry, upset scrawl created its own storm cloud on the page, drawing Izaya’s eyes to it and holding his gaze for a few seconds. Even though the written number was hidden from his sight, the number itself was burned into his mind. He could never forget it, even if he tried. Just like he could never forget the person it belonged to. The dried tear stains on the page attested to that fact.

Izaya quickly snapped himself out of his daze and flipped the page again, coming to the final one labeled “Neighbors and Acquaintances”.

He scanned through the pages in a hurry, wondering who on earth would be willing to take care of two sick toddlers last minute. He could hear Mairu and Kururi come waddling down the stairs, tiny yawns echoing around the house as they stumbled into the kitchen and over to their table. He could barely pay attention to them now as he bit his lip and thought about the people behind the numbers.

Who could he trust? A few of them owed him favors. Like the lady who lived three doors down
owed him for the time he’d revealed to her that her new boyfriend was a sex offender with three lawsuits stacked up against him. Or the old man across the street that had found out through Izaya the identities of the hooligans who kept vandalizing his yard, and had thus been able to press charges. He might be able to ask them. But…but did he want to leave his baby sisters in the hands of people who were only taking them because they were indebted to him?

Answer: not really.

Suddenly, Izaya’s eyes landed on a number near the bottom of the page. It was recent; he’d only added it yesterday after coming back from the yoga lesson at Shizu-chan’s place. He’d gone over to a specific house on his street before heading home and had given away a nice bouquet of roses and chrysanthemums. The lovely couple, still happy over their new baby, was quite happy to receive such a wonderful gift from their “sweet little neighbor” and he’d exchanged numbers with them in case he ever came home with more flowers or…whatever else Kasuka-kun’s mind cooked up as romantic. Or was it Shizu-chan’s mind?

Well, that wasn’t important right now. What was important was that the couple had chatted with him for a bit about their baby, leading into his own twin sisters, and they had then expressed interest in meeting the two girls. It wasn’t quite the usual way to meet someone but…

Izaya glanced at the clock on the wall and noticed it was 7:02. He didn’t have long before the train for school left. Sometimes, he felt like his life was dictated by clocks.
Izaya quickly typed the number into his phone and waited, listening to the ringing sound in one ear and the quiet munching sounds of his sisters in the other.


Izaya blew out a sigh of relief. “Yes, Hayashi-san. It’s me. Thank you so much for picking up.” He glanced over his shoulder and nearly choked as he saw his two tired sisters shoveling expired cereal into their mouths with abandon. He slapped a hand over his eyes, parting his fingers to watch them with a grimace as they kept eating. Well…there was nothing he could do about it now.

“Ah, I have a favor I need to ask of you.” Izaya finally said, turning away from his sisters so he could focus on the phone call.

“Of course! What do you need, sweetheart?”

This lady was maternal to the max. She would probably get along great with Namiko-san.

“Well, I know it isn’t the way to introduce you to them that I had in mind, but…well, the girls are sick and I need someone to take care of them while I’m at school. They can’t go to daycare see and—”

“Iza-nii!” Most-likely-Mairu (he was getting more and more certain that the chatty, horribly loud one was Mairu) screeched, looking over at him urgently and waving her arm in the air.

Izaya hurried over to her, pressing the phone into his cheek as he bent down to see what the matter was. “Uh, they can’t go to daycare because they’re sick. The center can’t take sick kids.” He continued talking, grabbing Mairu’s arm and turning it over to spot a scrape on the soft white flesh. Good lord, how had she gotten that?

“And so they’re sort stuck here at home.” Izaya ran over to the medicine cabinet, still talking into the phone as Mairu whined about her arm and waved it in the air. He grabbed some antiseptic spray and a box of band-aids and ran back over, dropping to his knees beside his sister. Balancing the phone
carefully against his face as he talked, Izaya held out the antiseptic spray to Mairu with one hand and tried to open the band-aid box with the other.

“I need a bit of help watching them. Like I said, I have school and…well, I can’t take them to school-”

Izaya cut himself off, lifting his head out of the range of the mouthpiece so the woman on the other side couldn’t hear him. “Kuru-chan, honey, don’t do that! You can’t eat your spoon!” He said urgently, dropping the box of band-aids and snatching the spoon out of his sister’s mouth. Most-likely-Kururi’s lip quivered and tears filled her eyes at having her toy snatched away from her.

He groaned and put the phone back to his mouth, jumping back into his conversation. “Ah, but they’re wonderful girls! They won’t give you any trouble!” He hoped he sounded convincing as his eyes flickered over to Mairu, who was trying to lick the antiseptic spray off her scrape after he’d sprayed it on. He snapped his fingers at her and grabbed a band-aid from the box, peeling it open and planting it over the wound, effectively blocking it from Mairu’s probing tongue.

“Truly, truly wonderful. The best behaved girls ever.” He babbled, pointing at the spoon, then his own mouth, then shaking his finger forcefully at Kururi before handing it back to her.

“Keep eating! Finish your breakfast!” He hissed at the two girls before grabbing the spray and the band-aids and standing up again, hurrying over to the medicine cabinet.

“Anyway, so as I was saying they’re great girls, unfortunately sick, and I need help with them!” Izaya chattered, shoving the things away in the cabinet and running a hand through his raven hair as he darted back over to the phonebook. “Would you mind watching them for the day?”

“Izaya-chan, you don’t have to try and sell your sisters to us.” Hayashi-san laughed on the other side of the phone. “We’ll be happy to take them. And if you need us to watch them during the rest of the week while you’re at school, we can.”

Izaya breathed out a huge sigh of relief, letting himself slump against the counter as he closed his eyes and thanked whichever holy beings were watching out for him. “Thank you so much. I’ll drop them off in about five minutes.”

He glanced at the clock again and noted that it was 7:09. The train left at 7:30. In five minutes it would be 7:14. Add about three minutes to complete the actual transaction of taking the twins over and dropping them off, as well as a bit of last-minute thanking and groveling, and that brought him to 7:17. It was a ten minute run to the train station. 7:27.

Dear God, why him?

“Okay! I’ll see you in a bit. Thank you again.” Izaya blurted, snapping his fingers at the twins. “Get your shoes on and grab some entertainment. You’re going to be staying with some friends today.” He told them, closing the phonebook and making his final goodbye to Hayashi-san before hanging up.

A few minutes of frantic scuffling and packing went by, during which Izaya packed away two teddy bears, three coloring books, two boxes of crayons, two bags of snacks, and one slip of paper with the school’s phone number to call in case of an emergency (the Hayashis could be serial killers – you never knew for sure) all into two tiny backpacks. God…he was magical. He was a magical fairy of incredible babysitting power and no one noticed.

Izaya sighed and ushered his sisters over to the front door, grabbing his coat from the hook beside the door and slipping his own shoes on. He picked up his books and slung his backpack over his
shoulder, thankful that he’d passed out in his school uniform last night. He would not have had the time to change into it. And a few wrinkles wouldn’t kill him.

“Okay! Out we go!” Izaya called with fake cheer, gently pushing the tired and sick girls out the door and locking it behind them.

As he hurried the twins down the street, trying his best to block too much of the icy wind from hitting them, Izaya heard his stomach growl loudly.

An image of his cereal, sitting untouched on the kitchen counter, sprang into his mind.

His stomach rumbled again.

Izaya checked his watch as he hurried the girls to one of the houses on their street, leading them up to the front door. 7:15.

Maybe three minutes left for the transaction, then the ten-minute run to the train station. That brought him already to 7:28, with the train leaving promptly at 7:30.

...

No breakfast! Yay!

***

Shizuo glared at the paper set on his desk. Yamamoto-sensei had handed it to him with a careful look in his eyes, clearly wondering what kind of result would come from this test. Shizuo had only been having tutoring with Izaya for a few days now, but this was a history test, one of the few subjects that he and Izaya had covered. It was supposed to be on the world war period that the class had just gone over, and Izaya’s skit from the other day was still surprisingly clear in Shizuo’s mind. Maybe he had a shot at this thing.

“Don’t turn over your packets until I tell you.” Yamamoto-sensei called from the front of the room. “I want to make sure everybody has a test before I start my timer.”

Shizuo stared at the back of his test, the white paper burning an image into his mind, as he ran over the small skit in his head. He could do this. He could do this.

“Shizuo-kun, are you ready for this test?” Kadota whispered from next to him.

Shizuo looked over at his seatmate, who was tapping his own desk with a slightly nervous expression on his normally-so-composed face. Shizuo frowned a bit at the unexpected look, but nodded. “I think so. My tutor and I went over this stuff a few days ago. So…I hope I’m ready.” He told his friend, and Kadota breathed a sigh of relief.

The nervous look left his face and he sat up in his chair, smiling at Shizuo. “Well, that’s good then.” He said in his usual, smooth way. “I was worried for you since I know you’re failing pretty badly. There was a rumor going around that you’d gotten a tutor to help you and I never asked to see if that was the case. I’m glad you have someone helping out.”

He glanced at his own test then back at Shizuo, a curious look on his face. “Who’s your tutor? Is it someone I know?” He asked.

Shizuo scratched the back of his head nervously, gold eyes darting to look away from his friend. “Uh…well…” Shizuo stammered, wondering if he should tell his friend that his mortal enemy was the guy tutoring him. What sort of rumors could that start? Next thing you know, the shipping fanclub would start making a coupling for him and Izaya and they’d be all over the school as the gay couple that they most certainly were not.
“You…sort of know him.” Shizuo said carefully, looking the other way and hoping Kadota would get the point and just drop it. Kadota hummed from behind him, but Shizuo could practically picture him nodding as he said, “Alright. If you ever get comfortable enough to introduce us, I’d like to meet him in person.”

Shizuo nodded silently, waiting as Yamamoto-sensei strode to the front of the room, having handed out all the packets, and took a seat at his desk. He looked over them all with a hawk-like gaze, his eyes fixing on Shizuo for just a few seconds, and then he pressed a button on his trusty timer. “Begin!” He barked, and Shizuo immediately flipped his paper over, ready to start his test for once in his life.

The very first question on the test:

“What major war was going on when Emperor Hirohito was reigning?”

Shizuo remembered Izaya’s grin as he’d asked Shizuo that question immediately after his special informative skit.

With a small smile crossing his face, Shizuo calmly circled the answer: World War II.

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“So how did your history test go?” Shinra chirped at lunch as he met up with Shizuo and Kadota in the hallway. It was rare for the three of them to spot each other before they met on the roof, and so they had eagerly met up to discuss what had just happened in their classes before they forgot.

Kadota looked over at Shinra in surprise. “How did you know we had a history test?” He asked, cocking his head a little as the three of them headed over to the cafeteria.

Shinra laughed. “Izaya told me! He knows pretty much everything that’s going on in our grade. Or in the school, as a general rule.” He grinned, pushing his glasses up on his nose and happily skipping along beside Shizuo and Kadota. “If you want to know which classes you have tests coming up in, what those tests will be on, how hard they’re designed to be, whether extra credit will be offered, if the teacher is going to curve it, or really anything involving class at all, Izaya’s your man!”

Shinra looked over at Shizuo and Kadota with a sly look in his eyes. “Izaya told me that your test was going to be a history exam on the WWII period with no curve, no extra credit, and pretty detailed questions while making up a huge portion of your grade!” He said conspiratorially, and Kadota groaned aloud, ducking his head. “I mean, how is anyone supposed to remember the two dates that the Occupation ran between as well as the leading American commander who was in charge of it?”

“The Occupation ran from 1945 to 1952, led by Douglas A. MacArthur.” Shizuo rattled off instantly, a certain scene from Izaya’s skit that involved singing Yankee Doodle and marching jumped into his mind. “And MacArthur was a general, not a commander.”

Both Shinra and Kadota looked at him in shock.

Shizuo felt his cheeks burn as he ducked his head, entering the lunch line at long last and grabbing a tray from the wall.

“Wow.” Shinra whistled from behind him, also grabbing a lunch tray. “That tutor of yours knows his stuff!”
“No kidding!” Kadota agreed, joining the two in line with his own tray. “I wish I had that tutor. How’d he get you to remember that?”

Shizuo felt the tips of his ears go pink as he grabbed a ladle and began ladling miso soup into a bowl on his tray. “He just…he’s got unique tricks to help me remember things.” He said vaguely, moving swiftly down the line and hoping the conversation would be dropped.

“What kind of tricks? Teach us!” Kadota pressed, ladling his own soup with a keen eye on the embarrassed Shizuo.

“I don’t know. It’s kinda…individualized?” Shizuo tried, looking pointedly away as he selected some fish next.

“Individualized? Like he comes up with these tricks just for you?” Shinra asked thoughtfully, a small smile flickering over his face.

“You could say that.” Shizuo muttered, scooting down to the section where the milk cartons were lined up like gifts from heaven, in neat little rows that were ready to be attacked by Shizuo.

“Hmmm…sounds like a lot of effort for the guy.” Shinra purred, almost excitedly, as he scooted closer to where Shizuo was, reaching past him to grab his own milk carton.

“Wanna…tell us who your tutor is?”

When Shizuo’s head snapped over to look at Shinra, he saw a mischievous glint in the wannabe doctor’s eyes, just barely hidden by his dorky glasses. “No.” Shizuo said firmly, feeling uncomfortable at the knowing way Shinra grinned at him. Like he knew who the tutor was.

“Why not?” Kadota frowned, moving in to get his own milk. “It could be seriously helpful to all of us.”

Shizuo grabbed his final type of milk (strawberry) and placed it on his tray, shuffling uncomfortably away from the line as his friends finished up. When they came over and joined him, the three of them began their usual trek through the crowded cafeteria and up towards the roof of the school.

“Shizuo, come on.” Kadota pressed as the three of them walked. “Why can’t you share your tutor with us? It can’t kill you, can it? And maybe we can sit it on your lessons or something.”

“N-No.” Shizuo shook his head, looking at the wall to his left instead of to his friends who were walking on the right. “I’m not sure if that’s a good idea.”

Kadota huffed and shook his head. “Well…I guess you need him the most. The rest of us don’t. We don’t have to meet with him if you don’t want to.” He conceded, calm nature inherently taking over.

Shizuo breathed a sigh of relief. They wouldn’t be meeting Izaya and discovering that the flea was Shizuo’s tutor.

But his relief didn’t last long.

“Hey! Why don’t we invite Izaya to eat lunch with us?” Shinra’s chirping voice suddenly said, tone way too cheerful and light for the reality-crushing, doomsday-bringing, icon of death itself that he was suggesting.

“What?!” Shizuo practically shrieked, stepping back from Shinra in horror.

Shinra grinned at the blonde, an evil light in his eyes. “I said, why don’t we invite Izaya to eat lunch
with us? Just for the day.” He said with fake innocence, turning to look at Kadota. Kadota, the unflappable boy, looked just as shocked as Shizuo felt, minus the terror.

“Izaya?” Kadota repeated, running a hand through his brown hair and gripping his tray tightly with white-knuckled fingers. “I mean… I don’t have a problem with him… per say…” His eyes flickered over to look at Shizuo, and the meaning was clear.

“Shizuo on the other hand…”

Shizuo bit his lip and glared at Shinra, who was giggling at him with that evil glint still hanging in his eyes. “I think it will be a great idea.” Shinra announced, nodding to himself like everything was already decided. “In fact, you two head on up to the roof and I’ll go get him from the library. This will be fantastic!”

And without another word, Shinra shoved his lunch tray into Shizuo’s hands and ran off out of their sight.

Shizuo watched him go with an impending sense of doom. This could not be happening. It just could not be happening.

“Well.” Kadota finally said, breaking the silence that had descended on their group. “I guess we’re eating with Izaya today. Sorry buddy. I know how uncomfortable you’ll be.”

“You have no idea.” Shizuo thought miserably as he watched the evil doctor run cackling down the halls.

Izaya coming to eat lunch with them?

“Uncomfortable” didn’t even begin to describe it.

Chapter End Notes

Ah, poor Izaya. That boy has so much stress, it’s a wonder he hasn’t grown any white hairs yet. And now Shizuo is going to have yet another lunchtime struggle with Izaya’s presence! How’s he gonna handle it? We shall see!

As usual, let me know if you have any questions below and please let me know what you think! <3
Izaya didn’t even know what was happening when Shinra found him in the library at lunch.

He’d just sat down in his favorite spot, tucked away in the stacks of books and out of the vision of the library’s occupants, but still in range enough so that he could observe all of them, when the bubbly future doctor burst into the library, yelling Izaya’s name at the top of his lungs.

Izaya had stared at the boy in shock, wondering just what he was up to. His stomach was screaming at him to eat something, and he’d pulled out his anime-style bento to devour it whole, but now Shinra was looking for him? At lunch? It was weird enough that Izaya had broken their unspoken rule about zero contact outside of class, but Shinra was doing it, too?

“Did I step over some line when I went and saw him? Should I reset the boundaries and let him know that one advice session does not make us lunch buddies?” Izaya muttered to himself, slowly packing away his bento and slinging his bag over his shoulder. He glanced up at Shinra, who was looking wildly around the library despite the chastisement of the librarian, clearly not going to leave until he saw Izaya.

Izaya sighed. Maybe Shinra just wanted more hints about the upcoming tests.

He walked out of his nice hidden nook in the book stacks and headed calmly across the library to his crazy friend.

“Yes, Shinra? What is it?” Izaya asked with a sigh, cutting through the start of another shrieked version of his name.

Shinra spun around instantaneously, a huge grin on his face. “Izaya!” He said happily, throwing his arms out as if to give Izaya a big hug.

Izaya held up one hand to dissuade any and all physical contact, planting a smirk on his face. “Izaya!” He said happily, throwing his arms out as if to give Izaya a big hug.

Shinra laughed at him. “Actually, yes! I need you to come with me! Right now!”

Izaya blinked at that. He hadn’t expected Shinra to…want to spend time with him. “With you? Physically?” Izaya asked in shock, looking Shinra suspiciously up and down. “Just what exactly do you want?”

Shinra grinned widely and grabbed Izaya’s wrist with his hands. “Nothing at all! Just come with me.
“When a sane person is told to follow an insane person and not ask questions, there are almost always consequences.” Izaya retorted, following Shinra along nonetheless without struggling, due to sheer curiosity. What could possibly incite Shinra to seek Izaya out at lunch? After class, the two of them split up and refrained from contact as a fact of life. Right now, Shinra should be back to eating lunch happily with his friends and Izaya should be back to his loner life in the library with his Sailor Moon bento box.

God…He sounded like a loser.

As Shinra dragged Izaya along, chatting about random things from class that day, Izaya clutched his bag with his free hand and followed him numbly down the hallways. They walked together, attracting a few strange looks from those who knew how fast they normally parted at lunch, but for the most part they moved quickly through the crowds of students. Shinra led Izaya down a final hallway where they reached a door with a sign reading, “RESTRICTED AREA: STAFF ONLY”.

Izaya had barely enough time to read the sign before Shinra flung the door open and charged happily up the stairs behind it, dragging Izaya after him.

“I know you aren’t the smartest person in the class, Shinra-kun,” Izaya called after his friend as he was dragged up the metal stairs. “But I do assume you read, yes?”

“Of course!” Shinra chirped, not even slowing down a bit as he pulled Izaya helplessly up the stairs which were becoming draftier as they neared the roof.

“Fantastic. Would you mind explaining to me why you didn’t read and then adhere to the instructions on that very obvious sign down there?” Izaya glared at the back of his friend’s head, feeling the chill through his jacket as they neared the last few steps leading up to the roof.

“Certainly!” Shinra turned back to look at Izaya with a grin, an evil glint entering his eyes. “You don’t need to listen to rules when you have a Heiwajima Shizuo!” He said mischievously, shoving open the slightly cracked door to the roof and hurling Izaya out through it.

Izaya fell onto the roof with a yelp, falling flat on his stomach on top of the cold concrete with a jarring impact to his ribs that was sure to leave a bruise.

He groaned a bit, eyes closed, as he slowly pushed himself up to his hands and knees, shaking his head to clear his mind. “Shinra…did you have to throw me?” He moaned, rubbing the back of his head as he sat back on his haunches. Suddenly, Shinra’s last words flashed through Izaya’s mind.

“When you have a Heiwajima Shizuo.”

Izaya’s eyes snapped open, and he looked up quickly.

Sitting there on a bench on the roof, eating off their lunch trays, were Shizuo and Kadota. Both were watching him with wide eyes, as if they couldn’t believe he was here. Embarrassment shot through Izaya’s veins at the compromising position he was in, and he quickly jumped to his feet, dusting off his pants and shooting Shinra a glare out of the corner of his eye.

“Hello, my friends! Our guest is here!” Shinra chirped happily, patting Izaya on the back and giving him a tiny shove towards the bench.

Izaya screeched to a halt and shot Shinra a surprised look. “Wait, guest?” He asked incredulously, looking back over at Kadota and Shizuo. “Who’s a guest?”
“You, flea.” Shizuo said flatly, his golden eyes boring straight into Izaya’s red ones. There was a hint of nervousness in there that Izaya could easily pick up on. Nervousness? Was Shizuo nervous that he was here?

“Ah, Shizu-chan.” Izaya purred, dropping into an overly dramatic bow. “The eternal light of my life and heart of all my joy. How does the lunch period find thee?”

“Shut up.” Shizuo responded simply, returning to his lunch with a grunt and taking a bite of his fish. “Sit your annoying ass down and shove some food in your mouth. At least then you’ll stop talking until lunch is over.”

“You underestimate me, protozoan.” Izaya smirked, feeling his fingers twitch at his sides despite the confident image he was projecting. “I’m a fast eater.”

Kadota sighed and looked at Shizuo for a few seconds before turning his attention back on Izaya. “Hello, Izaya. Would you like to sit with us while you eat?” He asked calmly, gesturing at the empty space on the bench to his side. The side away from Shizuo.

Izaya grinned at him. “Dotachin! My darling, how are you?” He gushed overdramatically, rushing over to the calm boy and throwing his arms around Kadota in a big hug. Kadota sighed and rolled his eyes, detaching Izaya’s arms from around him.

“Just fine, thank you. And I told you not to call me that.” He said flatly, moving over so Izaya could sit comfortably beside him. Izaya laughed at his behavior in delight. Izaya truly did take delight in his interactions with Kadota. As far as he could see, Dotachin was the only male he’d ever encountered (aside from Shinra of course) that didn’t react to Izaya’s affections. His actions were all highly dramatic, of course, and Izaya felt no actual attraction to the overly serious boy, but he did love flirting with Dotachin and watching how utterly nonreactive he was.

Shinra, Dotachin, and Shizuo were all interesting beings in their own rights. Shinra with his keen disinterest in humanity, and abnormal devotion to something quite inhuman. Dotachin with his pragmatic disinterest in Izaya and utterly composed nature overall. And of course, dear old Shizu-chan with his inhuman strength, hair-trigger rage, and stunningly impeccable sense of morality.

All fascinating creatures…all gathered here on one roof. Away from the rest of humanity.

Izaya looked over at Shizuo, who was still pointedly ignoring him in favor of his lunch. Why was that? He seemed so nervous because of Izaya’s presence. A grin stretched over Izaya’s face. He plopped down next to Dotachin…right in between him and Shizuo.

“Ne, ne, Shizu-chan!” Izaya giggled, leaning onto the protozoan and clutching his arm in a girly manner, making sure his body was flush against the larger boy’s. “Whatcha eating? Does it taste good?” He leaned right into Shizuo’s personal space, shoving his head in Shizuo’s line of sight as he examined the lunch tray.

He watched in delight as Shizuo’s fingers clenched tightly around the tray, digging grooves into the metal tray. “Get out of my food, flea.” Shizuo snarled, voice noticeably tenser than it usually was. “But Shizu-chan! I’m concerned for your health!” Izaya said with mock worry, turning to look at Shizuo with big, innocent eyes. “Cafeteria food could be bad for my sweet, little monster! You have such a sensitive tummy, after all.” He rubbed circles on Shizuo’s stomach and held back his snicker as Shizuo’s face flamed, his gold eyes standing out and glittering even more with the backdrop of red.
“Izaya…” Kadota’s voice said warningly behind him.

Izaya waved a dismissive hand at the serious boy. “Oh hush, darling. I’m not cheating on you with the monster. Don’t you worry.” He teased, and Kadota sighed again, looking at Shizuo nervously.

Izaya also turned his attention back to Shizuo, fluttering his eyelashes at the reddening beast. “So you see, I have to check your food for you!” He said innocently, grabbing the rest of Shizuo’s fish and popping it into his mouth without delay.

Shizuo’s eyes widened and then narrowed dangerously. “Flea!” He growled. “Don’t eat my food!”

Izaya pouted at him, making sure that he kept pointedly chewing the fish in front of Shizuo. “But why? I’m helping!” He said through a mouthful of fish, and he watched a vein of annoyance pulse in Shizuo’s forehead.

“You aren’t helping! You’re annoying!” Shizuo yelled, grabbing Izaya’s waist and shoving him away from him. Izaya pouted as he was pushed into Kadota, crossing one leg over the other with a huff. “See if I try to help you again.” He sniffed, looking away from Shizuo as though insulted.

There was a definite air of tension on the roof that Izaya was taking quite a bit of delight in. Maybe eating lunch here wouldn’t be so bad.

“Well! This is going great!” Shinra chirped, sitting down in the final place on the bench, in between Izaya and Shizuo. Izaya glanced at him and stood up off the bench, glaring at Shinra pointedly.

Shinra paused mid-sentence and looked up at Izaya in surprise, then he laughed good-naturedly. “Oh, I see. You want to sit with Shizuo.” He grinned with an evil look and scooted happily over towards Kadota, much to everyone else’s shock.

“Shinra!” Kadota protested, eyes wide as Izaya was allowed to drop next to Shizuo, pressing right up against the tense blonde once more.

“What?” Shinra asked with a goofy grin, settling his lunch tray on his lap and starting on his rice.

“Well…don’t you think we should…separate them?” Kadota suggested, looking at Izaya and Shizuo.

Izaya could feel Dotachin’s eyes on his back as he smiled at Shizuo, purposefully bumping his leg against the protozoan’s.

Shizuo’s muscles seemed to jump with each brush of contact that Izaya’s body made with his, and it fascinated the raven greatly. He giggled as Shizuo tried to scoot away and simply followed, draping one leg over Shizuo’s knee to boot.

Shizuo visibly jumped at this act and glared at Izaya with fire in his eyes.

Izaya smiled sweetly in return, swinging his leg lazily from atop its new perch.

Shizuo looked like he wanted to punch Izaya in the face but also like he was in conflict with himself about wanting to keep Izaya’s leg where it was. Fascinating.

“No. I think they’re getting along great!” Shinra chirped happily as he continued to eat his lunch.

Shizuo took a deep, calming breath and continued to eat his food, clearly attempting to forget that Izaya was there. Izaya pouted at this and started poking his arm, hoping to get a new reaction.
He got more than he bargained for when Shizuo immediately turned and grabbed Izaya’s arms, yanking him into the protozoan’s chest and lowering his head down to hiss in Izaya’s ear. “Would you cut it out?! I’m trying to eat my lunch in peace without my friends figuring out that my worst enemy is also my tutor. So quit touching me and all the rest of this shit!”

Izaya felt his cheeks burn red at the close and almost intimate contact with the monster. He was pressed into Shizuo’s strong chest, breathing in his strange vanilla-infused scent, and listening to the words whispered with a rush of hot breath against his ear. This was…way too close for comfort.

He squirmed nervously in Shizuo’s firm grip, tilting his head just enough to hiss back up at Shizuo’s own ear. “Of course I’m going to poke you and stuff like that! I’m trying to piss you off! And I thought we had an unspoken agreement about not even acknowledging the existence of the tutoring thing outside of your home.”

“What?! Since when?” Shizuo hissed back, his fingers squeezing slightly tighter around Izaya’s slender arms. “I thought it was obvious.” Izaya muttered. “Since I’m a god and you’re a monster. We’re still ourselves after all. We only play nice when we’re at your home.”

Shizuo’s fingers tightened even more at that statement. “Shut the hell up, flea.” Shizuo growled, making a shiver run down Izaya’s spine. He pressed his mouth right against Izaya’s ear, so close that Izaya could feel the odd contrast between his soft lips and his rough teeth as he spoke, each brushing and scraping Izaya’s ear intermittently. “Don’t go around making “unspoken agreements” without checking them with me first.” His deep voice said, making Izaya’s eyes widen. Izaya was too shocked to say anything in response. Who did Shizuo think he was, ordering Izaya around?!

“I get that you think it’s obvious, but it’s not obvious to me.” Shizuo hissed, the hot puffs of his breath combining with the rough press of his lips and teeth. Izaya shivered again at the close contact, wondering what the electric sparks running through his body right now meant. His arms where Shizuo was touching them felt like they were on fire, and his body now felt way too warm pressed up against Shizuo’s heat. This contact was over-stimulating his body.

“For all I know, you told Shinra everything about our arrangement. He is your only real friend.” Shizuo continued, oblivious to the way he was making Izaya’s head spin. “But…well, now you have another friend.” The intense fingers loosened a bit around Izaya’s arms, becoming almost gentle as they circled the appendages. “So…I guess all I’m saying is that you need to tell me things, too. And if it involves me, then please let me know what the hell you’re thinking. I can’t read your flea mind.”

Izaya felt dizzy as he tried to respond. “So…you want me to talk to you more often, but still pretend I hate you so no one finds out what we are?” He asked, confused and still trying to get a grip on his flaming body.

“Just…don’t tell anyone what we are, but know that I consider myself your…frenemy.” Shizuo grunted, grip slowly sliding down Izaya’s arms. Izaya felt his skin jump at the contact, the heat surging with Shizuo’s hands. “O-Okay…so where do we stand on the touching thing?” Izaya asked next, a little breathless as his body surged with heat and electricity.

Shizuo sighed, blowing more heat against Izaya’s already incinerated ear. “I don’t know…it makes it hard to eat and concentrate…but it is a thing you would typically do. I don’t know, do what you want. But keep in mind what I said. I’m your frenemy. I may be your enemy but I’m also your friend.”

“So still piss you off like we’re enemies but know that I have to tell you if I do anything involving you because secretly we have a half-assed, really shaky friendship.” Izaya squeaked out, planting his hands on Shizuo’s chest at the risk of the burning feeling in his palms and pushing away. “Got it!
Now let me go before you cause any more of a scene.”

Shizuo seemed to realize that Kadota and Shinra were both watching them and he quickly released Izaya, coughing a bit and returning to his food with a grunt. Izaya felt like his body was floating in the air, mind disoriented and fuzzy as he swayied in place, slowly turning to look over at Shinra and Kadota. They were both gaping at him and Shizuo, eyes wide and jaws dropped open.

“W-What a threat, right?” Izaya laughed weakly, hoping to restore some normalcy to the situation. “Sh-Shizu-chan is such a scary guy, ne?”

The two of them just stared at him, clearly not buying it.

Izaya coughed and heard his stomach rumble loudly. Grateful beyond belief for the distraction it offered him, Izaya practically dove into his backpack and pulled out his bento box, placing it happily on his lap. “Wow! I’m just so hungry! I’m just gonna eat real quick and then…go…”

When Izaya yanked the lid off his bento box, he’d forgotten one crucial fact about his lunch that day.

It was a Sailor Moon bento.

The other three boys stared at his lunch, as did Izaya, wondering if he could pass this off as being a lunch he’d mugged from a kid earlier in the day.

Before Izaya could say anything, Shizuo cut in.

“Did you make that?” He asked in an incredulous voice, gold eyes wide as he stared at the lunch.

Izaya quickly looked up at Shizuo, wondering if the larger boy was mocking him, but Shizuo seemed genuinely shocked by the sight of the bento, and his eyes were wide with what could possibly be mistaken as awe.

“Yes…” Izaya finally said slowly, clutching his bento protectively. “I usually make character bento, and last night I was tired so I ended up making Sailor Moon without thinking about it.”

The other boys stared at him and Izaya felt his cheeks flush red with embarrassment. “Don’t judge me! Boys can make bento, too you know! It isn’t just a girl thing!” He snapped, grabbing his chopsticks and shoving one of the pickled vegetables making Sailor Moon’s eyes into his mouth.

“No!” All three boys yelped, grabbing at the bento in desperation.

Izaya snatched his bento and hopped backwards off the bench immediately, holding it to his chest away from the crazy boys in shock. His red eyes were wide as he stared at the sheepish boys, carefully untangling themselves from the pile they were in on the bench. “What the heck, guys?!?” Izaya demanded, staring at them incredulously. “What was that? Why did you just attack my bento?!”

“It was so perfect.” Shinra wailed, whimpering as he looked longingly at the bento in Izaya’s hands. “Then you ate it and messed it up.” Kadota added, sadness overtaking even his impassive gaze. “It was the best anime bento I’ve ever seen.” Shizuo finished mournfully, shaking his head slowly.

Izaya stared at them all. You would think he’d just taken a bite of the Mona Lisa. Was it seriously that impressive to them?

“This isn’t even the best bento I’ve made.” Izaya said aloud before he could stop himself. “I was tired when I made this. It’s kinda sloppy for me.”
Their heads all snapped up to look at him in shock.

“That’s sloppy?!” Kadota asked with wide eyes, pointing at the bento.

Izaya nodded slowly, glancing down at the guardian of love formed of rice and vegetables cradled in his arms. “Yeah. I mean, it passed the inspection test, but it’s certainly not my best work.” He told them, almost embarrassed that they were finding out how much he loved to cook. More so than that, but how good he was at it.

“Izaya-kun,” Shinra said with a big grin, his eyes sparkling. “You should make us bento tomorrow!”

Izaya almost choked at that. “W-Wait, what?” He got out, eyes wide.

“Make us bento! An anime character for each of us!” Shinra declared, jumping to his feet with a mighty cry. “Yeah!” Kadota seemed to love the idea, looking at Izaya eagerly. “I would love to have a homemade bento from you.”

“It would be nice.” Shizuo admitted quietly, his gold eyes flickering up to meet with Izaya’s.

Izaya gaped at them all. “You want…me to make bento for you all?” He asked. “And…you aren’t worried that it’ll be poisoned?”

Shinra laughed at him. “Oh please. You wouldn’t poison something you gave me. I’d haunt you forevermore, and you don’t want that!” He said cheerfully. Kadota glanced at Shinra and then looked back at Izaya. “I’m just trusting you because I’ve never done anything to you to warrant death.” He said matter-of-factly. And the gazes all fell to Shizuo, who just sighed and ran a hand through his messy blonde hair. “Well,” He finally said. “I’m probably immune to poison.”

Izaya couldn’t help it.

He busted out laughing, holding the bento in to his gut as he doubled over, tears coming to his tightly shut eyes. His whole body shook with the effort of his laugh, happiness bubbling out from his chest as he cackled at the hilarity of it. Immune to poison. Shizu-chan. Oh, Shizu-chan.

Shizuo frowned at Izaya as he cackled, still clutching the bento tightly. “You done yet, flea?” He asked in annoyance, crossing his arms with a twitch of his eyebrow.

Izaya laughed even more at that comment, feeling the tears streak down his cheeks as he practically howled in joy.

“Maybe someone can sneak the bento from him while he’s distracted.” Shinra whispered.

That cleared Izaya’s laughter right up. He immediately snapped his mouth shut and glared at Shinra, holding the bento far away from the crazy doctor. “I did not get breakfast this morning. This is the first food I will have had all day, aside from Shizu-chan’s fish. You are not getting one bite.” He said darkly, red eyes narrowed with a dangerous glint.

Shinra held his hands up in surrender. “Alright, alright. But you’ll make us bento for tomorrow, right?”

Izaya shuffled in place, looking down at his Sailor Moon bento. “I mean…you want me to make you really good bento?” He asked nervously.

“Yes! The best you’ve ever made!” Shinra shrieked excitedly.
“One of the best you’ve made.” Kadota said with a smile.

“I’d take mediocre.” Shizuo muttered.

Izaya took a deep breath. “Well…I don’t know when I’ll find the time to…” He said, thinking about how he would need to make Mairu and Kururi’s as well, not to mention his own. Plus he was tutoring Shizuo tonight. How on earth would he find the time to make 6 bento boxes?

“How? Why wouldn’t you be able to find time?” Shinra asked with a sly smile, his eyes glinting mischievously. “Could you, perhaps, have prior arrangements?”

Izaya looked over at his only friend as the glasses-wearing boy grinned at him. “He suspects.” Izaya thought with certainty. Well, he’d have to worry about that later.

“If you can’t make us bento by tomorrow…then I guess we can assume that you were busy with something else.” Shinra snickered, looking over eagerly at Shizuo and then back at Izaya.

Izaya glared at his friend. “Not necessarily. Maybe I just don’t want to make an insane wannabe doctor like you a bento box.” He said coldly, and Shinra laughed. “Riiight. I think you should see this as a chance to prove yourself! If you want to prove to me that you don’t have something else to do…then you’ll make me, Kadota, and Shizuo bento tomorrow! And good ones, at that!”

“Hey, that’s blackmail!” Izaya argued, his fingers clenching tightly around his own stupid, compromising Sailor Moon bento.

Shinra shrugged, a happy look on his face. “Whatever you want to call it, so long as it gets me bento.” He sounded innocent enough, but the look on his face was pure evil. He wanted to expose Izaya and Shizuo. That…that evil doctor!

“Izaya, never to let myself choose my own friends.” Izaya snapped, glaring at Shinra.

“How hard can it be to find a little extra time, Izaya?” Kadota asked calmly, apparently still not clued in to Shinra’s evil plan.

“I’m sure you can find some.” Shizuo suddenly cut in.

Izaya looked at him in shock. Shizu-chan? What was Shizu-chan thinking?

Shizuo glanced at Shinra and then looked meaningfully at Izaya. “I bet you can find some time if you just make sure to keep all your cooking supplies near you. To help…remind you.” He said slowly, and Izaya’s eyes widened.

Oh…

Wow, Shizu-chan could actually be subtle. You learn something new every day.

Izaya looked down at his bento. “I guess I could.” He mumbled.

“Great!” Shinra said cheerfully. “We’ll be expecting perfect anime character bento tomorrow!”

Izaya looked up and glared at his friend. “Even if I don’t poison yours,” Izaya growled. “Expect some spit.”

Shinra waved off the threat and returned to his actual lunch tray, happily munching away. Kadota looked between the two of them for a bit before shrugging and joining Shinra. Shizuo looked at Izaya a bit longer and eventually made a jerking motion with his head to gesture for Izaya to join
them. Then he resettled himself on the bench, leaving just enough room for Izaya to sit in between him and Shinra.

Izaya stared at the odd sight he never expected to see. An open invitation from Shinra, Kadota, and Shizuo to eat with them. And an extra invitation to come eat with them tomorrow. Was this…was this what friendship was supposed to be like?

Izaya stared at their backs for just a few moments longer, soaking in the scene, and the feeling of acceptance that came with it. The feeling that he belonged somewhere, and that he was wanted.

“Izaya-kun. Come sit your flea ass down already.” Shizuo growled, slamming a fist into the empty space next to him.

A small smirk crept onto Izaya’s face as he came over, throwing some kind of taunt at Shizuo that he didn’t even register as he took the empty seat.

But even if Izaya didn’t notice, the smirk directed at Shizuo was gentler than usual. And Shinra saw it.

***

Shizuo hoped Izaya had understood his “subtle message” from earlier. It wasn’t like he was the best at conveying secret messages, despite all his experience with mystery novels and spy books, and he really hadn’t ever thought of that sort of scenario.

“How to tell your mortal enemy/tutor to bring cooking supplies to your house so he can make bento without saying anything remotely like that out loud”. Oh yeah. Shizuo was totally prepared for that.

He groaned and slammed his head into the wall as the clock ticked closer to the time that Izaya would arrive. Today was supposed to be a science lesson. Shizuo had a science test tomorrow. He was really hoping that they could focus on the material for the test. If he and Izaya had to cut their tutoring lesson short for the bento-making thing, how would that affect Shizuo’s performance on the test? He supposed he would just have to trust his tutor to solve that issue.

Provided he’d even understood Shizuo’s message.

“Why am I such an idiot?” Shizuo groaned aloud, grabbing his hair in frustration.

“I don’t know, Nii-san, but I will support you nonetheless.” Kasuka’s calm voice came as his younger brother entered the room. Kasuka sat down at the study table and set a pink heart-shaped box on the table in front of him. Then he looked at Shizuo with the same blank stare as always. "But if you’re talking about Izaya, then yes you are an idiot and he belongs to me.” He said flatly.

Shizuo stared at his brother in shock. “Um…no.” He said before he could stop himself.

Kasuka tilted his head slightly. “Yes.” He said simply.

“No.” Shizuo growled, turning to face his brother with tightening fists.

“Yes.” Kasuka responded, adjusting the pink box on the table.


There came a loud knock on the door.

Before Shizuo could even blink, Kasuka was up and at the door, flinging it wide open to reveal
Izaya standing there with several bags slung around his body. Izaya looked surprised when he saw Kasuka and the surprise only increased with what happened next.

“Hello, my love. How are you today?” Kasuka said smoothly, easily slinging the bags off of Izaya’s body and onto his own, slipping Izaya’s arm through his own in one fluid movement, and leading him swiftly over to the study table. Izaya followed with a dazed look on his face as Kasuka released his arm once they reached the table, pulled out a chair and took Izaya’s hand, gently seating him at the table. Kasuka proceeded to take the seat opposite Izaya and slide him the pink box. “There you are. An anniversary gift.” Kasuka said smoothly, gesturing at the box.

Izaya stared at the pink box like he wasn’t sure what to do with it. “Um…anniversary? For what exactly?” He asked numbly.

“The fourth day of our relationship.” Kasuka said, his eyes flicking over to meet with Shizuo’s before looking back at Izaya. “Happy anniversary, darling. Now good luck with your tutoring lesson.” He leaned in and kissed Izaya on the cheek before slinging Izaya’s bags onto his chair and smoothly leaving the room.

Izaya was frozen in place for a bit, red eyes locked on the pink box.

“Right…so…this is a thing now.” Izaya said aloud. “I…have a suitor with romantic delusions…This is happening.”

Izaya opened the pink box with a hesitant look, like he was afraid of seeing an engagement ring. Knowing Kasuka the closet pervert, Shizuo thought he should be worried about a porn novel instead.

Inside was neither a ring nor a porn novel. It was simply rows of heart-shaped chocolates.

Izaya looked at them and then slowly his head turned to Shizuo. “I don’t…suppose this was your idea as well?” He asked weakly, almost like he hoped it was.

Shizuo looked at the chocolates. “No…but I wish it had been.” He grumbled, crossing his arms with a huff.

Izaya sighed and closed the pink box, pushing it away from him. Shizuo wasn’t fully sure why, but seeing that made a warm feeling spread through Shizuo’s chest.

“Right, so I have no idea what I’m going to do with chocolate.” Izaya muttered, walking around to grab one of his bags and rummaging through it with a huff. “I can’t exactly feed it to the twins. They’ll go on sugar-highs, and lord knows neither me nor they need that when they’re sick.”

Shizuo paused at that comment, staring at Izaya as the smaller boy rummaged through his bag, red eyes scanning all the items in it with precision. His sisters were sick? The sisters that he adored? Could that have been what the strange emergency phone call was all about? And maybe it had something to do with Izaya being so tired, as well. Sick toddlers could be quite draining to their caretakers. Then again, wouldn’t that be his parents’ job to take care of the girls while they were sick?

So many questions started running through Shizuo’s head, and he couldn’t help but stare at Izaya while they did so.

Eventually, the raven noticed that someone was watching him, and he glanced up to see Shizuo staring at him intently. “Shizu-chan?” He asked slowly, cocking his head to the side with a frown. “Is something wrong?”
Shizuo was startled by Izaya’s voice and he quickly shook his head, trying for a weak grin as he scratched his head. “Um, no! No, nothing is wrong. So...what are we doing for the lesson today?”

Izaya smiled at Shizuo, and Shizuo got the feeling that he was really looking forward to this lesson. “You have a science test tomorrow, yes?” Izaya asked, returning to his bag and beginning to pull out...DVD’s?

Shizuo stared at the discs in confusion, watching Izaya happily stack them up one by one on the table.

“Um...yeah. I do.” Shizuo said numbly, staring at the DVD’S and trying to recognize the character on them. He didn’t think he’d ever seen that man before. Some lanky looking guy in a lab coat with wide eyes and a bow tie. Yeah...what was Izaya planning here?

“Great! Your exam is going to cover basic laws of physics with a bit of chemistry thrown in here and there.” Izaya informed Shizuo, having finished unloading all of his DVD’s (there were fifteen total – holy cow!) and started gathering the discs into his arms. “So I figured that a wide coverage of science topics involving physics and chemistry would be the best study idea as a cram method for your test.”

Shizuo stared at the discs, wondering just what was on them as Izaya made his way purposefully over to the living room.

“Of course, we won’t do this for every science lesson. I’ll go over the actual material from your class most of the time. This is just a cram study session and a way to squeeze in enough material while still letting me get things done.” Izaya was saying as he planting the discs down next to Shizuo’s DVD player, quickly running back into the other room and rummaging through a different bag. Shizuo watched the excited boy as he came running back over with a small stack of paper and a pencil, handing both to Shizuo.

Shizuo took them and stared at the paper sheets. They looked like those sheets teachers had you fill out during films to answer questions about the movie and make sure you were paying attention. These had a bunch of science questions on them and a few open-ended questions to boot. Huh?

Shizuo looked back up at Izaya, who was beaming happily down at him. “You made movie worksheets? For science questions?” Shizuo asked in confusion.

Izaya nodded eagerly and ran back over to the DVD player, starting it up and loading the first disc. “Yep! The discs I have here are wonderful marvels of education that I think every child should be exposed to at some point in life!” He declared mightily, flicking the TV on as he worked the DVD player, fingers moving faster than Shizuo could see.

Shizuo decided to stop trying to watch and he looked back down at the sheet, wondering what kinds of discs Izaya had.

“I play these for my sisters sometimes. They love them.” Izaya’s voice cut in. “And don’t worry; we’ll watch it with Japanese subtitles.”

“Subtitles?” Shizuo’s head shot up as he looked at Izaya in confusion. “Why would we need subtitles?”

Izaya walked over to the TV and started rearranging the cords on it, humming happily as he responded. “This is an American TV show, Shizu-chan. I only have the discs with English audio, but I did get versions with Japanese subtitles.”

Shizuo was stunned. An American TV show? What were they watching?
“I figured this would be a good way for you to study while letting me do other things. Since you oh so kindly volunteered to let me use your house to make bento.” Izaya continued (so he had gotten the message after all), running back into the other room to grab his final bag and running back over to Shizuo. He clutched the bag nervously, red eyes darting around the room like he wasn’t sure what to do with himself. “Um…I can use your kitchen, right?” He asked in a quieter voice than normal. “I don’t want to intrude.”

Shizuo snapped out of his daze. “Yes! Yes, go ahead. I asked my mom and she said it was fine. We’re having leftovers for dinner tonight.” He said, smiling warmly at Izaya. Izaya smiled back but then a look of surprise crossed his face. “You guys have leftovers? You don’t seem like the kind of people who would leave any food after a meal.” He asked with wide eyes.

Shizuo laughed at that. “Yeah, our family eats a lot.” He admitted with a fond smile, thinking of his crazy family. “But that’s why mom makes extra portions of everything. So that we have leftovers in case we need some.” He explained, looking up at Izaya happily.

Izaya watched him with an odd look for a few moments, then he spun on his heel and marched into the kitchen. “Well, that’s great! I’ll just use the kitchen in here to make bento and you play those videos. Answer the questions on the worksheets. The worksheets each correspond with an episode and everything is in order, okay? When the first disc finishes, move down to the next highest one on the stack and that will correspond with the next set of worksheets. Understand?”

“Crystal clear!” Shizuo responded, searching briefly for the remote before hitting play. Immediately, a strange theme song started to play in English, filling up the living room with strange noises and strangely catchy tunes.

“Bill Nye, the Science Guy.” The TV sang, and Shizuo stared at it, enraptured, as images of all kinds of wacky experiments floated over the screen. There was the lanky guy in the lab coat again, jumping around and doing random things.

“Bill! Bill! Bill! Bill!” The TV kept going as Shizuo watched, wondering where the heck Izaya had found a show about a crazy scientist who probably ate some funny plants every day in between teaching children science.

Dear God.

Izaya had found a video of Shinra’s future.

Shizuo looked at the happily grinning, overly excited, scrawny scientist in a lab coat and thought of his friend from school. Oh yeah. This was totally Shinra grown up.

“Bill Nye, the Science Guy!” The TV said one more time, and then the episode itself started.

Shizuo settled back in his chair, reading the subtitles and glancing down at the questions on his worksheet so he could get everything right. This was an interesting way to study. He was sort of practicing English at the same time too, wasn’t he? He was shocked to recognize most of the words that the guy was saying, even if he was speaking too fast for Shizuo to really comprehend his sentences. Just a few days ago, that would have been beyond him. Wow. Izaya was amazing.

Shizuo glanced over at where Izaya was in the kitchen, and practically felt his heart stop in his chest. There was the raven, with his adorably pink apron tied around his supple waist, getting all kinds of things ready on the stove and the counters of the kitchen. He was oblivious to Shizuo’s attentions, grabbing bags of rice and vegetables from his bag and starting to open them up and wash them. He
poured some vinegar into a pot on the stove and hummed to himself as he started to heat it up. It looked like he was going to pickle something.

Shizuo found himself entranced by Izaya’s fluid movements in the kitchen, practically dancing around the room as he gathered ingredients and began mixing them together with the expertise of a professional chef. He chopped up some vegetables on a cutting board with lightning fast precision, and mixed them around in a bowl with swift, tossing movements. He twirled over to a rice cooker, his silky raven hair falling in his gorgeous eyes for a few seconds as he tossed the pale rice into the cooker. Izaya brushed his hair back with a graceful sweeping motion, ruby eyes glittering like gemstones in his flawless skin as he danced back over to the vinegar pot.

Izaya hummed to himself with every motion, cooking happily away in the kitchen like nothing else existed. Wonderful smells started to fill the air, making Shizuo’s stomach grumble loudly. One of those meals…was for Shizuo.

Immediately, Shizuo pictured himself walking over to Izaya, entering the kitchen and hugging the smaller boy from behind.

Fantasy Izaya squeaked a little at the sudden contact, but once he realized who it was, a gentle smile came over those pink lips as he turned in Shizuo’s arms to face him. Bodies pressed flush against each other, Fantasy Izaya looped his slender arms around Shizuo’s neck with a shy smile. “Welcome home, Shizu-chan.” Fantasy Izaya said happily, standing on tiptoes to press a kiss to Shizuo’s lips. The kiss was soft and sweet, just like the little housewife of a boy kissing him. Finally, after a few seconds of perfect contact that felt just like paradise, Fantasy Izaya pulled his soft lips away from Shizuo’s, dropping back down onto flat feet and leaning against Shizuo’s chest with a sigh.“I’m so happy you’re back home.” Fantasy Izaya admitted, graceful fingers tracing small circles on Shizuo’s back. “I miss you when you’re gone.”

Shizuo wrapped his arms around Fantasy Izaya, holding the curved body against his own. “I’ll always come back to you, Izaya-kun.” Shizuo said to his husband, who looked up at him with sparkling ruby eyes. “I know.” Fantasy Izaya whispered, cupping Shizuo’s face with a gentle hand. “And I’ll always be here waiting.”

Shizuo leaned down and kissed those perfect lips again, delighted when their owner gave a soft little moan, leaning into the kiss with the same shy passion he always showed, parting his mouth slightly to give Shizuo better access.

Shizuo dipped his tongue into the sweet cavern of his husband’s mouth, feeling the raven wrap slender fingers in Shizuo’s hair, pulling him in closer.

Shizuo stumbled a bit over to the stove, and Fantasy Izaya pulled back quickly, a loving smile on those now slightly puffy pink lips. “I made dinner for you, Shizu-chan.” Fantasy Izaya said, moving over to show Shizuo what was on the stove. “Your favorite. Sweet and sour chicken with tres leches cake on the side.”

He nuzzled sweetly into Shizuo’s arm, pressing his lips to the fabric covering it. Shizuo wished he didn’t have a shirt on at that moment in time so he could feel those sweet lips against his body. “Thank you, Izaya-kun.” Shizuo said a little breathily, and Fantasy Izaya gently directed Shizuo’s face to look at him with soft fingers. Fantasy Izaya smiled up at Shizuo, ruby eyes sparkling. “Anything for you, darling.” He said softly, kissing Shizuo again. When he pulled away, the raven placed a soft finger on Shizuo’s lips to stop the blonde from coming in for more.

“And it’s Izaya-chan, remember?” He said sweetly, cocking his head at Shizuo with a smile. Shizuo smiled down at his husband, wrapping his arms around the supple waist that was all his. “Izaya-
“Shizu-chan.” Fantasy Izaya purred happily in between parting with Shizuo’s mouth. “Shizu-chan…oh, Shizu-chan…” They kissed deeper and deeper, Fantasy Izaya’s voice still somehow reaching Shizuo’s ears as Shizuo tongue dove into that sweet cavern. His hands dipped down to cup the generous curves of his husband’s ass, kneading into the soft flesh that only he could touch. Fantasy Izaya moaned at the contact and gently kissed Shizuo some more, saying his name again.

“Shizu-chan.” Fantasy Izaya’s eyes fluttered as Shizuo slowly massaged his backside. “Shizu-chan.”

As Shizuo leaned in for another kiss, the tone of Fantasy Izaya’s voice changed a bit.

“Shizu-chan? Shizu-chan?” The voice became confused and harsher, red eyes locked with Shizuo’s as their lips pressed together again. Still the voice came, “Shizu-chan! Shizu-chan!” More insistent and louder as Shizuo pressed deeper against his husband.

“SHIZUO!” A voice finally yelled, and Shizuo’s eyes snapped open.

He stared in shock at Izaya, who was in the kitchen stirring the pot of pickled vegetables. He was watching Shizuo with a confused look on his face. “The first episode is finished. Have you been paying attention to it at all?” He asked, an accusing look in his ruby eyes.

Shizuo winced and glanced at the TV. Indeed, the same song as before was playing in the background as credits rolled quickly over the screen. He’d fantasized the first episode away.

“Uh…sorry, I got distracted by…your…cooking.” He said lamely, hoping that Izaya would fall for it.

Izaya squinted his eyes at Shizuo suspiciously, still stirring the vegetables as he did so. “Hmm…” He said doubtfully, but he turned back to the pot, planting a hand on his hip. “I’m here to teach you, not coddle you into learning everything with pats on the back and gold stars.” Izaya said sharply, and Shizuo was quickly reminded that Fantasy Izaya and Real Izaya were two very different people.

He sighed and turned around in his seat, making a promise to himself not to look back at Izaya cooking in his kitchen again. No doubt that would lead to more housewife fantasies and he did not need that. Izaya as a housewife? What the heck was he thinking? There was no way someone as high-strung as Izaya could ever end up as a housewife. Sure, he might cook and clean, but he’d be the kind of husband who still expected to be respected and held a job on his own. He was not the stay-at-home sort.

Shizuo restarted the episode, all the way from the theme song, and made certain to take notes throughout the entire thing. He most certainly did not glance at Izaya and watch the way his hips swayed as he happily made bento. He did not watch with intense interest when Izaya had to bend over to pick up a utensil and his butt was stretched out on display. And he most certainly did not watch Izaya lick the tip of the spoon and then suck on it in delight, imagining that something else much bigger was in between those luscious, pink lips. Nope. His mind and conscience were both
clean.

Entirely clean.

Not a speck of dirt in sight.

When the episode finished and Shizuo glanced (for the first time, mind you) at Izaya, he saw a scene that was definitely not dirty at all. The smaller boy finished sucking the last cooking utensil with a pop, licking his lips once it was out with a satisfied look on his face. Then he happily sashayed over to the sink to wash it, whistling as his hips swayed back and forth seductively, oblivious to the eyes fixed intently on them. When Izaya reached the sink, he picked up the first utensil that was already in the sink, which happened to be a spoon. He squirted some soap onto his hand, shivering a little at the cool sensation, and turned on the water, ready to wash the dishes. His hand slid up and down the shaft of the spoon, coating it in slick soapy suds with each slow, smooth stroke, fingers dancing expertly over the spoon as he lavished it in soap and then gently rinsed the suds away with water. He proceeded to dry the clean spoon with a towel over on the side of the sink, squeezing the shaft of the spoon and jerking his hand up and down its length, drying it off with the towel with precision and speed. When he finally finished his attentions to that goddamn lucky spoon, Izaya walked back over to the sink and pulled out a knife with a thick, round handle.

Shizuo felt the blood rush down to a very special part of his body, creating a tight and very uncomfortable feeling in his pants. He quickly turned away from the kitchen and grabbed a pillow to cover the lower half of his body, praying that Izaya wouldn’t sashay in here next and insist on touching him again like he had earlier at school.

…

If he was being honest, Shizuo would rather have Izaya touch him like he’d just touched that spoon…

Okay. His mind was in the gutter.

Chapter End Notes

I just had to throw in Bill Nye. I can't have science tutoring and NOT throw in Bill Nye.

XD

Poor Shizuo is sinking deeper and deeper past the point of no return...Now we're onto all the housewife fantasies that a few of you predicted. :D Well! Please let me know what you think below! Thanks for reading! <3
The Cat Describes the Dog and the Dog Meets the Kittens

Chapter Notes

So I am very happy to announce that my younger sister has now made nearly a full recovery from her surgery, and it should only be about two weeks at the most before she’s completely back to normal. She was really happy to read all the get well comments that you guys left for her and she wanted me to tell you all thank you for her. So a big thank you from my little sister to all you readers who were wishing for her to get well! Thanks so much! <3

And now on to the next chapter without further ado. Enjoy! <3

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Izaya had had fun making bento at Shizuo’s house. His family had a nice kitchen and the appliances all worked really well. It made pickling the vegetables very easy and their rice cooker was just astounding. In fact, it had almost seemed brand new. Perhaps they’d never even used it…

Well, whether or not the Heiwajimas used their wonderful appliances, Izaya had been able to use them to create some bento lunches that he was actually quite proud of.

For his lovely Dotachin, Izaya had actually made two characters out of the ingredients for the bento: Yuuri Katsuki and Viktor Nikiforov from Yuri!!! on Ice. Heh heh. Whenever he could, Izaya liked to make little subtle hints at gayness towards the unflappable Kadota to see if he could shake his “darling” up. In this case, Izaya had designed the faces of the two skaters and carefully formed the word “VIKTURI” in nice big characters at the bottom of the bento. He would give it to Dotachin with batting eyelashes and a blown kiss. That was probably gay enough.

For Shinra the Schemer, Izaya designed a lovely image of Light Yagami, complete with crazy eyes and Death Note notebook. Not to mention several vegetables lined up beneath his face to say “YOU’RE CRAZIER”. Yeah. So there, scheming evil future doctor nutcase.

And last but not least, for the monstrous Shizu-chan, Izaya had made a full-body bento of Saitama from One Punch Man. It had the cape and everything, and right at Saitama’s feet, Izaya spelled out “YOUR SECRET IDENTITY”. The super strong guy who could defeat anyone with a single punch and was totally unstoppable in every way yet somehow retained a nonchalant sense of justice? It was definitely Shizu-chan as a superhero.

Izaya was happy with his creations, and he’d decided to stop there once he was done making them and wash up all the dishes. He would make his and his sisters’ bento boxes at home.

Upon making this decision, Izaya discovered that not only were the Heiwajimas’ appliances amazing for cooking, the soap brand that they used was incredible for washing dishes by hand! The soapy liquid felt nice on his hands but it required so much less scrubbing to get the food scraps off than the brand Izaya’s parents kept around. He would have to remember that one next time he went shopping.

“Come to think of it, that’s gonna be real soon.” Izaya muttered to himself, opening the pantry and peering through it with an analyzing stare. They had hardly any food left beyond instant ramen packets and those were getting old. Not to mention the fact that Kururi and Mairu were starting to
complain about them nonstop. And when four year olds complain, listen to their words.

Or fear the wrath of their newest art project in your hair.

Izaya sighed and ran his fingers through his raven hair, feeling the silky strands glide easily through without much interest. His mind was lost in lists and budgets and the massive lengths of the first one combined with the extreme smallness of the second. He had a lot to buy, and not a lot of money to do it with. But…wait, today was Friday, right? He was gonna get paid for tutoring Shizuo today!

“Yes!” Izaya cheered, punching a fist into the air with a triumphant grin.

“Iza-nii happy.” A soft voice whispered from behind him.

Izaya spun around to see a tired and still-very-sick Kururi rubbing her eyes in the doorway to the kitchen. And yes, he now knew indefinitely which one was which.

Because he’d taken some safety scissors yesterday and cut Kururi’s hair short and left Mairu’s hair long.

Boom.

Izaya smiled and held his arms out to the short-haired girl, opening them wide for a hug. “Yes, Iza-nii is very happy right now.” He said gently to the girl, and she happily waddled over into his arms, returning his warm gesture without a second thought.

“Why?” Kururi asked quietly, nuzzling into his chest.

Izaya soothingly stroked her head, smiling. “Because Iza-nii is getting paid today. For his new job.” He explained simply, kissing the top of Kururi’s head.

“Iza-nii has a job?!” A new voice shrieked, making Izaya look up and spot his other sister, waddling excitedly over to him, sneezing as she came. Izaya sighed and held his other arm out to the sneezing girl, trying not to wince as she sneezed on him and then snuggled happily into his embrace.

“Yes, Iza-nii has a job. That’s why I’m gone in the afternoons.” He explained, standing up and carrying both of them over to the counter and setting them down. He began pawing through the medicine cabinet (also growing alarmingly sparse) until he found their last bottle of expired kid’s medicine. He stared at the grape-flavored liquid for a few seconds, trying to remember where he’d bought it.

“What kind of *ACHOO* job?!” Mairu shrieked, letting out a big sneeze in the middle of her question. Izaya glanced at her and quickly read the instructions on the bottle, pouring out medicine for both of the sick girls. “It’s a tutoring job.” He said easily, sliding the two small cups of medicine over to the girls with the ease of a seasoned bartender. Hm…maybe he could get a job as a bartender, too.

“Tu…tor…ing?” Kururi sounded out slowly, cocking her head.

“Iza-nii is right! What’s tu-tor-ing?!” Mairu asked excitedly, her long braids swinging in the air.

“I help a student at my school learn some things that he’s having problems with.” Izaya smiled at his sisters’ curiosity, watching them chug down the medicine with a careful eye. He was going to go shopping after school today. Buy some medicine, food, and other basic groceries. And perhaps some presents since their birthday was coming up in a few months. It was December now. On February 14th, his darling girls would turn 5 years old. A full hand’s worth of fingers.
He sighed as he thought about how on earth he’d be able to make enough spare money to buy the girls presents. His parents were supposed to send money soon, at the end of January. Maybe then he could go out and get some last minute gifts for the girls.

“Who’re you tutoring, Iza-nii?!” Mairu asked happily, slamming her cup down on the table and pushing it over to her older brother. Kururi calmly finished her own cup and slid it towards Izaya as well, looking at him expectantly with the same question no doubt on her mind.

Izaya looked at the girls for a bit, wondering if it was a good idea to talk about the protozoan to the girls. They were very impressionable right now, after all. It could end badly if they decided that beating people up was an ideal way to get whatever they wanted. It was effective, yes, but Izaya wasn’t sure if he wanted them getting that sort of impression about life.

He eventually shrugged and turned to wash the cups, deciding he would tell them. After all, what could be the harm in just talking about the beast? It wasn’t like he had to mention the violent tendencies, and it wasn’t like they were going to meet him anytime soon.

“I’m tutoring a boy named Heiwajima Shizuo.” Izaya began, his hands scrubbing over the cups as he spoke. Each twin picked a leg of his and latched onto it, looking up at him with adoring eyes as they waited for him to continue.

Absently, he reached a soapy hand down and ruffled Kururi’s newly shortened hair, reaching over when he was done and twirling one of Mairu’s braids as well.

“I’m tutoring a boy named Heiwajima Shizuo.” Izaya began, his hands scrubbing over the cups as he spoke. Each twin picked a leg of his and latched onto it, looking up at him with adoring eyes as they waited for him to continue.

“Smart.” Kururi agreed, copying her twin’s motion.

Izaya smiled and walked over to the cupboards, both twins still latched on tight to his legs, as he put away the cups.

“So what kind of guy is Shi-zu-o?!” Mairu sounded out his name with a giggle, looking at Izaya pointedly. “Is he tall? Strong? Short? Fat? Huh? Tell us, tell us!”

Izaya laughed and twirled one of her braids again, walking into the living room.

“Tell us.” Kururi quietly repeated her twin’s request, clinging to Izaya’s leg as he entered the room and sat down, pulling each twin off his legs and setting them down beside him. He glanced at the clock on the wall real quick. He’d woken up earlier today so he’d gotten everything ready for school much faster. He had about fifteen minutes before he would need to drop the girls off with the Hayashis and leave.

“Shizuo is a very tall boy.” Izaya began looking between the two girls intermittently. “He’s very tall and very strong. He’s got broad shoulders and bright blonde hair. Oh, and his eyes are gold. Like pirate treasure.”

The twins’ mouths were open and gaping, looking at Izaya in awe like he was talking about a god. Izaya continued his description, smiling as he thought about his enemy-turned-pupil. "He’s got a warm smile when he uses it, but most of the time he’s frowning and his face is covered in a scowl. But I think that adds to his aggressive charm.”
“Handsome.” Kururi said softly.

“Oh, yeah! Shi-zu-o sounds haahahaandsome!” Mairu chirped, whistling a little bit.

Izaya laughed and ruffled their hair fondly, smiling at their comments. “Yeah. Shizu-chan is haaaaaaaaaandsome.” He agreed, hugging his girls to his sides.

“Iza-nii with Shi-zu-nii?” Kururi asked quietly.

Mairu jumped up excitedly, looking at Izaya with wide eyes. “Yeah! Is Iza-nii dating Shizu-nii?!” She shrieked, and Izaya nearly choked on his surprise. “W-What? No!” He said quickly, waving his hands to dissuade further questions. “Iza-nii is not dating Shizu-nii! Er, Shizuo!”

He looked at the clock again. These girls were going to press him about that. It was close enough to time to leave. “Okay! Let’s get a move on, girls! Gotta head to school!”

“So Iza-nii can meet his boyfriend?” Mairu snickered, making kissy faces at Izaya as he helped her into her coat. Izaya glared at the girl, fixing her coat with a scowl. “Shizuo is not my boyfriend. And how do you even know those words? You’re four!”

He turned to Kururi and helped her into her coat, questioning what went on at daycare.

“Iza-nii happy with Shizu-nii?” Kururi asked, cocking her head innocently. Izaya felt his cheeks blush red at the insinuation she was making. “Kuru-chan! I am not dating Shizuo! Get those thoughts out of your head!” He scolded, buttoning up the small girl’s coat before slinging his own on.

“If Iza-nii is happy, then we are happy!” Mairu sang, dancing around as she waited for him to get ready. “Iza-nii can date his haaaaaaaaaandsome boyfriend and we’ll support him in every way! Will you make handsome babies? Cuz you’re pretty and Shizu-nii is handsome so you’re gonna make great babies together!” The happy girl chattered, lost in her fantasies of pretty babies.

Izaya nearly fell over and looked at his baby sister with a red face, picking up his backpack and pulling it on. “M-Mai-chan!” He choked. “Me and Shizuo are not making babies! That’s not even possible!”


Izaya’s face turned even redder. “Ooooh, we are not having that conversation right now.” He muttered hurriedly, pushing the two girls towards the door. “Come on, girls. We’re going to go see the Hayashis. That nice couple from yesterday, remember?”

“Yay! They were fun!” Mairu cheered happily, sneezing once and trying to open the door herself without stopping. “Babies.” Kururi added, going over to help her twin. Mairu gasped and looked at her sister. “You’re right, Kuru-nee! They just had a baby so they must know how to make them! We can ask! Can we ask, Iza-nii?” They both looked at Izaya with pleading eyes, clasping their hands together in a begging way.

Izaya thought about it for all of three seconds. In those three seconds, three thoughts passed through his mind:

1) I won’t have to tell the twins about it
2) They’re parents so they should get ready to explain these sorts of things
3) Makes life easier for me
“Sure. You can ask them.” Izaya said simply, opening the door for the girls. “Now let’s go.”

The twins cheered as Izaya held their hands and led them down the street (after locking the door, of course), taking them over to the Hayashis’ house. He had to get to school now. He had special plans for Shizu-chan today; mostly ones that involved strolling uninvited into his classroom, taunting him into a chase, and losing him right at the gates of the school in order to deliver a special message.

Because Izaya had something important to tell Shizu-chan today. He couldn’t tell him in front of anyone else, and he had to tell him, no matter what. Izaya’s hands tightened around the little girls’ hands at his sides, and a small frown slipped over his face. Yes…he needed to tell Shizuo today. And he needed to leave school early again, too. He would drop the bento lunches off with Shinra in class this morning and taunt Shizuo into a chase right afterwards.

Then everything would just work itself out from there. Hopefully.

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Shizuo was happy about how the science test had gone. Yes, he’d had that annoyingly catchy theme song stuck in his head throughout the entire thing, and Future Shinra defining science terms in way too excited a voice, but he’d finished the test confident that he’d done well.

When he was the first one to finish, Yamamoto-sensei had looked shocked, his eyebrows shooting up as he took the test in wonder.

Shizuo felt embarrassed when all the eyes landed on the back of his head, but he shrugged them off and walked determinedly back to his seat, plopping down next to Kadota with a huff.

Kadota stared at him with wide eyes. “You’re done already?” He whispered, and Shizuo glanced at him quickly before nodding. He tapped his fingers on the desk, unsure of what to do next. He’d never had this problem before: being done with a test before everyone else. He was usually the last person to finish. Not that anyone would ever complain about him taking so long. The first idiot who did would find themselves flying out of a window for a good fifty feet.

But with this new development, Shizuo sat back in his chair and fidgeted nervously at his desk, unsure of what to do with all his pent-up energy. He was just sitting in place, squirming around with no idea of what to do with himself. In fact, he almost wished that the flea would come along. At least then he’d have a reason to run out of the room, yelling like a maniac and hurling desks around.

Yeah, chasing the flea sounded awful ni-

Shizuo’s eyes widened as the door to his classroom opened…and in strode the flea. Izaya sauntered in like he owned the place, his red eyes casually swooping over the test takers until they landed on Shizuo. They saw that Shizuo seemed to be done with his test, took in the fact that he was the only one who was done, and glee spread throughout them.

“Hey, Shizu-chan.” The raven purred, draping himself along the doorframe. “Fancy seeing you here.”

Yamamoto-sensei looked over in alarm at Izaya, his eyes flicking between the raven and the blonde like he was waiting for a bomb to explode. “Orihara-kun. What are you doing in my classroom?” Yamamoto-sensei asked, fingers tapping on his desk with nervous energy.

“I came to deliver a message of course!” Izaya laughed, his red eyes locking right with Shizuo’s. “To my beloved monster: catch me if you can!”
So saying, he spun on his heel and dashed out of the classroom, and well, what was Shizuo supposed to do? Ignore the open invitation?

“IIIIII-ZAAAAAA-YAAAAA!” The roar rang out as Shizuo tore out of the classroom, chasing down the raven with a savage grin on his face and vigor in his charge.

And that was how the monster of Raijin ended up at the gates ringing the school, advancing slowly on a grinning flea who was ready to bolt at any second.

“Shizu-chan!” Izaya suddenly said, raising a hand in the air to stop the blonde. “I just need to let you know something important real quick before you try to kill me and inevitably fail!”

Shizuo paused, more out of surprise that Izaya actually wanted to say something that wasn’t an insult than out of a willingness to follow his instructions.

Izaya grinned when he saw that Shizuo had actually listened to him, and that grin made Shizuo want to punch him all over again, but before he could try, Izaya started speaking again.

“I won’t be able to come and tutor you today, Shizu-chan.” He said, and that snapped Shizuo out of rage mode instantly. He looked at Izaya in confusion, wondering what in the world he was talking about. “Why not?” He growled, but the notes of concern underlying his voice dulled the rage that he usually portrayed when speaking to Izaya at school.

Izaya looked away like he didn’t want Shizuo to see his face. “I have some prior business at home is all. So I can’t come tutor you today. It’s no big deal. It’s Friday anyway, so no more school until Monday. I got paid by the principal today and I sort of need to…” He cut himself off there, giving Shizuo a huge grin instead of saying whatever it was he had been about to say. “Anyway! I won’t be there tonight! Don’t wait up! See you later, Shizu-chan!”

So saying, Izaya leapt over the fence of the school in one fluid motion, taking off in a run towards the train station.

Shizuo watched him until his tiny figure was out of sight, wondering what in the world was going on with Izaya at home. Was something wrong? Did he need help?

Shizuo remembered the two little sisters that Izaya had mentioned before on one of their previous tutoring sessions. He’d been so tired these last few days…was he taking care of his sisters? Maybe he needed some help with them, but wasn’t willing to ask for it.

Shizuo’s fists clenched and unclenched at his sides as uncertainty filled his mind. Should he help out? Izaya said he wasn’t going to be able to tutor Shizuo today. That probably meant the problem was serious seeing how Izaya had been so…well so focused on everything he’d done for Shizuo up to this point. He really seemed like he wanted to help Shizuo out and that he was serious about doing so. The problem must be bad if Izaya was skipping tutoring. As a pupil…and a frenemy…he was morally obligated to help out, wasn’t he?

The only problem was that Shizuo had no clue where Izaya lived. The raven was extremely secretive about that sort of thing: anything from the names of his parents to his home address was completely unknown by anyone at the school. Izaya didn’t give information about his personal life to anyone. He didn’t trust anybody with it. Except for…

Shizuo paused, and looked back at the school. He stared at the roof area that he, Kadota, and Shinra ate in every day.

Yes, Izaya didn’t trust anybody at all with info on his personal life. Aside from a certain perverted
doctor that Shizuo saw every day. It looked like he would have to ask Shinra for a favor at lunch today. And pray that he wasn’t doing the wrong thing by invading Izaya’s personal life.

May the heavens above help him if Izaya got angry.

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Or maybe the heavens should help him right now before he chickened out.

Shizuo stood in front of a rather large house on a rather nice street, gulping as he shuffled from foot to foot on the front porch. He’d just made the long walk up the beautifully paved driveway, past the small water features of the rock garden placed in front of the house, and was now standing in front of the lovely wooden door that signified the entrance to the Orihara household.

Shizuo looked over the house once more with nervous eyes. It was much bigger than his own house, with a swooping roof styled with traditional Japanese architecture, and windows all over the walls that gave you the impression that the house was watching you with hundreds of square-glass eyes. Oddly enough, each window had a curtain drawn in front of it, like the house itself was keeping secrets from all who might walk by. It was eerily quiet, too, with not a sound escaping from inside. The whole place seemed sort of…lonely. Lonely and empty.

It reminded him of Izaya.

Impressive and beautiful on the outside, but if you made it past the gate and gazed at it carefully, you could see the hollow shell that it actually was.

Shizuo took a deep breath and raised a fist to knock on the door. No turning back now. He’d made it all the way here.

He knocked loudly on the wooden door, listening to the almost echoing sound it made in the air. For a while, there was nothing but silence.

Then the sound of scrabbling feet could be heard clearly from behind the door, followed by the excited giggling of…children? There were shoving sounds and a bit of a crash, as though there was a fight going on to get to the door.

“Iza-nii! Iza-nii!” A tiny voice called happily from behind the door. “Izaaaaaa-niiii!”

“Iza-nii back.” A softer voice added, and Shizuo could hear the clicking of the door as a lock came undone and it swung open. He was greeted by two tiny girls, one sitting on top of the other’s shoulders so they could open the door, who both gaped at him in shock.

Shizuo stared at the little girls with an equal amount of shock. They were so tiny and cute. Both of them had mousy brown hair, quite different from the inky black shade of their brother’s, and big brown eyes that looked up at him innocently. One of the girls was less emotional than the other one (the twin on the bottom of their little totem pole with shorter hair) and was looking at him with a pretty straight face for a toddler who had just opened the door on a stranger, but the two of them were still obviously twins.

“Iza-nii.” The one on the bottom whispered softly, cocking her head slightly at Shizuo. “Kuru-nee is right. You are not Iza-nii.” The one on top gurgled, looking at Shizuo with wide eyes. “Who are you?”

Shizuo shuffled nervously in front of the two girls, trying to peer around them to see if Izaya was in there. Then again…if they had thought he was Izaya, then maybe Izaya wasn’t even home.
“I’m…well, my name is Shizuo.” Shizuo started, hoping Izaya hadn’t spread any rumors about the monster of Raijin to his sisters yet.

When both girls’ eyes widened even further and their jaws dropped open, Shizuo knew he was wrong.

“Listen, I promise I’m not-” Shizuo started to say, holding up his hands desperately to comfort the girls who were no doubt about to run away from the beast.

“Shizu-nii!” The top one shrieked in delight, launching herself off her sister’s shoulders and slammed into a stunned Shizuo at top speed. “Shizu-nii! Shizu-nii! We get to meet Shizu-nii!”

“Shizu-nii.” The other one echoed, running over and latching onto Shizuo’s leg with a tight hug, a happy smile on her straight face.

Shizuo gaped at the two girls in shock, his arms wrapped around the koala clinging to his chest, and his leg lifted slightly so he could look at the other one on his leg.

“H-Has Izaya told you about me?” He asked in surprise, his voice choking a bit as he asked his question.

The talkative one pulled back instantly, giving Shizuo a big grin. “Yes! Iza-nii told us about you!” She said happily, then she grabbed his face in both hands, examining him carefully.

“Blonde.” The quiet one said.

“Check!” The loud one chirped happily.

“Tall.” The quiet one said next.

“Check!” The loud one looked Shizuo up and down with shining eyes.

“Strong.” The quiet one tugged on Shizuo’s leg and looked up at him with a pointed gaze.

Shizuo awkwardly lifted the little girl on his leg, effortlessly holding her out straight in the air and trying in vain to gently shake her off.

“Check! Check! Check!” The loud one giggled, bouncing in Shizuo’s arms in delight.

“Broad shoulders.” The quiet one smiled, hugging Shizuo’s leg tighter despite his efforts.

The loud one patted both of Shizuo’s shoulders, looking very pleased at what she could see.

“Check!” She sang.

“Gold eyes.” The quiet one listed with a tone of finality, looking up at Shizuo’s face.

The loud one tilted her head to peer intently into Shizuo’s eyes, her nose barely two inches from his as she gazed widely into his golden orbs. Shizuo shuffled uncomfortably in place, wondering if this was how Izaya taught his sisters to interact with every stranger who came to their house. It was definitely a good way to scare off intruders.

“Cheeeeeeck!” The loud one declared, clapping her hands in joy and wiggling around in Shizuo’s arms. “It’s Shizu-nii! It’s Shizu-nii! So handsome! Shizu-nii!”

Shizuo almost choked at that comment which had been just thrown into her ramblings. “H-
“Handsome?” He squeaked out, eyes wide with shock. “M-Me?”

The loud one laughed and hopped out of Shizuo’s arms, grabbing one of his hands and tugging him into the house with an eager look on her face. “Yes! Shizu-nii handsome! Come in, come in! Come in, Shizu-nii!”

“Iza-nii’s boyfriend.” The quiet one added, releasing Shizuo’s leg and taking his other hand, helping to pull the shell-shocked blonde into the house.

“B-B-B-Boyfriend?!” Shizuo shrieked, feeling like his world was cracking around him.

“Come in, come in!” The loud one repeated, ignoring his comment and pulling him all the way inside.

Shizuo let himself be pulled into what appeared to be the living room, and over onto a large sofa which was placed in front of a TV.

Both twins hurried off out of the room and Shizuo heard the front door slam shut, the lock coming back into place, and the two girls hurried back into the living room, plopping down on either side of Shizuo.

“Is Shizu-nii comfortable?” The loud one asked excitedly, her brown eyes wide as she hopped in place on the couch.

“Shizu-nii guest.” The quiet one added, leaning her head against Shizuo’s arm.

Shizuo looked between the two girls, still amazed that they were not only unafraid of his presence, but were also happy to see him.

“Um, yes I’m comfortable.” Shizuo managed to say awkwardly, glancing around the house. Aside from the two lively girls, the whole place seemed rather…empty. It was a big, empty house. There was almost no trace of family here. It seemed so lonely.

He looked back down at the two happy toddlers, wondering if they’d ever seen a big rowdy party full of people and life. Judging by this overly neat, overly large, overly quiet house, he was guessing not.

“What are your names?” Shizuo asked next, smiling a little at the girls.

They seemed thrilled that he was finally warming up to them.

“Mairu!” The loud one chirped excitedly, jumping to her feet on the couch and hopping in place. “I’m Mairu!”

“Kururi.” The quiet one added, smiling at Shizuo as she hugged his arm.

“Mairu and Kururi? Those are pretty names.” Shizuo commented, ruffling Kururi’s hair gently. “Iza-nii picked them!” Mairu chirped, hopping off the couch and running in front of Shizuo, hurling her upper body onto his lap with a grin.

“Really? Izaya named you two?” Shizuo asked in surprise, looking down at the girl as she nuzzled into his lap.

“Yes. Iza-nii named us.” Kururi smiled, rubbing her head against Shizuo’s arm.

“Iza-nii raises us, too!” Mairu added with a giggle, playing with Shizuo’s fingers. “He feeds us and
plays with us and bathes us and tucks us in and takes us to daycare and takes care of us when we’re sick!” She listed off, examining Shizuo’s fingers with great interest. “We’re sick.” Kururi added, hopping off the couch and joining her sister on the floor.

“Oh right! Kuru-nee is right!” Mairu shrieked, looking up at Shizuo with a happy grin. “We got sick a few days ago. Iza-nii has been taking care of us and convincing the neighbors to watch us.”

Shizuo had had a cold feeling start to settle in his stomach with each word the twins were speaking. It seemed Izaya did everything for these girls…absolutely everything. And a few more things started to come together in Shizuo’s mind with that knowledge.

Why Izaya had gotten so upset during the yoga lesson when Shizuo mentioned his parents. Why he’d been so uncomfortable entering Shizuo’s house for the first time and meeting his family. Why no one knew anything about Izaya’s family or home life. Why Izaya had been so exhausted these last few days. Why Izaya never asked for help with anything at all. Why Izaya always seemed to be so lonely.

“Is…Is Iza-nii the only one who’s home with you guys?” Shizuo asked slowly, wondering if the girls had inherited Izaya’s craftiness and suspicion. Wondering if they were going to pick up on the unasked question he was trying to answer.

“Most of the time.” Kururi said softly, looking up at Shizuo with big brown eyes.

“Yep! It’s just us and Iza-nii!” Mairu said cheerfully, grinning happily up at him.

“I…see.” Shizuo managed to get out, forcing a smile onto his face as he looked down at the two girls. Half of his mind wanted him to believe that their parents just stayed out really late and didn’t tend to come back home early very often. But another half of his brain was jumping to a different conclusion: the parents were just not there. They were gone all the time. And if that was the case then it was no wonder why Izaya was so closed off to everything and everyone around him.

Yep. The pieces were definitely coming together.

Suddenly, there was a loud banging noise from the front door, as if something heavy had just been dropped onto the front porch.

“Girls. I’m home.” A tired voice called through the door as the lock came undone and the wooden entrance swung open.

“Iza-nii!” Mairu cried in delight, jumping up instantly from Shizuo’s lap and racing towards the door at top speed. Kururi followed swiftly afterwards, bolting towards the front door with a soft smile on her face.

“Iza-nii, you’re back!” Shizuo could hear the thrilled girl screech, followed by the sound of a child latching onto someone’s leg. “Good trip?” A much softer voice inquired, and Shizuo could hear the new person sigh fondly as he leaned down to pick up the second girl. “Yes, Kuru-chan. The shopping trip went pretty well. And how are things back here, my darlings? Are you both okay? Did you throw up at all? Are you feeling better or worse?”

Shizuo felt his heart pound in his chest as the new voice came closer, surrounded by the excited chattering of the two toddlers it was with. He knew it was stupid to allow his heart to race in his chest like this but…when the raven finally came around the corner, one arm wrapped around a tiny girl, the other lined with grocery bags, and a loving smile on his face directed at a second girl latched to his leg, Shizuo couldn’t help but feel his heart swell at the sight of Izaya.
Izaya was as beautiful as ever, even with the heavy evidence of exhaustion lining his face. The slight bags under his eyes and dull look glazed over the ruby orbs did nothing to detract from the flawlessness of his alabaster skin, or the sharp contrast of his raven hair with the rest of his body. The gentle curves of his body were as apparent as ever, and the smile spread over his pink lips only heightened the loveliness of the rest of him. The look on Izaya’s face now was different from anything Shizuo had seen on it up to this point. It certainly wasn’t the harsh look of mischief and evil that was present on God-Izaya’s face at school. It also wasn’t the sweet but still slightly patronizing look that was on Tutor-Izaya’s face at Shizuo’s home. It was something better than either of those looks. This look was loving and happy and honest. It was something that Shizuo could never have imagined on Izaya’s face, and he never could have imagined how stunning it made Izaya look.

He was radiant.

“…and a guest showed up, too!” Mairu’s chirping voice suddenly cut into Shizuo’s thoughts, dragging him back to the present. He looked down at the toddler as she pointed him out happily, squeezing Izaya’s leg just to make sure her brother was looking.

Shizuo glanced up and made eye contact with his tutor, who froze right where he was, red eyes growing larger than Shizuo had ever seen them. “Sh-Sh-Shizuo?!” Izaya choked out, dropping the bags right where he stood as his jaw dropped with them.

Shizuo gave a sheepish wave, standing up from the couch as he scratched the back of his head. “Uh, hey Izaya. How...how are you?” He asked weakly, golden eyes flicking around the house nervously.

“Shizu-nii visit.” Kururi’s soft voice told Izaya, pulling on her brother’s dark hair with a happy smile on her face. Izaya turned and gaped at his sister in shock, his face an even paler shade of white than it normally was. “R-Really?” He got out, gulping once as he looked in fright over at Shizuo. “H-H-How long has Shizu-nii been…visiting?” Izaya asked weakly, setting his sister down as he slowly gathered the fallen grocery bags.

“Only a few minutes! Why didn’t you tell us your boyfriend was coming over?” Mairu chirped, hopping off Izaya’s leg and running over to her twin to hold her hand, grinning up at Izaya.

Izaya tripped and fell over his own feet, crashing to the ground next to the groceries with a loud thud. Shizuo clapped a hand over his mouth to stifle the laugh that threatened to tear out of him. He’d never seen Izaya look so clumsy.

The raven pushed himself up on his hands and knees, cheeks red with embarrassment, as he started to gather the groceries that had fallen out of their bags. Izaya picked up a tomato and dropped it almost immediately, his fingers shaking slightly from the shock of Shizuo’s presence and the comment that had just been made.

Shizuo jumped in place and ran over immediately to where Izaya was, dropping to his knees and helping him gather the groceries.

Izaya glanced at him briefly, a small look of gratitude crossing his face before he looked over at his sisters again. “Um, girls, Shizu-chan is not my boyfriend.” He said gently, holding open a bag so Shizuo could load the loose produce into it.

Mairu looked skeptical as she crossed her arms, peering at her brother suspiciously. “Yes he is! Cuz he’s handsome!” She said firmly, as if that explained everything. Kururi nodded from beside her, crossing her arms to mimic her sister.
Shizuo felt his cheeks blush red at the compliment as he finished putting away the last of the groceries into the final open bag.

“Being handsome does not make him my boyfriend.” Izaya glared at his sisters as he snatched the bags from Shizuo and stood up, planting his hands on his hips as he looked at the two toddlers. “And you two are not supposed to let anyone in the house! What were you thinking?”

“Shizu-nii good.” Kururi said softly, ducking her head guiltily as Izaya glared at her.

“Yes, Shizu-nii is good, but not everybody is! No more answering the door unless you know it’s me. Understood?” Izaya shook his finger at the girls with a very serious look on his face. Both girls nodded instantly, and Shizuo felt a smile creep over his face at the protective big brother Izaya seemed to be.

The twins looked over at Shizuo and big pouts immediately crossed their faces as they sought pity from him.

Shizuo stifled another laugh and walked over to Izaya, placing a gentle hand on his shoulder. “I think they get it. Let’s move on, okay?” He suggested, and Izaya’s head snapped up to look at him. “I don’t need that from the guy who barged into my house while I was out buying groceries!” He snapped, slapping Shizuo’s hand off his shoulder. “I told you I had something important to do today! Why did you insist on seeing me? And how did you know where my house was? And how did you get my sisters to open the door? And why are you still here? And why are you acting so nice? And how are you so calm right now?!” Izaya fired off one question after the other, his words growing almost panicked as his eyes started to dart around the room wildly, breath coming faster and faster as his ruby eyes widened further and further. He looked like he was about to explode.

Shizuo didn’t know what else to do. He hadn’t expected Izaya to get this…panicked about Shizuo showing up in his house. Whenever Shizuo panicked, his mother would always calm him by giving him a hug. But Izaya wasn’t really the hugging type…then again he was really freaking out…maybe a hug would show him that Shizuo meant no harm at all by being here.

Before he could change his mind, Shizuo reached out for the panicking raven and yanked him against his chest, trapping him in a tight embrace. Shizuo held Izaya against him, making sure his arms were wrapped firmly around the squirming body, hoping that this wasn’t a terrible decision.

Izaya let out a sound that was halfway between a monkey’s screech and a cat’s yowl as he struggled to free himself from Shizuo’s grasp, the tiny body squirming back and forth furiously inside of Shizuo’s arms.

“Izaya-kun, calm down.” Shizuo said as softly as he could, hoping he wasn’t squeezing Izaya’s body too tightly. “I just came over here because you’ve been so tired lately, and I was worried about you stressing yourself out too much.”

Izaya suddenly froze in Shizuo’s arms, his entire body acting as though it had just been paralyzed or turned to stone. Not a single muscle was twitching in his body. He had just stopped moving.

Shizuo wasn’t sure if that was a good thing or a bad thing, but he decided to just keep talking.

“I was worried about you, Izaya-kun.” He repeated, slowly rocking Izaya’s motionless body back and forth. “You always place so much…well, so much care and effort into the lessons you give me, so when you cancelled this one, I just thought something serious might be wrong. I asked Shinra where you lived at lunch today and I got permission from my family to come visit you and help you out if you need anything.”
Izaya was still silent and immobile for a while after Shizuo had finished talking.

Shizuo looked over at the two girls who were still standing there, watching them with careful brown eyes, as if gauging Izaya’s reaction to this strange form of interaction. Shizuo got the feeling that however Izaya reacted was going to be the premise of how these little twins were going to react here in a few seconds. He prayed that the reaction would be positive.

Izaya just stood in Shizuo’s arms, not talking or moving, until eventually he shifted the tiniest bit in Shizuo’s grip, allowing himself to sink somewhat into Shizuo’s embrace.

“You…just want to help?” Izaya asked quietly, his voice softer than Shizuo had ever heard it before. “That’s all? You were…worried…about me?”

Shizuo nodded slowly, hoping that he wasn’t about to scare Izaya away. “That’s right. I was worried about you, so I came over to help. That’s…well, that’s the “friends” part of “frenemies”.” He said gently, looking at the inky black hair of Izaya’s head.

Izaya stayed silent for just a little bit longer, but eventually, he pulled back and looked at Shizuo with the barest trace of a smile on his lips. Shizuo might have been seeing things, but he could have also sworn that there were a few tears forming like dewdrops in those ruby eyes.

“Alright then.” Izaya said gently, pulling away and out of Shizuo’s embrace. But he stayed next to Shizuo, close enough that if Shizuo had reached out a hand just a few inches, he could have been holding hands with the ice king himself.

Izaya looked over at his sisters and smiled at them, rearranging the grocery bags that were laid out on his arm. “Girls, it looks like we do have a guest, after all.” He said cheerfully, and the look of pure joy that crossed the twins’ faces was enough to melt Shizuo’s heart on the spot.

“Shizu-nii is staying!” Mairu cheered, running over and latching onto Shizuo with a happy giggle. “Shizu-nii stay.” Kururi agreed, snatching Shizuo’s hand and pressing it to her cheek affectionately.

Izaya looked at his sisters and the fondness in his eyes was plainer than the sun in the sky. “Let’s make him feel at home, okay? I’m gonna make dinner.” He announced, heading over to the kitchen as the girls dragged Shizuo eagerly into the living room again, back over to the couch.

Shizuo threw a glance over his shoulder just in time to watch Izaya do the exact same thing, their eyes meeting from across the house as they just stared at each other.

A smile crossed Izaya’s face as he gave a shy little wave before vanishing into the kitchen, and Shizuo knew that the same smile had been reflected on his own face when he waved back before leaving to play with the twins.

He was in the Orihara household. He was with the Orihara family. He was closer to Izaya than he’d ever been before.

And that made Shizuo truly happy.

Chapter End Notes

Yay! Shizuo has finally met the twins! But also, oh no! He now has a pretty solid idea of just what is going on with Izaya and the Orihara family. What will he do? How will
Izaya react? We will all wait to see on Sunday!

As usual, thanks for reading! I hope you liked it! <3
So I've been toying with the idea of writing a small lemon for these two dorks. I've gotten a few comments asking about it and I think I want to try it. Since that would change the rating of this story, I think I'll make it a separate one-shot for Valentine's Day or something along those lines. But what do you guys think? Should I try it? Please vote yes or no in the comments!
And now on to the actual chapter! <3

Izaya had been terrified when he saw Shizuo in his house.

No one had ever come to his house before, not even Shinra. It was a golden rule, an unspoken golden rule, that none of Izaya’s friends ever invaded his privacy and entered his house. He selected his friends very carefully, making sure they were the kind of people who wouldn’t care at all if they didn’t know anything about him from where his house was to how old he was. Shinra fit this category perfectly (he was actually the first to have done so) and thus he was Izaya’s first friend.

The crazy doctor ended up being Izaya’s only friend as well, even though the raven had made a long list of acquaintances at school, and that was fine with Izaya. Shinra didn’t ask questions. Shinra didn’t pry. Shinra was safe.

But Shizuo on the other hand? Apparently that was a very different story.

Izaya never thought there would be someone who cared enough about him to check up on him at home if he was having problems. His parents weren’t exactly the shining example of care and support, and his policy of “distance friendships” sort of kept anyone who might actually care away from him.

Yet again, Shizuo had proved to be the exception to Izaya’s rule.

Izaya had been shocked when Shizuo said he was worried. No one had ever worried about Izaya before. And the fact that Shizuo was only there to help? Unbelievable!

Izaya let the protozoan stay, partially because help would be nice (even if the twins were recovering from their sickness, they were still a handful) and partially because his worry had been…sweet. It was almost endearing.

But that didn’t change Izaya’s suspicions about how much Shizuo had discovered about his family’s “status”. He knew his sisters were blabbermouths, and that if they ended up trusting someone, they would inevitably end up spouting their whole life story. Thankfully, their lives weren’t very long at this point, but still.

Izaya could feel his body buzzing from where Shizuo had hugged him. He could hear the twins and Shizuo in the living room as they played together, the twins chattering eagerly over Shizuo’s soft replies. He could feel happiness spreading in his chest as he unloaded the groceries and packed them all away in the kitchen. He could feel safety and warmth in this household for the first time.
“Shizu-chan…you never fail to amaze me.” Izaya said softly to himself, grabbing a few tomatoes and setting them aside so he could use them for dinner in a bit.

He wondered if Shizuo would start to ask questions about Izaya’s personal life now that he’d seen the…state of his house. It wasn’t exactly comforting and familial, like Shizuo’s own home. Perhaps now Shizuo would begin to pry. Well, Shizuo’s prying was almost guaranteed at this point. The real question that Izaya had to answer was…would he let him pry? Was he okay with that? Was he…going to let someone past his walls?

For the first time in a good long while, was Izaya going to let someone get close to him?


Izaya felt his fingers clench inadvertently around the grocery bag that he was opening. His red eyes stared off into space as memories began to fly into his mind, unbidden and untamable.

A ride on a Ferris Wheel in the night sky during the Fireworks Festival.

A small ice skating class for couples.

A lesson on riding motorcycles where Izaya fell one too many times, but he was helped back up every time.

A friendly smile waiting for him when class was over, walking him to the library.

A conversation about books as they huddled together on the couch.

A hand holding his, gentle and comforting.

All fake. All completely, horribly fake.

Tears started to form in Izaya’s eyes as his hands started shaking. He grit his teeth as the memories just kept flowing, not one of them stopping to give him the slightest bit of relief from the pain. Why? Why him? Why did it have to be him?!

“Izaya?” A deep voice broke into Izaya’s thoughts, making him jump and drop the packet of noodles he’d been holding.

Izaya looked down at the floor and dropped to his knees instantly, grabbing the noodle packet with shaking hands as embarrassment coated his face.

“Sh-Shizu-chan. You startled me.” Izaya managed to squeak out, avoiding eye contact as best he could.

Unfortunately, Shizuo’s gentlemanly nature compelled him to run over and help Izaya up from the ground, his strong hands grabbing Izaya’s arms with surprising care as he helped the smaller boy to stand.

Still, Izaya refused to look into Shizuo’s face. He refused to find the same look on the protozoan’s face that he’d seen on…his face so many years ago. He was afraid to find it. Afraid to let the same face trick him into comfort once again.

“Izaya? You okay?” Shizuo’s voice sounded confused and concerned as a placed a hand on Izaya’s shoulder, squeezing slightly.

“Fine. Just startled.” Izaya bit out, turning away so he could face the food again. He prayed Shizuo
would get the message and leave him alone soon. He didn’t want to break down right now. He needed to focus!

Shizuo was silent for a bit, but he didn’t leave, which made Izaya nervous.

“I didn’t realize being startled made you cry.” He finally said in a soft voice, and Izaya froze instantly.

“Crying?” He croaked out, and then he forced a harsh laugh past his lips as his hands roughly ripped open the noodle packet. “Who’s crying? Shizu-chan, I think you need to get your eyes checked.”

Shizuo didn’t respond to Izaya’s taunt. Instead, he just reached a hand around from behind Izaya and gently, with a touch like a feather brushing across his skin, wiped away some of the tears from Izaya’s eye. Izaya let him wipe away the tears, not moving or speaking as the blonde moved to his other eye and gently cleared that one as well.

When Shizuo was done getting all the tears, his hands dropped down and wrapped around Izaya’s waist, pulling him back against Shizuo’s chest.

Neither of them spoke as Shizuo held Izaya to him, the warmth of his body radiating throughout Izaya’s own cold frame, as Izaya just held the noodle packet in front of him. He stared at the noodles, still not trusting himself to look back, but trusting Shizuo just enough to allow himself this. This gentle embrace that he never thought he would feel again.

They remained like that for a few minutes, listening to the twins rummaging around in the living room, and not saying a word.

Finally, Shizuo sighed, his hot breath ruffling Izaya’s raven black hair. “I’d like to know about your parents.” He said softly. “You don’t have to tell me now. I can just assume that they work long hours and show up late at night. That they’re still around…just not as much as other parents.”

Shizuo’s arms were warm as they circled Izaya’s waist, and his body solid as it pressed to the curves of Izaya’s back. “Until you’re ready to tell me about them, then we can leave it at that. But right now…will you tell me why you’re crying?”

Izaya didn’t know how to respond to that. The very words that had just come out of Shizuo’s mouth were worth so much more than anything anyone had ever said to him. More tears filled his eyes, of a different kind than before, as he tried to comprehend the meaning behind Shizuo’s words.

Care?

Concern?

Affection?

Sweetness?

Gentleness?

Love?

None of these things were applicable to Izaya. None of these things were ever given to him. But Shizuo’s words implied them. These things were coming from his enemy. No…his frenemy. Were they actually there? Was Izaya just finding something that didn’t exist? Or did Shizuo…did he feel those things for Izaya?
It was impossible.

He was just being nice, probably due to lessons from his mother or father. There was no special emotion involved here. It was Shizuo being Shizuo. He was being considerate for the sake of his upbringing.

But no matter the reasons for his kindness, he was still being kind. He deserved an answer.

“I remembered something,” Izaya said simply. “Something…unpleasant. I don’t want to talk about it further…nor do I want to talk about my parents. Can you…can we…leave it at that for now?”

Shizuo nodded from behind Izaya, his chin brushing the top of Izaya’s head when he nodded. “Of course. That’s fantastic for now.” He said gently, rubbing small circles on Izaya’s sides. “I didn’t expect you to be so giving with your information.”

Izaya felt a small smile flicker over his lips at the statement. “Well.” He said finally. “It’s almost Christmas, isn’t it? I ought to be a little more giving than usual.”

He could feel Shizuo chuckle from behind him, the sound rippling over Izaya’s entire body. “Yes. I suppose so.” The blonde agreed, still holding Izaya comfortably against himself. “And Izaya…since it’s almost Christmas…well, I just want you to know that if you need help here at home, you can ask me and I won’t tell anyone about it. Okay?”

Izaya felt his heart swell with something and a smile crossed over his face. He gave a simple nod as an answer, getting a small grunt from Shizuo in response.

They stayed still for just a tad longer, and then Izaya flapped his arms about, pushing Shizuo away from him. “Now that’s enough contact for one day! Go play with the girls again. I need to finish making dinner.”

“Right, right.” Shizuo said from behind him, but Izaya could practically hear the smile in his voice as his footsteps exited the kitchen. “If you need any help with dinner, call me. I’m not the best cook ever, but I can at least follow instructions.”

“Duly noted.” Izaya waved a hand in Shizuo’s direction, refusing to turn and let the protozoan see the smile on his own face as he returned to cooking. “Now go play. Those are your current instructions.”

Shizuo chuckled as he left, and an almost domestic feeling passed over Izaya at the ridiculous scenario he was in. Honestly. Shizuo was his enemy! Just at the start of this week, Izaya had been contemplating new methods of ruining Shizuo’s life and helping him to fail the grade. And now the blonde was in his home, playing with his sisters as Izaya cooked dinner for them all, and offering support that Izaya hadn’t received in years.

Life was certainly a very funny thing.

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“Is Shizu-nii gonna live with us now?” Mairu chirped happily as she shoveled some more noodles into her mouth, chopsticks gripped clumsily but securely in her hand.

Shizuo smiled at the tiny girl and ruffled her hair, twirling one of her long braids a bit before pulling his hand back as Izaya responded for him.

“No. Shizu-nii has his own home. He’s going back there after dinner.” Izaya told the girl, leaning
over the table with a napkin and wiping some noodle sauce off his sister’s cheek. Shizuo bit his lip to help curb the emotion that was rising up in his body at the sight of Izaya being such a caring older brother. Honestly, it was adorable to see him taking care of his baby sisters with as much effort as he put into tutoring Shizuo. He was like his own version of a single parent.

Shizuo felt a pang go through his chest at that thought. He was certain that Izaya’s parents were absent from the scene of the Orihara siblings’ upbringing. He wasn’t going to press Izaya about it, and out loud he was only going to mention them as though they worked all day, but he figured that Izaya’s parents were all but missing in action when it came to their children. He had no idea where they were or what they were doing, but it wasn’t what they ought to have been doing. That was for sure.

Shizuo felt a gentle tug on his sleeve that jolted him back into the present. He looked down in surprise and saw Kururi, smiling at him as she tugged on his shirt, her short hair slightly choppy on her head as she tilted it to the side. “Shizu-nii. Handsome.” The quiet girl stated as she laid her head on Shizuo’s arm, contentedly nuzzling up against him.

Shizuo felt his cheeks blush red at the girl’s affections. He was not going to get used to that compliment, was he? Oh well. They were toddlers. He was probably the first male they’d seen aside from their own brother. It hardly counted as a compliment.

“Yes. Shizu-nii is very handsome.” Izaya agreed, his ruby eyes flicking up to gaze at Shizuo through his dark eyelashes for a few seconds before going back down to his sister. “He’s a handsome guy. Much better than most other males his age.”

Shizuo’s cheeks got even redder at that, and he ducked his head instantly, feeling the embarrassment rush throughout his body instantly. Okay, there was no way he could pass that comment off as ignorance. Izaya had just…called him handsome.

“Iza-nii pretty and Shizu-nii handsome! Make babies already!” Mairu complained, conveniently right as Shizuo placed a bite of noodles in his mouth. He started choking right off the bat, pounding hard on his chest as the noodles got stuck in his throat, gold eyes wide with shock.

Izaya helped pat Shizuo on the back, his hand pounding a steady rhythm as he gaped at his little sister. “I thought you were going to ask the Hayashis about how babies were made.” He said weakly. “Didn’t you ask?”

Mairu waved a hand dismissively in the air as Shizuo started to question the way Izaya himself had been brought up if he was pushing off a responsibility like that on his neighbors.

“We did ask! But that doesn’t matter. You two can still do it if you try!” Mairu said happily, nodding eagerly at Izaya.

Izaya stared at his sister, hand freezing on Shizuo’s back. “How…how exactly did the Hayashis explain it to you?” He asked slowly, and Shizuo quickly waved a hand in the air, his cheeks burning red. He did not want to hear this conversation at the dinner table.

“H-How about we just eat and push this off for later?” He suggested, looking over at Kururi for support.

Kururi looked at Shizuo for a few seconds, but apparently decided he had earned her favor as she turned and nodded at her twin. “Later.” She agreed, and Mairu pouted, crossing her arms. “But Kuru-nee!” She whined, looking between Izaya and Shizuo longingly.

“No! Mai-chan, this discussion is over. Eat your noodles.” Izaya ordered, snapping his fingers and
pointing at the dinner left on Mairu’s plate. His cheeks were tinged the slightest shade of red, but his eyes were determined as they glared at his little sister.

The tiny girl bent to his will and ducked her head, shoveling the noodles into her mouth with abandon.

Izaya sighed and took his seat again, picking up his own chopsticks and continuing to eat.

Shizuo had finally gotten the last of his noodles out of his throat, and he copied Izaya’s decision to continue dinner, grabbing a bite of the pickled vegetables as well.

The four of them ate in silence for the most part, which made Shizuo a little uncomfortable. Every few seconds he looked up, hoping to see one of them strike up a conversation, but the Orihara siblings just kept eating, their eyes focused on their food and their faces relaxed as they ate. It was like they were used to eating in total silence.

Mairu soundlessly pointed at the salt shaker on the table and Izaya slid it over without a word, not even losing pace as he continued to eat. Kururi tapped her sister’s arm and Mairu lifted her arm up so her twin could grab a napkin, not one of the toddlers even uttering a sound as they moved.

The silence was deafening to Shizuo, who was used to constant conversation and shouting and jokes and laughter around the dinner table. This…silence was unnatural. He couldn’t stand it.

“So!” Shizuo finally blurted out, startling the three siblings around him who jumped in shock, looking over at him with wide eyes.

Shizuo directed his gaze at the twins, trying to ignore the pointed gaze of Izaya that was locked on his face.

“What are you girls doing tomorrow?” He asked as pleasantly as possible, fingers tapping nervously on the table as he took another bite of vegetables.

Mairu and Kururi both stared at him blankly, their gazes slowly moving to look at their brother as if for approval. Shizuo glanced over at Izaya and saw the red eyes locked on him, an unreadable expression covering his lovely face. Finally, the raven looked at his sisters and nodded once, taking another bite of his dinner without a word.

The twins slowly looked at each other and then back at Shizuo. “We’re going to daycare tomorrow.” Mairu announced. “They’re having an all-day craft event. Iza-nii paid the fee for us to go.”

“Worked hard.” Kururi added quietly, nodding her head once as she took a small bite of vegetables.

A sort of light came into Mairu’s brown eyes as she nodded happily, bouncing in her seat a little as she focused her eager gaze on Shizuo. “Yeah! We both worked really hard on our crafts for the event and we’re gonna display them for other people! It’ll be really fun! And Iza-nii worked hard, too! In order to pay the fee.”

Shizuo glanced over at Izaya, who was smiling proudly at his two girls. When he noticed Shizuo looking at him, his cheeks turned a little red and he stared pointedly down at his food, refusing to meet Shizuo’s eyes.

“You worked hard to pay the fee?” Shizuo repeated Mairu’s words, cocking his head a little at Izaya. “What does that mean?”

Izaya looked up at Shizuo, then back down at his food with a shrug. “It’s no big deal. I really didn’t
do that much.” He tried to say, but his sisters cut him off as they jumped to their feet in protest.

“Not true!” Kururi gave a soft little shout, her eyes glaring at Izaya with more passion than Shizuo had ever seen in them. “Iza-nii did all those favors for our neighbors!” Mairu added, pointing a finger at Izaya accusingly. “We saw Iza-nii! Iza-nii hunted all over and looked things up and talked to people and went all detective to find things out for people! Iza-nii found a bunch of information for people and did favors for them to get money for us!”

Shizuo raised an eyebrow as he looked back at Izaya. Those weren’t the typical “favors” he thought of when he thought of doing favors for neighbors. He thought of walking the dog, cleaning the yard, taking out the trash, and babysitting. He didn’t think of…hunting all over, looking things up, talking to people, and turning into a detective to sell information.

“What kind of favors are those?” He asked, looking at Izaya intently.

Izaya glanced away, avoiding eye contact as he moved some vegetables around absently on his plate. “I just…well, it’s called selling information.” He said defensively, red eyes locked on his dinner. “Information is priceless! I just ask people if there’s anything they want to know, follow the rumors, spread a few others, and hunt down whatever was asked of me. I’m pretty good at it, if I say so myself.” His voice dropped into a mumble near the end, and he grabbed another vegetable, popping it into his mouth as if to shut himself up.

“Iza-nii is the best!” Mairu declared, pounding a fist on the table defiantly. “He’s who everyone goes to for information! Even Grumpy Old Guy!”

“Broker.” Kururi added softly, copying her twin’s pounding motion on the table.

“Yeah! Iza-nii is an information broker! The very best one!” Mairu said proudly, looking over at Shizuo as if daring him to disagree.

“Girls! Stop exaggerating! I’m hardly an information broker. Amateur sleuth is probably closer to the truth right now.” Izaya scolded the toddlers, but there was a smile flickering over his lips nonetheless as he gently pushed the girls back down into sitting positions.

Shizuo smiled at the sight, taking another bite of his dinner as the siblings all settled down again.

“Well, speaking of your daycare event and my amateur sleuthing,” Izaya said the last words with heavy emphasis, staring at the girls for good measure before turning to Shizuo. “I have a job that I need to look into around the same time that the event ends. The girls need to be picked up then and I can’t exactly be in two places at once.”

Izaya’s red eyes were darting around the room nervously, like he wasn’t sure about asking his next question. His hands fidgeted a little with his chopsticks as he finally looked at Shizuo, biting his lip before speaking.

“I was wondering if maybe you could…well, if you could pick up the girls while I’m working and just hold on to them for a bit.”

Before Shizuo could say anything, Izaya bolted up in his seat, eyes wide with alarm as he started speaking at rapid fire speed.

“Only for a little bit! I promise you won’t have them for more than an hour! And then I can meet you at the park or something! You don’t even have to take them home! And they’re wonderful girls, really!” He babbled, one statement after the other with no small amount of panic, his fingers tapping the table rapidly as if that was helping him calm down.
“Wow. This boy has too much on his shoulders.” Shizuo thought as he stood up at the table, placing his hands on said shoulders comfortingly. “Relax, Izaya-kun.” He said softly, smiling at his frantic tutor. “I’ll be happy to take the girls for a bit. We can walk around town or something. I really don’t mind. I miss taking care of Kasuka, if I’m being honest.”

The relief that washed over Izaya’s face made everything worth it. “Thank you so much, Shizuchan.” Izaya breathed out quietly. “I…I can’t tell you how much that means to me.”

Shizuo looked at the exhaustion that was coating Izaya’s too-young face. He listened to the deafening loneliness and quiet of the house around them. He remembered the stark lack of family photos around the house and the inability of the twins to so much as describe their own parents. He thought about Izaya’s tutoring job, his “amateur sleuthing”, his job as the girls’ guardian, and his school career. He thought about the lack of friends that Izaya had, and thus the lack of support.

“You don’t have to tell me.” Shizuo finally said, looking deep into Izaya’s eyes without wavering. “I know.”

They continued to eat in silence for a little while after that, but it was a comfortable silence, different from the tension that had been around the table before. As Shizuo stared down at the dinner that Izaya had prepared for all of them, a sudden thought jumped into his mind.

“You never got to give Shinra and Kadota and me our bento boxes, did you?” He asked, looking up at Izaya.

The raven froze, a bite of rice halfway to his mouth as his red eyes widened.

Slowly, his head turned to face Shizuo, and Shizuo noticed that his face was abnormally pale, even for him. “Oh my god.” The raven whispered. “It’s winter break now, isn’t it?”

Shizuo nodded slowly. Today had been the last day of school before the start of winter break.

“So I have no chance of getting it to them anymore.” Izaya continued, and again Shizuo nodded, seeing where this was starting to go.

“And Shinra would have been expecting bento…” Izaya groaned, slamming his head on the kitchen table.

“Yes. Most likely.” Shizuo said gently, wincing a little at the moan of agony that came from Izaya’s lips.

“I am so dead.” The raven despaired, banging his forehead on the table over and over. “Dead, dead, dead, dead! Shinra is going to come to my house, slit open my stomach, use my organs for research, and dance on my grave!”

Izaya suddenly bolted upright in his seat with a groan, grabbing his hair in his hands and squeezing his eyes shut. “It’s all over!” He wailed, shaking his head back and forth. “At the end of winter break when I see him again, that mad scientist is going to murder me!”

Shizuo tried not to laugh at the dramatic display the moaning raven was making of himself, clapping a hand over his mouth to stifle the giggles. “I-It’s just bento.” He managed to snicker, biting his lip as Izaya’s ruby eyes snapped down to look at him. “I’m sure you could just give it to him on the first day of school when it starts up again. Or drop it off at his house over the break.”

“I don’t have the time for that!” Izaya yelled, waving his arms in the air frantically. “Those bento will go bad in a few days and I’m totally booked! The twins need someone here to watch them! How am
I supposed to get the bento to three different houses while still watching the girls?!”

Shizuo watched the panic spread over Izaya’s face and he smiled again, reaching over the table to pull Izaya’s hands from the air.

The raven looked up at him in shock, red eyes wide as his hands were gently pulled down and placed on the table in front of him. Shizuo’s warm eyes bored deep into Izaya’s confused ones, their gazes locking tight on each other almost immediately.

“How about…after this daycare business is over, I watch the girls a little longer?” Shizuo suggested gently, making sure his hands were still placed firmly over Izaya’s much smaller ones. Izaya stared up at him, not saying a word, prompting Shizuo to continue.

“I’ll just hang out with them like planned, but for a few extra hours instead of just one hour or so.” He said, glancing over to look at the two girls watching him eagerly. “And while I’m doing that, you can drop off all the bento. Do Shinra and Kadota first, then give me mine when you’re picking up the girls. Sound okay?”

Izaya stared at him for a while longer, eyes wide and shock filling them, like he wasn’t sure what to do with this display of help and support. Well, he better get used to it. Shizuo helped his friends. And considering the sort of situation Izaya was in…he needed all the help that Shizuo could offer.

“Sound okay?” Shizuo repeated, voice a little gentler as he looked right into Izaya’s eyes.

After a few more heartbeats of silence, Izaya slowly nodded. “So helpful, Shizu-chan.” He whispered softly, a small smile playing over his pink lips. His ruby eyes glittered a little as they fixed on Shizuo’s golden ones, returning his deep gaze. “If I didn’t know any better, I’d say you almost cared about me.”

“Because I do care about you, Izaya-kun.” Shizuo said before he could stop himself. “If you ever need help and I happen to hear about it, I’m going to help you.”

Izaya blinked a few times in shock, then that small smile came back onto his face. “Alright then.” He said gently, pulling his hands out from under Shizuo’s in one fluid motion. “I’ll accept your help.” Izaya looked over at Mairu and Kururi, smiling fondly at them before turning back to lock eyes with Shizuo one last time.

“It looks like you’re going to daycare tomorrow, Shizu-chan. And then taking care of my two little demons for at least three hours. I wish you luck.”

Chapter End Notes

So it looks like the crisis about Izaya’s family has been averted for just a while longer. Don’t get too comfortable, though! It won’t be averted for long! But who is this mysterious Hajime? Things are starting to get a little serious! Dun dun duuuuuuh! Well, I will see you all on Wednesday with the next chapter! Please remember to vote below! <3 <3 <3
Alright! So I am going to say right now that I am super shocked and impressed that there have been so many of you guys who know who exactly Hajime is already. I really, really am. Kudos to all of you who knew exactly who he was right off the bat! And to those of you who have no idea what I'm talking about, don't worry! You will know very, very soon.

Okie dokie! Here is the next chapter! I hope you enjoy! <3

“Even if those girls are sick, they still want to go to daycare.” Shizuo mumbled to himself as he slipped on a winter coat, getting ready to leave his house and pick up the Orihara twins from daycare. “I personally think they just faked being well enough to go so that Izaya would let them.”

“Is that so?” A cheerful voice asked from right behind Shizuo.

Shizuo jumped in place and spun around, his father right behind him with a huge grin on his face.

“D-Dad!” Shizuo yelped in shock, dropping his scarf on the floor.

Shizuo’s father bent over and grabbed the scarf, handing it to Shizuo with a grin on his face. “I didn’t know you’d taken up babysitting, son.” He sang, giving Shizuo a very pointed look. “Is it for a certain someone? Eh? Is it?” He elbowed Shizuo in the side, wiggling his eyebrows suggestively at the blonde boy.

Shizuo felt his cheeks blush red as he snatched the scarf, wrapping it fiercely around his neck with force that probably would have strangled a regular person. “Shut up. He asked me to pick up his sisters. I’m doing it as a favor for him. That’s all.” He muttered, refusing to look at his father as he stalked over to the door and yanked it open, feeling the winter air of December slam him in the face.

“Oh sure.” His dad’s voice called after him as he headed out. “And when you see your boyfriend again, send me a cute selfie of the two of you, will ya? Your mother would want one!” Shizuo sent a glare back at the house but swiftly turned around and kept walking, refusing to give his father the satisfaction of seeing him look back.

The winter air was cold and it nipped at his nose as he walked along, turning his cheeks pink with its stinging bite. The snow crunched under his feet as he walked, and his hands were cold as he looked at the slip of paper Izaya had given him yesterday. The address of the daycare was written on it in Izaya’s neat little handwriting, and it was surprisingly close to Shizuo’s school. He figured Izaya must have found a daycare close to school on purpose so that the boy could still make it to class on time. Man. Izaya had way too many responsibilities for a teenager in high school.

As Shizuo walked along the usual route he took to school, he stared up at the puffy gray clouds up in the sky, watching the snow flurries slowly spiral down to earth. It was calming, watching those little sparkles of white as they caught the light and wafted down to the ground. Shizuo stared up at the sky
as he walked, allowing a few of the snowflakes to land on his cheeks as he moved. They were tiny bursts of cold that melted on his warm skin in seconds. Each one was calming and reminded him of the season of the year that they were in. It was winter, yes, but it was also Christmas. Well, it wasn’t Christmas yet but it was getting close. And when it got close to Christmas, everything just seemed brighter.

Shizuo was always calmer closer to Christmas, and the rest of the world seemed a little kinder and full of far more cheer than it did the rest of the year. He loved Christmas. He loved the Christmas traditions that his family had, too. He was looking forward to this year’s Christmas Roast. He had a feeling that it was going to be a really good one.

Shizuo was snapped out of his thoughts by the sounds of giggling that broke into his mind.

He glanced over to his left, and spotted a large building tucked away on the street, a little bit of snow dusting the roof and the pathway leading up to it. There was a colorful handprint painted on the roof that almost screamed toddler, and warm lights glowing from the inside of the building pulled a smile instantly onto Shizuo’s face.

This must be the daycare.

Shizuo walked up the snow-covered path to the front door of the low building, knocking once on the colorful door.

He had waited for barely two seconds before the door was flung open, revealing a tall man with a rather friendly grin and paint all over his face. “Hello! Can I help you?” He asked cheerfully, wiping a bit of pink paint off his cheek as he looked Shizuo up and down.

Shizuo shifted uncomfortably, fiddling a bit with the scarf around his neck as the man’s sparkling dark eyes locked with his golden ones.

“Uh, yes.” He finally managed to say, straightening up as he faced the man. “I’m here to pick up the Orihara twins. My name is Heiwajima Shizuo.”

The man blinked and a look of shock crossed his face. “The Orihara twins?” He repeated, his eyes wide as he looked Shizuo up and down again. “As in…Izaya-kun sent you to pick his sisters up?”

Shizuo felt his hands twitch when the nurse said “Izaya-kun”. That was his nickname for Izaya. Only he could say that.

“Yes.” He managed to force out. “Izaya-kun sent me to pick his sisters up.” The “me” probably came out a lot harsher than it needed to but Shizuo was already too distracted with clenching his fists and refraining from attacking this overly friendly, overly attractive male nurse to care.

The nurse raised an eyebrow, but he nodded slowly and stepped aside. “Alright…come on in.”

Shizuo nodded in response and stepped inside the warm building, listening to the giggling sounds of children coming from a room off to his right. He was pretty sure he could hear Kururi and Mairu laughing in the back as well.

“My name is Suzuki.” The male nurse suddenly said from behind him, dragging Shizuo’s attention back over to him. The nurse had crossed his arms and was watching Shizuo carefully. “I’ve known Izaya-kun for a long time. Have you?” He asked coolly, one perfect eyebrow arched on his stupidly perfect face.

“Oh, Buster. You do not wanna go toe to toe with me.” Shizuo thought in his head as he turned to face Suzuki. “As a matter of fact, I’ve known him since he started high school.” Shizuo responded
A smirk crossed over the perfect face, marring the friendly image that he had been portraying. “I see. So you’re the classmate that he’s taking pity on for money?” He asked kindly, but there was a sharp bite to his words that made Shizuo’s golden eyes narrow instantly.

“All you are is a 20-something year old nurse who takes care of his baby sisters at daycare.” He deadpanned back, fists practically shaking at his sides as he struggled to keep from punching this man sky-high. “You’re a little old for him, you know. He’s still a high schooler.”

Suzuki raised his hands up in the air as though in surrender with a bright laugh, the sound cutting through the tense situation like a bullet through air. “Hey! Hey! I totally was not trying to give off that impression. I promise I’m not after Izaya like that.” He grinned, the friendly look reinstated back onto his too-perfect face. “I’ve just known him since he started taking his sisters here and I’m kinda protective of him.” Suzuki looked fondly towards the back room where the sounds of children giggling could be heard plainly along with the sounds of a few baby toys being put to use for something they were not made for.

“See, he’s just a really good kid. He’s a kid with plenty of secrets and a chip on his shoulder, but he’s a good kid. I don’t know any other boys his age who would willingly take up the slack for his parents on a daily basis like he seems to do and still focus on his schoolwork at the same time, not to mention pick up a job or two to support the household.” Suzuki laughed and shook his head, but there was a look of worry in his eyes that Shizuo didn’t fail to pick up on.

“Honestly…I think he does too much.” The male nurse said softly, his eyes flicking up to meet Shizuo’s. “He works too hard for someone his age. And he doesn’t ever rely on anyone else.”

Suzuki cocked his head as he crossed his arms, looking Shizuo up and down appreciatively. “Which I guess makes you something real special to him, huh? Because I never thought I’d see the day where Orihara Izaya sent someone else to pick up his girls.”

Shizuo felt embarrassment flush over his cheeks as he looked away from the nurse, scratching his head and staring pointedly at the ground. “I-It isn’t like that.” Shizuo mumbled, hating his voice for stuttering. “I just didn’t stop bothering him and letting him know that I wanted to help him out. He probably is only letting me do this to get me off his case.”

Suzuki laughed at that, dragging Shizuo’s attention back up to him in surprise.

The dark eyes were sparkling as Suzuki leaned in towards Shizuo, a big grin on his face. “You really think Izaya would be willing to use his precious sisters just to “get you off his case”? He asked, a mischievous light in those dark orbs. “We both know he loves them far too much to use them for something like that. No, my friend, Izaya likes you. He sees something in you and he trusts it. A lot.”

Shizuo felt a warm feeling buzz through his chest as he looked away from the nurse, his head and staring pointedly at the ground. “I just want you to know,” Suzuki’s friendly voice broke into Shizuo’s thoughts, making him jerk his head back up to look at the male nurse. Suzuki was smiling at him, but there was a certain look in his eyes that took away from the cheer of the situation.

“Izaya-kun doesn’t just have problems at home.” Suzuki said flatly, gaze locked with Shizuo’s. “He has trouble in his heart as well. Mostly when it comes to opening it up. I don’t know the details as to...
why…but I can tell you that there used to be someone else who would come with him to pick his sisters up, a long time ago.”

Shizuo froze at that statement, his blood running cold in his veins.

Someone else? Used to be? Izaya used to trust someone else enough to help him pick his girls up. Clearly that didn’t happen anymore…so something must have hurt him. Probably that person. Shizuo felt his fists tighten again at his sides at the thought of someone hurting Izaya. Not to mention hurting his heart. Who was this person that had hurt Izaya so badly? Had he been close to Izaya a long time ago? Was he the reason that Izaya refused to let new people into his life, or at least another factor that added to that behavior of Izaya’s? Was he…was he related to why Izaya had been crying yesterday?

Shizuo opened his mouth to speak again and demand information about this other person, but a different voice cut him off before he could.

“Shizu-nii!” A tiny voice squealed, followed by the sound of pattering footsteps racing towards them. “Shizu-nii is here to pick us up!”

“Shizu-nii.” A softer voice added, as another set of footsteps joined the first.

Shizuo glanced over to his right just as two adorable girls raced around the corner, one with long braids and the other with short choppy hair, running over to him with big grins on their faces.

“Mairu. Kururi.” Shizuo got out before both girls slammed into his legs, each one latching onto a different leg with happy giggles. The tiny girls looked up at him with adoration in their eyes, big smiles spread over their faces.

“Shizu-nii! Do you wanna see our art project?” Mairu asked excitedly, her braids bouncing as she hopped in place.

“Yes. Shizu-nii look.” Kururi added, snuggling against his leg. “And tell Iza-nii.”

“Yeah yeah! Tell Iza-nii what you think of it! Iza-nii wanted to see it but he couldn’t. I’m sure he’d love to hear about it from his boyfriend!” Mairu chattered happily, tugging eagerly on Shizuo’s hand and pulling him towards the room she and Kururi had just run out of.

She had no idea just what sort of effect her words had on Shizuo.

He felt something surge up inside him that annihilated the wrenching in his gut Suzuki’s mention of this other person had caused. At the word “boyfriend”, Shizuo felt a warmth spread over his chest.

He may not be as close to Izaya as others might have been in the past. There may be some tragic backstory on Izaya that Shizuo didn’t know about yet. And heck, Shizuo may be scared out of his mind to try and start what he had was certain now that he wanted to start with Izaya. A relationship had always been completely out of the question for him after all, and there was no one crazy enough to want to be in one with him, so he’d always shoved the matter aside.

But with Mairu’s words, Shizuo knew something now. He knew something about his chances with starting a relationship. Even if he didn’t have the approval of his own self, or the confidence in himself to love another, at the very least he had just heard the approval of another, and the confidence in another that he could be loved.

He could be loved by these two little girls. And if he tried hard enough, he could be loved by Izaya. Maybe he could even erase the effect of this other person on the raven. He was already the “boyfriend” in the twins’ minds. Next step was getting through to Izaya’s heart and becoming the
“boyfriend” for real.

Shizuo threw a glance over his shoulder to look at Suzuki, maybe see what the male nurse was thinking or ask him to wait and tell him more about this other person.

But the perfect nurse was gone.

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Izaya had separation anxiety.

He discovered this maybe five minutes after 3 o’clock, when he would have gone to pick up the twins. Apparently, he could stand being away from them for the exact amount of time that they were supposed to be at daycare. But once that time limit passed, he freaked out. Even back when he used to let…him…come with Izaya to pick up the twins, he’d never let him go alone. Izaya was always with him as they picked up the twins. He had never once fully entrusted someone else to pick up his girls. And now that they weren’t in his immediate line of sight at the time period that he should be seeing them, he was having a mental breakdown.

“My girls better be alright.” Izaya muttered to himself, fidgeting frantically with his phone as he waited in the “lobby” of the group he was meeting. “If they’re not alright, I’m gonna castrate somebody. And then hunt down somebody else and castrate them. And then resurrect them both from the dead so I can sick my demon sisters on them. And then kill em once more for good measure. And once I’m through with them, I’m suing the daycare.”

Izaya’s leg bounced in place as he rambled on to no one in particular about what he would do if his sisters were not 100% okay. Even though he was about to enter what was probably along the lines of one of his more dangerous dealings, he could still only ramble about his sisters…well…it’s not like the job was too terribly dangerous.

One of Izaya’s neighbors had run into some trouble with a gang that was rising up. It was one of those color-oriented gangs that Izaya had been watching for a while now. Apparently, this particular color gang had had a surge in activity, and was now taking to organized crime rather than simple club meetings and matching accessories.

His neighbor had been walking home with his daughter’s Christmas presents when he’d been mugged by this gang. They all wore purple and they had all been either teenagers or young adults. They stole his wallet, his cell phone, his car keys, and they’d taken his daughter’s present and smashed it to bits in front of him, laughing all the while. They’d left him beaten up and bleeding out on the street, a mere five days before Christmas Eve.

Disgusting scoundrels.

Yet another interesting aspect of humanity.

Izaya’s neighbor had been devastated by the attack, not to mention the loss of his car that the gang stole in the middle of the night, and the destruction of his daughter’s present. He’d come to Izaya for help, offering to pay him over 50,000 yen (over 441 dollars) to find the gang who’d done this to him.

Izaya told him that he would do one better.

Izaya would not only find the gang, he would report them to the police so the man didn’t have to do anything rash, and he would personally replace his daughter’s Christmas present. All other items would be returned by the police.
The man had been extremely grateful to Izaya and thanked him profusely with tears in his eyes and everything. It wasn’t like Izaya was just going to let this case go.

The man’s daughter was one of Mairu and Kururi’s friends at daycare.

So now, Izaya was sitting outside the employee door in an arcade, waiting for the teens inside to finish chatting.

He’d tracked members of a rival gang of the Purple Dragons (Purple Dragons? Seriously? What were we, middle schoolers?) to this arcade. It seems that this gang had actually risen up from a coalition of teenage arcade employees and slowly spread to encompass a broader variety of members. Including but not limited to aspiring drug dealers, high school drop-outs, and even one member who was a karate champion while also working with human traffickers.

Really, it was a great mix. Izaya planned to keep up relations with them long after this case was over.

But going to the situation at hand, Izaya had managed to arrange a brief meeting with the main leaders of this arcade-born gang known as the Cybers. He agreed to cover the evidence of their involvement with the Purple Dragons once the police were involved, as well as send them a nice picture of the Purple Dragons’ leaders being escorted off in handcuffs. This was more than enough to get him a meeting with the Cybers. Heck, they’d been willing to meet with him the instant he said he was attempting to take down the Purple Dragons. But he needed to have a few extra incentives to assure their cooperation with what he was asking them for.

Finally, the door to the employee room opened and Izaya looked over, noticing that the teen standing there was one he had not met before. The boy looked surprised to see Izaya there, and he actually looked around a bit as if to make sure that there was no one else waiting.

Izaya stood up with a dramatic sigh, crossing his arms and smirking self-righteously at the teen. “My, my. Here I’ve been, waiting for nearly an hour, and when I’m finally about to enter the meeting room, I’m looked over as if I don’t belong. So rude.”

The teen turned back to look at him in shock, his jaw dropped open as his eyes bugged out of his skull. “You’re the information broker?” He asked in shock, his eyes raking up and down Izaya’s body. “B-But you’re so…so…”

“Attractive? Graceful? Young? Out of your league?” Izaya asked smoothly, pushing confidently past the shell-shocked teen and into the employee meeting room.

He looked around the room and took careful note of all the people within it.

There were fifteen teenagers total, only seven of whom he was personally acquainted with. Three of the teenagers he knew by reputation, and the remaining five were complete strangers.

Izaya nodded to them all and made his way over to the one that had invited him to the meeting. His name was Haru, and he was a high school drop-out working in the arcade. Haru didn’t seem too impressive on the outside, but Izaya had seen the guy at work in the underground. He was level-headed, collected, cold, and capable. All very good things to be when dealing with drugs and human traffickers. Haru was much more suited to the life of a gangster than the life of a student.

“Orihara-san. Thank you for coming.” Haru said in his usual curt manner, nodding his head once at Izaya and moving over so Izaya could stand beside him. Izaya nodded back, looking around the room at the other teenagers eyeing him as he did so. “Thank you for having me. I trust that we can come to an agreeable arrangement.” He said smoothly, facing the rest of the room with sharp eyes.
One of the teenagers (his name was Riku; Izaya knew him by reputation only) cleared his throat and tapped at a picture of the Purple Dragons’ insignia on the table they were all standing around. “Orihara-san, we understand that you’re looking to take down the Purple Dragons via traditional police methods.” He said gruffly, his dark eyes locked on Izaya. “Is this true?”

Izaya gave Riku one of his signature smirks, leaning casually onto the table himself, before responding. “Not entirely. I fully intend to take down the Purple Dragons, yes. But I would not say that I’m using ‘traditional police methods’. After all, I’m setting the gang itself up and leading the police to them. I’m not exactly calling 110 (the equivalent of 911) here.”

Haru smiled at the statement and looked pointedly at Riku. Izaya had no doubt that they’d talked about him before letting him come inside. Possibly, Riku had doubted just how “underground” Izaya was. He didn’t exactly look like your typical gang-info guy from the streets. Izaya had grown used to that over the years as he grew more and more ties with gang activity. However, he always made sure never to involve himself in their affairs too deeply. That left traces in case police ever showed up, and police gaining even the slightest traces on him could lead to complications for him and his sisters. No, Izaya was underground but he was always careful never to become too underground. Not yet, anyway.

“So what exactly do you need from us?” Another gang member, this one completely unknown to Izaya, asked, crossing his arms with a suspicious look in his eyes. “You’re only going to lead the police to them and let the police take care of it, so how are we necessary?”

“I need some basic information in order to formulate my trap.” Izaya said calmly, looking down at the pictures that the Cybers had spread all over the table. They were various shots of Purple Dragons members and different buildings around town. Interesting.

“For example, I need to know the location of their current hideout. I am aware that they use several. As their rivals, you ought to know which one they use the most, or at the very least which ones they don’t use. Let’s start with that.” Izaya said swiftly, his eyes glancing over all the shots of the buildings with keen precision. He waited for one of them to start talking, knowing that if he pushed them it would look like desperation. Izaya wasn’t desperate, here. He was a capable informant, willing and able to supply them with their rival’s downfall and pictures of it, all for a simple exchange of information. He just had to be patient and let them see him in that light.

Not as the random pretty boy who’d sauntered into the arcade with an attitude problem.

After a few seconds of silence, Riku spoke up.

“The Purple Dragons’ main hideout is this building here.” He said in that same gruff voice, his finger landing on a certain photo up near the top of the table. Izaya’s eyes scanned over the building, committing every detail to memory.

“That’s the abandoned grocery store just outside the Sunshine 60 area. I know it.” He said bluntly, nodding his head at Riku in thanks.

Riku nodded back, his eyes still locked on Izaya. “Good. Besides this, they have about seven other major hideouts, but they mostly gather in this one. They’ve only used the other ones a few times.” He added, crossing his arms once more. Riku lifted an eyebrow, signaling for Izaya to ask his next question.

Izaya remained silent for a little bit as he studied the table, carefully portraying the image of nonchalance and power, before he looked up at Riku again. It seemed Riku was the one who was willing to do business, so he’d talk to him.
“Beyond muggings, what other criminal activities are the Purple Dragons involved in?” He asked curtly, and Riku nodded his head once. “They’ve only done muggings when it comes to crime, but those muggings often lead to the injury of the person being mugged, and they’ve done quite a few of them.” He responded, and Izaya hummed thoughtfully.

“Assault and battery, not to mention repeated theft.” He muttered to himself, nodding several times. “Very good. Do you know if they have any kind of security in their hideout? A camera system or even just a lookout who always stays behind?” He asked next, looking right into Riku’s eyes.

This particular question was just for show on Izaya’s part. He wanted the Cybers to believe that they were the hinging point of this takedown, and thus feel more important and more willing to help out. If he asked for a lot of important information, they would feel flattered and be a little bit more compliant to his demands. Izaya had already staked out each one of the Purple Dragons’ hideouts and knew that they kept no security systems on any of them, not even lookouts when they left on muggings and other trips. All of their things were left laying around in their hideouts, easy for any random person to steal if they happened to wander by. It was idiotic, really.

But Izaya waited for Riku’s answer, acting as if the success of his mission depended on the tough boy’s intelligence.

Riku thought about it for a bit, but eventually shook his head. “No security systems. No lookouts.” He said firmly, summing up about three days worth of investigating in two simple sentences.

Hmph.

Izaya still nodded like it was all very important, throwing out a few more useless questions that he already knew the answers to for good measure, dragging the conversation out for another 15 minutes. He carefully watched the reactions of the other gang members as he and Riku talked, and noted that they seemed to be warming up to his presence. A few of them were busy staring at his butt, but that was to be expected. They were still teenagers, after all. The last of the skeptical looks had faded, and it seemed like the gang was now certain that he was legit and that he knew what he was doing. He was asking all the right questions, after all. No need for them to know that he didn’t even need to ask them.

After asking his final useless question (did they carry any weapons besides bats, answer: no), Izaya moved on to the true matter at hand.

“That’s all I need to know.” The raven said smoothly, straightening up from his intentionally casual position on the table and making a show of smoothing the wrinkles from his shirt. “Now, I have a request to make of you before I actually engage on this mission.”

Riku seemed far more relaxed now than he had at the beginning of the meeting. He had even stopped crossing his arms and was letting his hands stay planted on his hips, entire body posture relaxed and confident. Perfect.

The large boy nodded his head at Izaya for him to make his request.

Izaya fought a smile from crossing his lips, and bent his head down to hide any flickers of satisfaction that might be passing over his face in that moment. “In order to be successful at this operation, I need something that will attract the cops to the Purple Dragons’ hideout.” He started, red eyes drifting over to look at a certain teenager in the room. This one was named Keiji. He was an aspiring drug dealer who had recently gotten into the market with a new kind of party drug that he’d been passing around his school for a fair amount of money.

It was a drug that was part aphrodisiac and part euphoric, resulting in a rather potent little pill which thrust those under its influence into a sort of high rarely experienced from simple endorphin rushes.
Essentially, it was great at parties and clubs. It was also highly damaging to the brain’s neural pathways. The overstimulation that the brain was receiving was horrific; it was combining ecstatic euphoria and happiness that tantalized endorphins within the brain with a stimulant for hormones that activated the sexual drive of the body. There were two different kinds of the most powerful type of human pleasure being released all at once within the body. There was sexual pleasure compounded with plain happiness, and it thrust the mind into a state of pleasurable stasis. When placed in this state for too long, the brain lost contact with the neurons it used for everything else. This drug felt fantastic, but it was extremely hazardous and addicting to boot.

Naturally, the police were trying to crack down on it, and with the growing popularity it had within teenagers, they were desperate to stop the drug wherever it could be found before it permanently damaged the entire upcoming teen generation.

It was the perfect bait.

“I need some of those lovely little party drugs you’ve been spreading around.” He said sweetly, red eyes locked on Keiji. Keiji’s own eyes widened as the other members of the room looked at him in shock. “How did you know about—” Keiji started to stammer, his eyes flicking around nervously, but Izaya cut him off by waving a hand in the air. “I’m an information broker. I know much more than you think.” He said coolly, planting the all-knowing smirk on his lips.

Keiji’s face was pale and his knees seemed weak as the other Cyber members gaped at him. “Keiji?” Riku asked, his dark eyes wide. “How long have you been dealing those?”

“Yeah. And how did you even get your hands on Devil’s Bliss?” Another member, Yuka, added in.

Devil’s Bliss. So that was what the drug was called. Izaya had heard conflicting stories about it since he’d gotten most of his information on the drug from the police and each station seemed determined to call it something different, mostly by the chemical names for it. At last, he knew the street name for the drug. Happy day.

“I-I-I—” Keiji stammered, his eyes flickering all over the place as he wrung his hands nervously. He looked like he wanted to run out of the room and never come back. Now that wouldn’t do.

Even if it would be fascinating to see how the gang would turn on itself knowing that one of its own members had been dealing with the most potent drug on the market behind its back (so how many other secrets were going on at the same time?), Izaya needed this gang to stay together for at least a bit longer. He needed to step in here.

“Keiji was collecting money for the gang’s funds.” Izaya said breezily, drawing the attention in the room back to him. He made sure his red eyes were locked with Keiji’s, neither one of them looking away, so that the drug dealer would get the message instead of looking confused and dumb like he did now.

“He was selling the drug alongside a few other people in his school, and he used his portion of the profits to help fund the Cybers.” Izaya continued, a smirk still in place on his face as he looked at Keiji. “He didn’t know how to tell any of you about his new method, so he kept it a secret. Haven’t you all been wondering where the money he’s been donating to you has been coming from?”

Keiji’s eyes widened as the rest of the gang turned to look at him again, a new look of respect crossing their faces.

Keiji seemed dumbstruck by the explanation that Izaya was offering. Izaya winked at him, red eyes glittering mischievously, hoping that this was the last hint he would have to send.
Finally, understanding crossed the boy’s eyes (honestly, how hadn’t the police found this kid already?) and he nodded hastily to the rest of his gang. “Th-That’s right. I’ve been using my portion to help fund our gang.” He told the others, wringing his hands a bit as he looked around.

Izaya waited patiently as the other Cybers started crowding around Keiji, slapping him on the back and thanking him profusely, cheering for his accomplishment and nodding approvingly at him. Keiji accepted all the praise, a look of pride coming over his face as he turned from member to member, smile in place as he became the newest hero of the gang. His eyes occasionally flickered up to look at Izaya, a look of confusion, relief, and gratitude filling them each time he saw the info broker.

In reality, Izaya and Keiji both knew that while Keiji was indeed working with other people at his school to sell the drugs, he was taking a massive portion of the profits for himself, and only donating a small bit of that to the Cybers. It seemed believable that if he was working with others, then he would only be getting a small portion of money, just the right amount that he’d been donating. And since he had partners in crime, not only would the suspicion about how he acquired the drugs go down, but his “loyalty” to the Cybers would increase since he was donating the profits to them. Yes, through Izaya’s story, Keiji sounded like a loyal hero. In truth, he was raking in money and adding just a tiny amount to the Cybers as a typical, greedy human.

Izaya felt a smile stretch further over his face as the gratitude in Keiji’s eyes turned into a look just short of worship whenever he looked at Izaya, the dumbstruck boy still surrounded by his adoring gang members. Keiji was indebted to him now, at least in the boy’s eyes. From Keiji’s perspective, Izaya had just saved him from getting kicked out of the gang, and turned him into a hero in the eyes of his friend’s. He failed to see the bigger picture where the entire gang would have dismantled from his silly act of under-the-bar drug dealing, and thought Izaya was taking special pity on him. Now, Izaya was his savior, but also a savior with good dirt on him if it ever became needed as blackmail. In essence: Keiji belonged to Izaya.

Yes, he needed to keep this gang around for a while.

“Oh that we have all that settled,” Izaya cut in, drawing the gang’s attention back over to him. The smile was still stretching his lips as he looked across the happy faces of the fools before him. So strange how happy humans could become from the simplest things. Without any proof to back his actions up, Keiji was a hero simply because he’d given a tiny bit of money to the gang “at his own expense”. This tiny donation made these people so happy, but Izaya suspected it was the show of loyalty behind it that made Keiji the hero. Humans craved loyalty in every relationship they had. Even if they had no desire to be loyal themselves, they wanted loyalty from others, expected it even.

An image of Shizuo popped into Izaya’s head at that moment for some reason, startling the raven.

Shizuo…Was Shizuo like all those other people? Would he ask for loyalty but never give it in return?

Izaya thought of how Shizuo had seemed upset that Izaya was going to cancel tutoring lessons. A classic example of expecting loyalty. He expected Izaya to be loyal and continuously provide tutoring lessons, no matter what. It upset him when that balance was thrown off. Typically, there would be some brooding and anger from a human who experienced lack of loyalty. But…But Shizuo-chan hadn’t done any of that. No. The beast had come to Izaya’s house. He’d been worried about Izaya and Izaya’s life at home. And right now he was taking care of Izaya’s sisters for no compensation at all, no real reason at all, as a show of loyalty. He was being loyal even when he hadn’t gotten loyalty. So Shizuo-chan expected loyalty…but he provided it as well. Shizuo-chan was different.

Izaya shook his head, trying to banish thoughts of the blonde from his head. He had to stop thinking
about the beast. Right now, he was working. And Shizuo wasn’t important. He was a means to an end right now. A way of getting more money to help Izaya provide for himself and for his sisters. Plus, Shizuo was only being nice to Izaya because he wanted tutoring in order to pass the grade. Neither one of them was actually looking for some kind of an emotional attachment with the other. So Izaya needed to get these sorts of thoughts out of his mind. Shizuo didn’t care, and he didn’t care.

“But you let him go get your sisters.” The tiny voice whispered in his mind. “You never even let him do that. You trust Shizuo more than you’ve ever trusted anyone.”

No, he doesn’t. He doesn’t trust Shizuo. He was only using him because the beast had offered himself up to be used. That was it.

“You know that’s not it. You feel safe with Shizuo.” The voice persisted, poking at Izaya’s defenses like a hot iron trying to melt through ice. “You want to open yourself up to him. You want to let him into your life and let him be a part of it like no one else ever has been before.”

Shut up. That wasn’t it. He couldn’t allow that to be the truth. He just couldn’t risk opening up like that again…only to be shot down like the rat he was.

“Orihara-san?” A voice cut into his inner dialogue, causing Izaya’s head to snap up and look at Haru on his right, red eyes a little dazed.

Haru raised an eyebrow, a bit of confusion crossing his features. “What are your next terms?” He asked slowly, his eyes raking Izaya up and down.

Izaya mentally slapped himself for getting carried away. Thinking about stupid things like that while he was working. How unprofessional could someone get?!

“I need some pills of Devil’s Bliss.” Izaya said aloud, looking over at Keiji with a cold and pointed expression. “Not too many. Just a few packets should be incentive enough to lure the police wherever I need them to go.”

Keiji was already nodding before Izaya even explained why he needed the drugs, and the raven had to fight another smile from crossing his lips. Yes. Keiji was definitely all his.

“Of course you can have some. Should five packets be enough?” Keiji asked immediately, his hand diving into his pocket to pull out his phone, no doubt in order to contact his drug buddies and clear it with them.

“Five should be more than enough.” Izaya purred, delight curling his lips into a smirk. “I’m just setting up a nice trail for the police, after all. They tend to come running after finding a single pill.”

And it wasn’t like Izaya wanted a ton of extra drugs laying around once he was done with this Purple Dragons bust. Nor did he wish to become a part-time drug dealer and sell them off. Those sorts of things could be easily traced back to him. Or…

Horror filled Izaya at the thought of some Devil’s Bliss being left around his house and the twins getting ahold of it. No. No, absolutely not!

“Actually, three packets is sufficient.” Izaya said smoothly, smiling at Keiji like a snake. “No more.”

Keiji nodded once, typing furiously away at his phone while the other gang members watched.

“Is that all you need?” Haru asked next, still watching Izaya carefully.

Izaya gave his contact a curt nod, sending the snake smile his way next. “Yes. I have all my
information, I have the bait I need for my trap, and I have my promise to you ready to be fulfilled.” He chirped, digging into his pocket and pulling out his cell phone with a smile. “Just text me when you have the drugs and I’ll come here to pick them up. All you have to do is sit back and watch after that. I’ll send you the picture once the job is done.”

With that, Izaya turned and started to walk out of the employee room. When he reached the doorway, Izaya threw a look over his shoulder, directed at Keiji. “Make sure you use the code word “games” when you text me instead of actually saying drugs.” He said flatly, his red eyes boring into Keiji’s worshipping ones. “Wouldn’t want to leave any kind of trail.”

Izaya intended to delete the message after receiving it anyway, but still. Foster trust. Always take the opportunity to make his partners feel like they were useful or being charged with important tasks.

Keiji nodded eagerly, fingers tapping on his phone as he conveyed a few more messages to his drug buddies. “Of course, Orihara-san.” He got out, his words rushing over each other as they spewed out of his mouth. This guy was just looking to please him, wasn’t he?

Izaya nodded once, giving a jaunty wave to the rest of the gang before sweeping dramatically out of the room and closing the door behind him.

He sighed once after the door was closed, feeling some of the tension of the situation leave him now that the transaction was official and definite, before he straightened up and headed immediately out of the arcade.

No need to doddle around here any longer than he had to. Shizu-chan was watching his sisters right now and Izaya needed to deliver all the bento boxes as quickly possible while the blonde was doing so. With the meeting over, Izaya’s separation anxiety had come back in full force. He needed to get to his sisters as quickly as possible.

“If he forgot about them or left them somewhere, then I’ll never forgive him.” Izaya muttered aloud as he swept out of the arcade store and began marching in the direction of Shinra’s house. “I’m going to call him and ask him where they are. If they’re hurt, I’ll rip his throat out and shove it up his special area. Then I’ll jump on him and smash his internal organs until he dies. And then I’ll bring him back. And then I’ll kill him again!”

So chanting his threats of murder, Izaya broke into a run for the distant house, pulling out his phone and refusing to acknowledge the tiny voice that spoke in his head when he dialed Shizuo’s number just to check on the twins real quick.

“You’d never kill Shizuo. You’re more likely to kiss him on Christmas Eve than harm a hair on his head.”

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Suzuki frowned as he stared at the number on the pad in front of him, unsure of what to do with it. He hadn’t used it in a while. It was placed right next to the number that he used all the time despite the fact that it never worked. Izaya-kun was not aware of it, but Suzuki always called the Orihara parents before he called Izaya-kun for anything. And they never picked up. On the rare occasion when someone did answer the phone, it was a woman who always said she was a secretary. Suzuki had never once spoken with the Orihara parents. It was always Izaya-kun who picked up and came to get the girls. That in itself was concerning. But when he went over to Mairu and Kururi and asked them why they’d only drawn themselves and their brother for the family portrait, and they responded by asking who else was supposed to be in the family, that was beyond concerning.

Suzuki was sure that the Orihara parents were missing from the family picture, in more ways than one. And for some reason, Izaya never spoke about it. This new guy, Shizuo, seemed to be close to
Izaya. After all, he had come to pick up the twins on his own. Izaya had *never* let anyone come to get his girls without him present. Not even that other boy who used to come all the time with him.

Izaya’s ex-boyfriend, Hajime.

“She was better than almost anyone else. He was aware of Izaya’s family situation, and knew just how bad it was. He was also the only person that Suzuki had ever seen make Izaya do something he didn’t want to do. Like talk about his family life, for example.

This Shizuo person. Should he wait and see if he had the same influence on Izaya as Hajime had? The family situation was becoming more and more concerning. He needed to do something about it soon. He couldn’t wait too long. In fact, he might have already waited long enough.

Suzuki grit his teeth, clenching his fists as he made up his mind. He couldn’t wait to see if Shizuo could gain the same influence over Izaya. Even if it did seem promising, Suzuki just couldn’t wait any longer. He needed to call the person he could count on right now in this moment.

Suzuki grabbed the daycare phone, dialing up the number before he could stop himself and putting it to his ear. After a few rings, a person on the other end picked up.

“Hello.” His voice wasn’t surprised, or even remotely flustered at having received a call from a number that he shouldn’t have seen in ages. He had never seemed to be surprised by anything before, either. Not even when Izaya had found out the truth.

“Hello.” Suzuki forced out, praying that he wasn’t doing the wrong thing. “I need you to do something for me.”

Chapter End Notes

Uh oh, what is Suzuki doing? !O□O/! He is messing with everything, that's what he's doing!!! So what will happen to our poor little Shizaya ship now? Who knows!

Oh! And I indeed believe that I'm going to write the Valentine's lemon. Or at least give it my best shot! I already started on it, so we will just have to see how it turns out! Thank you for reading!! Please let me know what you thought below! <3 <3 <3
Alright! So this chapter is going up a tad later than I wanted it to. My apologies on that. Last night, I caught a stomach bug and I was throwing up all night.

Not. Fun. At. All.

I didn't fall asleep until after 6 o'clock because apparently puking is more important than sleeping. �-sama

So I woke up late this morning and thus am posting the chapter a little late. Sorry about that!

Well, now that I've said my little woe-is-me-I-am-sick-spiel, here is the actual chapter! I hope you enjoy it! <3

“Izaya-kun! What are you doing here?” Shinra’s flat voice washed over Izaya like a slap to the face.

“Oh, what a warm greeting, Shinra.” He said sarcastically, trying his best not to pant from the long run he’d just been on. “I run all the way here to give you something, and you don’t even have the kindness to pretend to be happy to see me.”

“You’re right.” Shinra heaved a large sigh, looking into the house behind him. “The one I love says I should always try to be kind to everyone.” The adoring look on his face melted away when he turned to face Izaya again, but a friendly smile was on his face in place of the flat displeasure from before.

“So what can I do for you, Izaya-kun? You need to give me something?” He asked happily, pushing his glasses up his nose and peering at Izaya curiously.

Izaya took a deep breath, nodding his head once before straightening up in front of his friend. He stretched a few times and reached into the bag slung around his body, rummaging around in it for the bento box. Each of them was labeled with the names of the person meant to receive it.

Or at least what Izaya thought their names should be.

Izaya found the one labeled DR. FRANKENSTEIN and grinned, pulling it out and handing it with a happy smile to Shinra.

Shinra took the bento from him excitedly, pausing when he saw the label on the box. “Oh ha ha. Very funny, Izaya-kun.” Shinra stuck his tongue out at Izaya, who only waved jauntily, bouncing in place as he waited for Shinra to open the box.

Shinra pushed his glasses up the bridge of his nose and unsnapped the lid of the bento box, peering inside it curiously.

He was greeted by the evil face of Light Yagami and the crazed demonic look in his eyes, carefully
created from sliced tomatoes and rice grains, all underlined by the phrase YOU’RE CRAZIER.

“Izaya!” Shinra cried, looking up at Izaya with a pout. “What if my beloved saw this? She’d think I’m a serial killer!”

“Good! Then she has a worst-case scenario of what you’ll turn into and can prepare for it.” Izaya retorted, completely unrepentant as he grinned at his crazy doctor friend.

“I would never use the Death Note if I received it!” Shinra continued his protest, jabbing a finger at Light in outrage. “Never ever!”

“Goodbye, Light! I’ll see you in Hell!” Izaya called cheerfully, spinning on his heel and dancing off towards his next destination.

“Hey! I am NOT Light! Get back here!” Shinra’s voice yelled after Izaya, and Izaya only laughed in return, throwing a glance over his shoulder to wink at the pouting doctor.

Despite his complaints about the meal, Shinra was still taking a picture of the perfect bento and hugging it to his chest protectively.

“Enjoy your alternate self!” Izaya sang, spinning around the street corner and out of sight.

“Forget what I said earlier! If I ever found the Death Note, I’d use it on you!” Shinra’s voice yelled after him, echoing down the streets.

Izaya only cackled maniacally, a huge grin splitting his face and making his red eyes glitter as he headed for Kadota’s house next.

***

“Kyohei! Honey! You have a visitor!” The kind woman turned and smiled at Izaya, her eyes sparkling as she looked him up and down. “And he’s a little cutie!” She gushed, squeezing one of Izaya’s cheeks and shaking it slightly.

Izaya laughed at the treatment, but inside his head, he was freaking out.

“Stop touching me, freakishly kind female version of Dotachin!” Izaya screamed in his head. “I am Orihara Izaya! I DON’T DO PHYSICAL CONTACT!”

“Coming, Mom. I’m coming.” He heard Kadota’s calm voice from the inside of the house and he hopped happily in place, the correct bento already in his hands as he beamed at Kadota’s mother.

She beamed back at him, ruffling his raven hair a bit before shuffling off back inside, pausing as her son came to the doorway.

Kadota balked when he saw Izaya smiling happily at him on his doorstep, and even stumbled back a few steps.

“I-Izaya?” He asked in shock, normally-calm eyes raking the smaller boy’s body up and down in a strange mixture of confusion and terror. “What are you doing here?!”

“You didn’t tell me you had such a wonderful boyfriend, Kyohei!” Kadota’s mother gushed, looking over at Izaya and then giving Kadota a decidedly suggestive eyebrow wiggle. “He’s quite the catch. A good cook, adorably sweet, and pretty? You better wrangle this one up and never let him leave! Rawr!” His mother made cat’s claws with her hands and raked playfully at Kadota, winking once at
Izaya before skipping off into the house.

Kadota’s head swung around to look at Izaya in shock. “Boyfriend?!” He shrieked, all composure entirely gone. “You told my mother you were my boyfriend?!”

Izaya shrugged, happily handing the bento over to the horrified boy with a sweet smile on his face.

“Dotachin and me are in loooooove!” He sang, fluttering his long eyelashes and blowing kissy faces at the already-flustered boy. “I thought it was time you came out of the closet and told your mother about us!”

“There is no closet! I’m straight!” Kadota snapped, his face completely red as he examined the bento with careful eyes. On the lid of this bento, the name DOTACHIN was written out neatly, with swirling hearts added at the end. Somehow, this made Kadota’s face flame an even darker shade of red.

“And there is no us!” He added, gritting his teeth as he glared at Izaya. “There is only you and your crazy flirting!”

Izaya pouted and clutched his hands over his heart. “Dotachin! I thought you loved me back! Are you saying it was all a lie?” He cried dramatically, allowing tears to well up in his eyes.

“Shut up! That’s not what I’m saying!” Kadota stuttered, looking behind him in fear like he expected his mother to swoop in from nowhere and reprimand him for being a bad boyfriend.

“Then you do love me!” Izaya gushed, throwing his arms around Kadota in a tight hug. “I knew it all along!”

“Stop it, Izaya!” Kadota grabbed Izaya’s shoulders and pushed him off, but he pushed him gently so that he didn’t hurt the smaller boy. Izaya smirked at that, his red eyes glinting mischievously. “Normally, you would’ve just shoved me and expected me to backflip or something to avoid getting hurt myself!” He said cheerfully, poking Kadota’s chest with a Cheshire Cat grin. “Looks like someone has a serious fear of their mother, hm?”

“Sh-Shut up!” Kadota spluttered, his eyes darting to look behind him once more before he popped open the bento lid and checked inside.

His cheeks which had just started returning to a normal color now flared back to bright red.

“That’s not funny, Izaya!” He yelled and swung a fist at the cackling raven, who simply dodged it with a spin, blowing a kiss at the fuming boy.

“That’s you and me, darling! As ice skaters!” Izaya chirped happily, waving with a wink at Kadota before taking off down the street.

“I know what Vikturi is, Izaya!” Kadota’s voice roared after him. “AND I AM NOT GAY!”

“Deniiiiiiial!” Izaya sang, blowing one more kiss before slipping away and disappearing down the street.

Two down, one to go!

And that last one had his sisters. So step on the gas!

***
“I understand that you took them to the park.”

“Yes.”

“I understand that you wanted them to run around for a bit.”

“Yes.”

“I understand that you wanted them to have some fun.”

“Yes.”

“What I don’t understand, is how you could possibly let them eat TRIPLE-SCOOP ICE CREAM CONES IN WINTER!”

Izaya’s voice rang around the park like it was being amplified through a megaphone.

The raven was furiously rubbing his sisters’ arms through their coats, watching their blue-tinged faces with panic in his ruby eyes. The tiny girls were shivering violently and their teeth were clacking together like little steam engines on train tracks, but their faces shone with happiness.

“Ice cream good!” Mairu gurgled happily, her braids swinging around her head as she bounced in place.

“Tasty.” Kururi added, licking her blue lips contentedly.

“I don’t care if it’s tasty, girls.” Izaya snapped, looking between their faces in worry. “You can’t eat ice cream outside in winter! I don’t even know why there was an ice cream truck out here in the first place.”

Shizuo watched the scene before him with a feeling that was half guilt and half fondness as he tried his best not to smile at the overprotective Izaya crouched down before him. He probably shouldn’t have given into the twins earlier when they’d begged him for ice cream, that much was true, but their little puppy-dog eyes had been too much for the blonde to handle. He couldn’t say no to faces like those. And he had such a high body temperature himself that things like eating ice cream in the middle of winter didn’t really bother him. Apparently, that wasn’t true for your average toddler, but at least Shizuo knew that now.

“I really am sorry, Izaya-kun.” Shizuo said again, dropping down to his knees on the snowy ground and looking at the raven’s back. “I didn’t know it would be such a problem.”

“Eating ice cream in winter?! Who wouldn’t that be a problem for?!” Izaya demanded, still not turning around as he frantically rubbed the heat back into his sisters’ bodies.

Shizuo felt his cheeks tinge with embarrassment as he coughed a bit, looking away sheepishly and hoping Izaya wouldn’t notice. “Well…um, anyway, should we take them home now? They need to get inside, right?” He asked, thinking about how long he and the twins had already been walking around the snowy park.

Izaya paused at this and sighed, standing and glaring at Shizuo with fierce ruby orbs, cheeks tinged pink from the cold, and a tiny little nose with flakes of snow gently landing on it. Adorable.

“Yes, we should get them inside.” Izaya said, cutting Shizuo out of his daze as he pulled the twins to their feet. “I’ll give you your bento when we get to my house. For now, you take one twin and I’ll take the other.”
“Shizu-nii!” Mairu screeched immediately, launching herself at Shizuo before he was ready and nearly knocking him over into the snow. Shizuo laughed as he managed to catch the girl with one arm and himself with the other, barely stopping himself from making an impromptu snow angel on the park ground. The snow numbed his bare hand, making little tingling sensations of cold run throughout his body, but the warmth bubbling up in his chest more than made up for it as he laughed at the unrepentant little girl happily snuggling into his chest. Shizuo rocked to his feet and stood up, holding the tiny girl with both arms and bouncing her a little in his arms, much to the toddler’s delight.

“Ready to go home, Mai-chan?” He smiled at the little girl, who giggled in delight and nodded her head, clapping her hands eagerly. “Ready! Ready!” She agreed, looking over at her siblings with impatience all over her face. “Hurry up! Gotta go home!” She scolded, wagging a finger at them.

“Now you hush up, little girl.” Izaya grunted, hefting Kururi into his arms as the quieter twin wrapped her arms around his neck with a small smile. “Some of us don’t have superhuman manservants carrying us home.”

“I’d happily carry you if you asked.” Shizuo said before he could stop himself, instantly turning red and looking away as Izaya’s wide eyes landed on him.

“Really?” The voice purred from behind him, and Shizuo could feel embarrassment coating his cheeks as he stared pointedly down into the snow. God, why had he said that?!

“I might take you up on that someday.” Izaya continued, grunting a little at the end as he hiked Kururi up onto his back to carry her home. “Since you’re such a gentleman, and all.”

Shizuo felt his mouth go dry at the thought of carrying Izaya bridal style, Shizuo’s arms supporting the wonderful curves of the raven’s body while the raven in turn looped his arms around Shizuo’s neck. He could see that right now, Izaya in a wedding dress, the smooth skin of his arms rubbing against Shizuo’s neck as he smiled adoringly up at Shizuo.

“I love you so much.” Fantasy Izaya whispered, trailing a finger down Shizuo’s neck and over onto his chest, down to his pectorals where it lingered. Fantasy Izaya licked his lips and started tracing circles on Shizuo’s chest, ruby eyes locked with Shizuo’s golden ones the whole time. “Only you, Shizu-chan. My gentleman.”

Fantasy Izaya stretched up and pressed a kiss to Shizuo’s mouth, purposefully lifting and moving his hips so that his butt was resting in Shizuo’s hand instead of the crook of his legs. Shizuo happily squeezed, drawing a moan from Fantasy Izaya who brought his head closer, tilting to the side and opening his mouth to give Shizuo full access to the delicious pink cavern.

Shizuo let himself dive in, ignoring the snow all around them in favor of the heat of Fantasy Izaya’s mouth. Such wonderful, delicious heat…all his…his alone…

“Shizu-nii? Shizu-nii! Hey! Shiizuuu-niiiii!” A tiny voice broke into his fantasy, smashing it to pieces and snapping Shizuo back into the present with a jolt.

He looked down in shock in his arms, noticing the tiny toddler who was sitting there, cocking her head curiously at him as her wide brown eyes stared up at him. “Shizu-nii’s nose is bleeding. Is he okay?” The oblivious girl chirped in concern, looking at Shizuo with all the innocence of childhood.

Shizuo felt his cheeks turn red and he looked briefly over at Izaya, who was also watching him in concerned confusion, before looking back down at Mairu and wiping his nose hurriedly with a handkerchief that Kasuka had given him a few days ago. In case of a perverted thought attack, his
younger brother had said. Shizuo had no idea that he would be using it. While thinking of Izaya, of all people!

“Uh, I’m okay.” Shizuo managed to get out, giving a weak smile to the little girl in his arms as he shifted her a bit. “Just…uh…it was nothing! So let’s get you home now, yeah?”

Without letting Mairu say anything in response, Shizuo immediately began marching off through the snowy park, hoping that he was heading in the right direction because he wasn’t sure if he wanted to turn around and let Izaya see the deep red shade of his face.

“Shizu-chan!” He heard Izaya yell after him, and the sound of hurried footsteps crunching in the snow behind him only spurred him to keep walking.

“Yes?” He asked gruffly over his shoulder, still refusing to turn around and look at Izaya.

“Wait for me.” He could hear the pout in Izaya’s voice as the smaller boy finally caught up, walking beside Shizuo, their arms almost brushing as they moved. “Gosh, why would you move so fast? I kinda have the only key to my house, you know.”

Shizuo only grunted in response, staring straight ahead as they walked out of the park and along the sidewalks of the street, heading in the direction of Izaya’s home.

The two boys were silent for the majority of the walk, with only Izaya’s occasional check-ups on the twins to see if they were cold or if they wanted any food breaking the quiet surrounding the walk home. Shizuo kept nearly slipping into daydreams about Fantasy Izaya, having to snap himself out of them before he started drooling or got another nosebleed in the presence of Mairu, who would certainly announce it to the world if she spotted it.

Izaya carried Kururi, humming softly to himself as he did so with something like content passing over his face. He mentioned something about dropping the girls off at daycare tomorrow even though it was Christmas Eve and picking them up around 6 since they had a Christmas Eve activity at the daycare. Shizuo logged that away in his mind, for a reason he wasn’t exactly sure of. Izaya would be walking to the daycare around 6 pm tomorrow. Somehow that was important. Well, at least he could find Izaya if he decided to go looking for him on Christmas Eve.

Aside from this offhanded comment, no conversation was made until they reached the Oriharas’ home, Izaya fiddling around in his pocket for a bit before producing the key to the house and jamming it into the lock to let them all inside.

Once the door was open, both twins instantly dropped from their perches and dashed inside, crying out in relief as the heat of the house surrounded them and huddling in front of a small heater in the living room.

Izaya sighed as he watched them, a small smile still playing over his lips as he removed his coat and hung it on the wall, dusting a bit of the snow off it before holding out his hand to take Shizuo’s coat.

Shizuo was shocked by the gesture. He’d expected Izaya to give him the bento and make him leave once they got here. But it looked like, even though the raven was staring the other way and refusing to make eye contact with him, Izaya was offering to let Shizuo stay for a bit.

Shizuo felt his cheeks blush red as he slipped out of his jacket, passing it to Izaya so the silent boy could hang it up on the rack beside his own coat, dusting the snow flurries off that one as well.

“I have your bento in my backpack, so I’ll give that to you right now. But what do you want for dinner?” Izaya asked next as he reached down with one hand to rummage in his backpack while still
dusting the coat off with the other. His question startled Shizuo again with another offer that was insinuated with the statement. Izaya was inviting him over for dinner.

Izaya glanced briefly over at Shizuo and then returned to his task of dusting off the coat, trying to get what seemed like every bit of white fluff off the jacket. “I just went grocery shopping with the money from the tutoring job so we have a few things besides bento ingredients for once.” Izaya was saying as he brushed off the very last bits of clinging snow. “Anything in particular that you’re in the mood for?”

Shizuo thought about it and managed to get out a small grunt of “chicken” before kicking off his shoes and scooting them to rest beside Izaya’s smaller ones.

Izaya nodded like Shizuo had just requested a four-course meal and finally finished his snow-dusting task, turning his full attention on looking through the backpack.

“I know it was in here somewhere.” The raven muttered, brushing some silky hair out of his eyes as he scanned the contents of the backpack. “I never took it out…ah! Here it is!” Izaya happily pulled out a bento box from his backpack and spun around on his heel, presenting it to Shizuo with a flourish.

Shizuo took the bento with blushing cheeks, noticing with a pause the sticky note on top of it that said SHIZU-CHAN/PROTOZOAN. He gave Izaya a look that said “really?” before sighing and taking off the lid of the bento.

Inside, in perfect formation from various vegetables and rice grains and general cooked goodness, was a full-body figure of Saitama from One Punch Man. It had the cape, it had the bald head, it had the intense expression, it had everything! And right underneath, spelled out ever so precisely in sliced tomatoes, was the phrase: YOUR SECRET IDENTITY.

The guy who destroyed everybody with one punch.

“Gee. Thanks Izaya-kun.” Shizuo said sarcastically, rolling his eyes at the bento.

“But it’s true, Shizu-chan! You’re a super hero!” Izaya giggled happily, throwing his arms out wide and grinning at Shizuo with sparkling eyes. “Save me, Saitama-sama! Save me!” He cried, falling dramatically to the floor and reaching out for Shizuo with fake desperation.

Shizuo felt his cheeks blush deep red, a new fantasy starting to crawl into his mind instantly. One that involved Shizuo coming to Izaya’s rescue and Izaya being extremely grateful to his Shizuo-sama for doing so…very grateful…to his Shizuo-sama…

Okay! He’d already slipped into one Izaya Fantasy for the day! He couldn’t do another one and just stand there dumbly while Izaya was looking up at him in glee, waiting for a reaction.

“Sh-Shut it, flea.” Shizuo managed to grunt out, entirely aware that it was a flimsy comeback. “You don’t need saving. Get up yourself.”

Izaya pouted, but the happy sparkle was still in his eyes, letting Shizuo know that it was fake.

“But Saitama-sama! You have to save me!” He whined, rolling around on the floor with a slight giggle hiding in his words.

“I’ll save you by chasing you into the living room if you keep rolling around like that.” Shizuo threatened, but a fond smile was slipping on his lips nonetheless at Izaya’s antics.
Instantly, Izaya popped to his feet, a big grin on his face. “Oh, look at that. All better!” He chirped in mock surprise, examining himself intently before blowing a small kiss at Shizuo. “My hero!” He sang, quickly spinning around and rushing over to the twins by the heater.

“Girls! Take your shoes off and put your coats on the rack. Shizu-nii is going to eat dinner with us again tonight.” He told them, moving on from his little damsel-in-distress regime and going back into Big Brother Mode. Shizuo looked over at the twins, and the delight that filled their dark brown eyes upon hearing about him staying completely erased any doubts Shizuo might have had about skipping family dinner twice in a row.

He smiled as the two toddlers rushed over to him, babbling excitedly about Shizu-nii’s favorite foods and which room Shizu-nii was going to sleep in tonight, while Izaya headed into the kitchen to begin preparing dinner. It was almost…familial.

Maybe he was helping Izaya to learn what family was, after all.

Shizuo looked down at the tiny toddlers bouncing all around his feet like overexcited kittens, throwing their coats on the floor instead of the rack and kicking their shoes off messily in their eagerness to pull Shizuo back into the living room to play. Shizuo barely managed to get the lid on his bento and keep it intact before he was yanked over to the couch once more. But he didn’t mind at all.

“Next time, we should go to my house for dinner so you can meet my family.” Shizuo found himself telling the twins, and the joy in the room at that moment was so thick, Shizuo felt like he’d tasted it if he’d stuck his tongue out for two seconds.

And maybe he was helping Izaya’s family, too.

Chapter End Notes

Shizuo, Shizuo, Shizuo. His fantasies are just the best. XD And hey! We finally got the bento reaction scenes!

But where are all the bad things that are happening behind their backs? Will they be able to figure out what's going on before it's too late? Who knows!

Anyway, thanks for reading and again I'm sorry about the slightly late post. Stomach bugs are killing machines. Hopefully, it'll be gone in a few days. Fingers crossed! I hope you enjoyed! <3
Chapter Notes

Right! So I realized that without reading "Christmas Roast", a lot of the backstory behind this chapter might be a little difficult to understand. Because THAT'S RIGHT! AS OF THIS CHAPTER, "CHRISTMAS ROAST" IS NOW CANON! SHIZUO AND IZAYA HAVE KISSED, PEOPLE! THEY HAVE DONE IT! And darn, there's a spoiler for "Christmas Roast" in case you haven't read it...well! If you haven't read it, you might wanna go back and read that real quick before starting this chapter. It won't kill you not to read it, but it will be easier to get all the confusion running through the characters and understand what events they are referring to.

And yes, this chapter is MUCH later than usual...I have my mother to thank for that. More details on THAT little adventure in the ending comments, if you care.

And now, onto the chapter! I hope you enjoy! <3

“Shizu-nii! Shizu-nii! We want to see Shizu-nii!” The whiny voice demanded as its owner leapt up and down, screaming her demands as loud as she could.

“Kasu-nii, too.” A second voice added, this one’s owner stomping her foot quietly to help make her point.

The first complainer took this foot stomping act to be a great inspiration and began jumping up and down, stomping her feet as hard as she could as she wailed loudly, big tears running down her cheeks as screams ran out her mouth.

“We want to see Shizu-nii and Kasu-nii!” Mairu screamed, her brown eyes locked urgently on Izaya like her life depended on it. “We like them both a lot!”

“Family, too.” Kururi pouted, waddling over to Izaya and wrapping her arms around his leg with a big pout on her face.

“Yeah! We like the Heiwa-what-what family!” Mairu yelled, latching onto Izaya’s other leg with a vicious grip of death and doom.

Izaya winced at the harsh grip and glared down at his sister, but the glare only lasted for a second before he blew out a sigh and all the anger ran out of him as he slipped his coat on, getting ready to leave the house.

“They’re called the Heiwajima family, girls. Heiwajima. And right now I need to head over to their house and you can’t come.”

“Why not?!?” Mairu demanded, squeezing his leg even tighter, if that was possible. “Why can’t we come with Iza-nii?”

“Why not?” Kururi echoed, her brown eyes pitiful and mourning as they looked up at her brother.
“Because Iza-nii is going over there for work. He’s tutoring Shizu-nii. He can’t bring you.” Izaya tried to explain, but even his voice sounded weak and unsure as he spoke. Ever since Christmas Eve, he’d been very confused. Actually, he’d been tired and confused since that day he’d let Shizuo pick the girls up from daycare. His confusing feelings for the blonde had begun then, with the beast constantly slipping into his thoughts like a plague, rearing his perfect face and warm smile every two seconds without Izaya being able to stop him. That night, he’d dreamt about Shizuo as well, despite his best efforts before going to sleep all being focused on trying not to think about the blonde. Then it was all brought to a crescendo on Christmas Eve when Shizuo took him to that weird Christmas Roast tradition of his family’s…and they’d had that kiss…and then Izaya had kissed him again… why had he kissed him again?!

He was so confused, not just by his situation, but by himself. He’d never been one for physical contact. He’d made up his mind long ago to ditch that entire aspect of human connection. He’d also made up his mind long ago to completely despise Heiwajima Shizuo as his mortal enemy and to ruin his life in every way possible. But now he was giving out hugs and coming to family parties and having make-out sessions on Christmas Eve and everything he was doing seemed to be revolving around a certain blonde character that Izaya just wasn’t sure about anymore. He wasn’t sure what he felt for Shizuo at this moment in time. Was it hate? It used to be, but Izaya was pretty darn sure that it wasn’t anymore. It didn’t even feel like dislike! He enjoyed seeing Shizuo and helping him out. He enjoyed interacting with the Heiwajima family and experiencing the warmth that came with them. He was enjoying every aspect of his new relationship with the blonde…even the kissing.

“God, what is wrong with me.” Izaya muttered, zipping up his jacket and planting his hand on the doorknob to head out. Heading out on Christmas Day. To go tutor his mortal enemy. When he could have had the day off. Something was wrong with his brain.

“Many things are wrong with you, Iza-nii!” Mairu screeched, tugging on his pant leg with all her toddler might. “Because you aren’t taking us with you!”

“Take us with you.” Kururi agreed, tears starting to roll out of the emotionless eyes as she pulled on Izaya’s leg even harder.

Izaya sighed and ran a hand through his hair, wondering what he was supposed to do. Should he obey the twins’ wishes and take them along? Or should he be forceful and make them stay at home alone on Christmas Day? It was Christmas Day, for goodness sakes! It was a season of family and giving and stuff like that with some mistletoe scattered here and there. Oh, and presents. Yeah, there were supposed to be presents.

Izaya looked away guiltily from the girls, wishing that the tutoring job paid just a little more money than it did. He hadn’t had enough to buy groceries and Christmas presents, and he considered survival more important than happiness. So the girls didn’t have presents this year. Just like last year…and the year before that…

As a matter of fact, Izaya didn’t think he’d ever gotten the twins Christmas presents in their lives. He managed to scrounge up enough money from his info brokering and odd favors around the neighborhood for birthday gifts, but he never seemed to have enough extra money in time for Christmas. If he had managed to finish that job with the Purple Dragons, then he would definitely have had enough. But…well, obviously he hadn’t finished it yet. He was still waiting for a text from Keiji about the Devil’s Bliss. And until he had that, he couldn’t go forward with the set-up and ensuing takedown.

So…well…in that light, maybe this could be the twins’ present.

Taking them to tutoring lessons? Seriously? That was the only present he could provide for his girls?
Izaya sighed again, tapping his foot nervously as he looked down at the whining toddlers still clinging to his legs. Their brown eyes were tear-filled and desperate, and their pleas only added to this effect. They really wanted this. It was something they desperately wanted to do.

So…

“Alright.” Izaya finally conceded, and both girls froze in shock, their jaws dropping open as they gaped up at their older brother.

“A-Alright what?” Mairu squeaked out, her brown eyes looking like they were ready to pop out of her skull any moment.

Izaya looked down at her and smiled, ruffling her brown hair a tiny bit before he looked at the other one, who was watching him with the same bated breath as her counterpart.

“Alright, you can come with me. Consider it a Christmas present.” Izaya told the girls, and the joy that immediately coated their little faces made it all worth it.

“We get to come with Iza-nii!” Mairu shrieked happily, braids bouncing like crazy as she hopped up and down in excitement. “See Heiwajimas!” Kururi added in delight, spinning around and letting her little skirt fly around her like a spinning top. “Yeah, we get to see the Heiwajimas!” Mairu laughed with her eyes sparkling, all traces of tears gone as she hugged her sister and spun her around the little entryway.

Izaya watched the two of them for a bit with a smile on his face before he clapped his hands sharply, snapping their attention back to him.

“Yes, but you better get your coats on quick because we need to leave as soon as possible!” He instructed, red eyes raking from twin to twin. “Understand?”

“YES SIR!” Mairu shouted, giving a little salute before dashing off to her room, ready to grab her coat and prepare for war. Kururi gave her own silent salute before following after her younger sister, just as eager in her silence as Mairu was in her screaming to head out.

“If I was the cruelest human being alive,” Izaya thought as he listened to the two girls happily chatter while they grabbed their coats and hats. “I would leave the house right now while they were distracted.”

Izaya glanced at the door behind him and his hand which was still on the knob. He could do it. He could leave right now and they would not be able to follow him.

For just a few seconds, Izaya was tempted to do just that.

Thankfully, he was not the cruelest human being alive.

“We’re ready, Iza-nii!” The cheerful voice declared, followed by the pattering of feet as two toddlers came rushing back over to him, all ready to leave.

Izaya smiled at them and nodded, opening the door to reveal the world of winter outside. “Right! Then let’s get a move on.” He ushered the twins out the door, grabbing the hand of each one, and started on his trek to the train station, twins in tow. He wasn’t sure how the Heiwajimas would react to seeing all three of them come over. Yes, they’d seen all three of them at the Christmas Roast but they hadn’t talked too terribly much.

Although it seemed the twins had already grown quite attached to Kasuka. The she-devils were in love with the demon spawn. God, he hoped that didn’t last. Maybe now that Christmas was over,
their feelings would return to normal and they would find him just as creepy as their big brother did. As the twins walked next to him, they chatted happily about Kasu-nii and seeing Kasu-nii again and what a great person Kasu-nii was and asked why hadn’t Iza-nii introduced them to Kasu-nii sooner.

...

Then again, maybe not.

When they reached the train station, Izaya smiled at the woman at the gate, Meiko-san (whom Izaya knew quite well at this point), and she ushered him on in, giving him a secret wink as she handed him three train passes.

He stared at them in shock for a few seconds, and then opened his mouth in confusion to ask Meiko-san why she was giving him free all-day passes.

She held up a hand before he could say anything, her smile warm and friendly. “It’s Christmas Day, honey. You buy passes all the time so these ones are on me.” Meiko-san said kindly, reaching forward just enough to ruffle Izaya’s hair before gesturing him on through. “Now hurry up! I know you’re taking that train to Sunshine 60 again and it’ll be here in just a few minutes.”

Izaya felt gratitude surge up in his chest as he beamed brightly at the gate agent. “Thank you, Meiko-san! Thank you so much!” He cried happily, ruby eyes shining with joy. Izaya bowed quickly to the smiling woman, forcing Mairu and Kururi’s heads down with him before straightening back up with a snap and dragging the tiny girls off towards the platform.

He could hear Meiko-san laughing from behind him as she watched them shuffle off.

“You’re welcome, Izaya-chan!” She called before turning her attention to the next customers at the gate.

The train arrived just as the Orihara siblings reached the platform, doors hissing open like steam coming out of a teapot, and the crowds started pouring in like there was no tomorrow.

“Come on girls!” Izaya yelped, dragging both twins hurriedly into the crowd of shoving businesspeople, employees, and families all heading to various places (for some ungodly reason) on Christmas Day.

Izaya managed to somehow shield the twins from the onslaught of elbows and knees as the siblings were shoved onto the train with the crowd, and he even slipped them all through the milling crowd of travelers to some seats in the corner, plopping down with a sigh of relief.

Kururi and Mairu both sat on either side of him, hugging him tightly as they looked in fear at the people crowding around them. Izaya placed a comforting hand on each little head, smoothing their hair down gently as the train employees began shoving the last few people into the train like sardines. Those already in the train were forced together even tighter, a few resorting to sitting on each other or pressing themselves tightly against the windows as the crowd increased.

Izaya frowned, moving Kururi to the same side as Mairu beside the wall and scooting them both a little closer to the corner as more people squashed down on the seats beside them, trying to make sure everyone fit on the train.

Honestly, why were there so many people going places on Christmas Day? Shouldn’t they be taking the day off from work and spending time with their families?
“You’re supposed to be taking the day off from tutoring but here you are.” That ever-so-helpful voice in his head pointed out.

Izaya scowled to himself, still petting the frightened twins’ heads as the PA came on to announce their departure.

At least he was still technically spending time with his family. All these businesspeople and workers were just ditching them entirely.

Out of nowhere, a man plopped down in the seat right next to Izaya, squishing him completely against the girls who cried out as they were shoved into the wall. They whimpered in fear and looked up at him with big eyes full of the beginnings of tears.

“Hush. It’s okay.” Izaya soothed, smiling gently at them and brushing the hair out of their eyes. “This is normal, my darlings. You’re completely fine. Iza-nii is right next to you.”

“As is that pompous idiot who just crushed your sisters!” The voice reminded Izaya angrily in his head, making Izaya very aware of the leg pressing against his own and the large torso shoving him to the side.

His raven head snapped around to glare at the large man, but he froze when he realized who it was.

It was a businessman in a slick black suit, which were a dime a dozen on this train, but this one easily towered above the rest of the train’s passengers, standing at least 6 feet tall as he spoke gruffly into his phone. His eyes were electric blue, an unusual color for Japan, and that more than anything was what made Izaya take notice of the rest of his facial features, and figure out his identity.

Defined cheekbones. Electric blue eyes. Dark brown hair that seemed eternally messy. Lightly tanned skin that you rarely got in Japanese people. Tall bone structure. Muscular. A figure that demanded respect, even if it could blend into a crowd given the right situation.

Izaya’s head snapped the other direction right away as his heart began to pound wildly in his chest, praying that the man didn’t look down from his phone conversation and recognize him. Izaya had only met the guy once, at dinner, but once was definitely enough.

“He looks just like his son.” Izaya whispered to himself, almost without thinking. “He…he looks just like Hajime.”

With all the problems he’d been having these last few days repressing those unbidden memories, having physical proof of their existence sitting right next to him, even if it was only the father of the one who’d broken Izaya’s heart, was so not helping.

Izaya could practically hear Hajime’s voice talking in his ear right now, smooth and unsurprised by anything that happened to him, yet still kind and caring underneath. He could feel Hajime’s hand rubbing calming circles on Izaya’s back, or his cheek resting gently on Izaya’s head. His father was right there, pressing into him, way too close.

Way too close…

Too close…

Too close!

Izaya jolted out of his seat, stumbling over to the wall where his girls were huddled with the pretense of bending down in front of them and checking on them. He ignored the complaining grunts of the
people he shoved aside and the angry glares he got from packed-in passengers all around him, staring into the twins’ eyes blankly and holding their hands in front of him. He could feel his heart pounding like a steam engine in his chest, drowning out everything around him except for those cursed memories, and he was acutely aware of every movement that Hajime’s father was making over in the corner of his eye.

“Iza-nii?” A tiny voice broke into his mind, dragging him back to the present with a jolt.

“Huh?” Izaya shook his head and looked down at the tiny girls before him in shock, watching their heads cock to the side, identical gazes of concern peering up at him.

“Is Iza-nii okay?” Mairu asked gently, pressing a chubby hand to his cheek and patting it slowly. “Iza-nii pale.” Kururi added, squeezing Izaya’s hand tightly.

Izaya gulped down some of the panic that was welling up in his throat, managing to force a smile out at both of the twins. “I-Iza-nii is fine.” He assured them, stuttering only a bit in the beginning. “He just…he just remembered something bad, is all. Nothing to worry about.”

Mairu’s eyes widened. “Something bad?” She repeated, looking around the train in worry, like she would see it waiting for them in the throngs of people milling around them. “Iza-nii forget something at home?” Kururi asked, still holding Izaya’s hand with worry in her big brown eyes.

Izaya felt his heart squeeze at the affection his sisters were displaying. They were such good girls. “No. No Iza-nii didn’t forget anything.” He assured Kururi, brushing some of her choppy brown hair out of her eyes. “And it’s far away from us.” He told Mairu next, pulling her back down into her seat which she had starting to stand up slightly from. He turned his red gaze back and forth between the girls, smiling gently at them both. “It’s nothing to be worried about. Nothing that can bother us now.” He promised, and relief slowly passed over the twins’ faces as they nodded, giving their brother a tight hug.

Izaya hugged them back, closing his eyes as tears began to fill them. His wonderful girls. He loved them much more than what was healthy. They would be the death of him with their demonic antics, but he would always forgive them in the end. Nothing they could do could ever make him stop loving them. Heck, if they ganged up and killed him in his sleep, he would probably come back to watch them as a guardian angel.

He loved them so much.

“Izaya?” A gruff voice asked in surprise, and all the blood in Izaya’s body froze at once.

Maybe…maybe if he didn’t react, the guy would think he was mistaken and move on.

Izaya pulled back from his girls and smiled at their faces, trying his best to ignore the electric blue gaze that was now locked on him.

“Izaya that’s you, isn’t it?” The gruff voice asked again, more certain of itself this time than it had been before.

Just keep ignoring it. Just keep ignoring it.

A large hand reached through the air and grabbed Izaya’s shoulder, shooting a bolt of lightning and fear through his body instantly.

He jumped and slapped the hand away from his body, heart pounding wildly in his chest as he stared
at Hajime’s father, who had indeed just grabbed his shoulder. His red eyes locked with those sharp blue ones, and Izaya knew he’d been caught.

“It is you, Izaya.” Hajime’s father grunted in satisfaction, leaning back on the bench and smiling at the flustered raven. “I haven’t seen you in a long time.” He looked Izaya up and down, the smile never fading from his handsome yet rugged face. “You’re still as pretty as ever.” He remarked, slipping his phone into his pocket so he could turn his full attention on the boy who most certainly did not want it.

“Thank you.” Izaya managed to say coldly, turning the twins’ heads away from the man so they were not looking at him curiously. He didn’t want the girls to have anything to do with that family. Anything at all.

“You’re welcome.” Hajime’s father said smoothly, as though Izaya had actually been sincere.

Anger flashed through Izaya’s veins at the thought. What on earth could he possibly have to thank the Shishizakis for? Nothing, that’s what! He had nothing to thank them for! Who did this guy think he was, offering up that “you’re welcome” as though Izaya had actually asked for it?

Izaya refused to look up at the man, instead turning his attention on fixing the girls’ hair, even though it already looked fine.

“So what are you on the train for?” Hajime’s father asked next, apparently still not done with the conversation.

“Visiting someone.” Izaya responded curtly, trying to convey the message that he did not want to speak.

Either Hajime’s father was dumber than he thought, or he was just ignoring the message (probably the latter) because the huge man continued to speak.

“I see. I’m going to a very important meeting in Shinjuku. We’re probably getting off at different stops then. What sort of person are you visiting?” He asked politely, still smiling at Izaya.

They were not friends or even remotely friendly with each other anymore. Don’t smile at him as though they were!

“A person.” Izaya huffed out, still refusing to look up.

He thought that might be the end of the conversation, but the universe decided to play a very cruel trick on him.

“Iza-nii is visiting his boyfriend!” Mairu chirped, ducking under Izaya’s arm and grinning at Hajime’s dad with no clue of who he was.

“Boyfriend.” Kururi agreed also smiling at the man.

“Iza-nii’s boyfriend is very nice and strong and...” Mairu trailed off, tapping her lips thoughtfully like she couldn’t think of whatever other important aspect she’d been about to list.

“And handsome.” Kururi supplied, nodding at her sister encouragingly.

Mairu bounced happily in her seat. “Right! He’s sooo handsome! Dreamy, one might say!” She gushed, clasping her hands together and batting her eyelashes.
Izaya wasn’t sure what Hajime’s father’s face looked like right now, but he knew his own was flushed red with mortification.

“Girls! He’s not my boyfriend.” Izaya snapped, face reddening even further as he pulled the girls away from Hajime’s father and over to the wall.

“Yes he is!” Mairu protested, pouting at Izaya unhappily. “Cuz you kissed him on Christmas Eve last night!”


Izaya’s life was over.

His face was as red as a beet root as he slowly looked over at Hajime’s father, terrified of the look he would see.

Hajime’s father was frowning now, humming slightly to himself as his electric blue eyes watched Izaya carefully. “I see.” He finally said, voice low and gruff. “You have a new boyfriend now? How nice.”

Izaya gulped, looking pointedly away once more.

“Yeah! And he’s nicer than the other guy was!” Mairu added, bouncing happily in our seat. “Blue-eyed meanie.” Kururi added, crossing her arms with a sharp nod. “Kuru-nee is right! The blue-eyed guy was a total meanie compared to Shizu-nii!” Mairu sang, looking over eagerly at Hajime’s father. “Shizu-nii is the nicest guy in the world! Nice and handsome and tall and strong and he and Izaya are going to make great babies!”

“Ohay! That’s enough sugar for you!” Izaya yelped, grabbing both his girls’ heads and yanking them over to look at him. He was never riding on this train again. Never. Free passes or not.

Hajime’s father was silent for a bit. “I see.” He said again, crossing his arms. “Well, I’m glad you found a new boyfriend. Someone as pretty as you was bound to find one eventually. I know Hajime did.”

Izaya flinched at the very name, and a horrible feeling boiled up in his gut.

“I know he did.” He thought bitterly, his hands squeezing the twins’ maybe just a bit too tightly. “I was there when he found her.”

Before anything even more awkward could ensue, the magical PA voice from heaven came on and announced that Sunshine 60 was the next stop.

Izaya straightened up instantly, pulling the girls to their feet alongside him. “Well, that’s our stop!” He said with forced cheer, unable to look at Hajime’s father and simply fixing up the girls’ hair yet again. “It was…an experience, seeing you again.”

It had not been a pleasure. Not even remotely.

“Before you go,” Hajime’s father tried to say, holding out a hand as if to grab Izaya again. “I want to know something. Hajime got a call the other day. He’s been looking for-”

“I don’t care what your son does and I don’t want to hear about it short of you telling me that he threw himself under a train and got mauled to pieces.” Izaya said with as much pleasantness as he
could muster, shooting Hajime’s dad a single, strained smile. “So I bid you farewell.”

The doors slid open as Hajime’s dad opened his mouth to say something else, but Izaya swiftly pulled his girls into the hordes of exiting people, refusing to look back or listen to anything that man had to say.

It didn’t concern him anymore. He didn’t want to hear a thing about it.

If only he’d known just how wrong he was.

***

Shizuo was shocked when he opened the front door and found Izaya standing out front in the snow, not to mention his two little sisters as well.

Yes, he’d brought them over to the Roast last night, but it was still odd that he would bring them so shortly afterwards. They’d cozied up to his pervert of a brother, after all. Shizuo would’ve thought that Izaya wanted to avoid that situation. But more surprising than that was Izaya’s actual presence.

“What do you mean, you don’t know why I’m here?” Izaya asked, cocking his head to the side in confusion. “We talked about it yesterday. I’m going to tutor you over the break so you don’t forget anything.”

Shizuo slapped himself on the forehead. Right! And Izaya had said he would come over…right before he kissed Shizuo good night…being completely honest, that kiss had pretty much erased everything in Shizuo’s mind that had come before it. He felt embarrassed for not remembering the actual conversation. The kiss had just been so…wonderful.

“I’m sorry I forgot.” Shizuo apologized, bending down to ruffle the girls’ hair even as he looked over his shoulder and back into the house. “My family has an annual Christmas Day trip that we plan after we open presents. It was mom’s turn to pick this year so we’re going to the Christmas carnival that’s in town. I completely forgot about it last night.”

He looked apologetically at Izaya, shocked when he saw the crushed look on the raven’s face.

Izaya quickly wiped the look off his face when he saw Shizuo watching him, straightening up with a bright grin. “That’s okay! We’ll just go back home. No big deal.” He said cheerfully, but Shizuo could hear the pain in his voice. And when he looked down at the twins, he could see tears welling up in their eyes as they clutched Izaya’s legs.

“Shizu-nii.” Kururi whispered, burying her face in Izaya’s leg so he couldn’t see her cry. “Wanted to see Shizu-nii.” Mairu whined, doing the same on Izaya’s other side.

Shizuo felt his gut wrench as the Oriharas turned to go.

Before he could think about it, his hand shot out and grabbed Izaya’s wrist, stopping him in place. “Wait!” He said desperately, trying to ignore the confused look on Izaya’s face when the raven turned around to look at him. “Yes?” Izaya asked, and there was an unmistakable glint of hope that had entered those ruby orbs. There was no way Shizuo could crush that. Especially not after the connection they’d had last night.

He was closer than ever to being Izaya’s boyfriend! He could feel it! He wasn’t going to ruin his chance now.

“Um…come with us!” Shizuo suggested, grabbing Izaya’s free hand in his and looking into those
ruby eyes. “On the trip! I know that a tutor wouldn’t typically go with his pupil on family trips, but… maybe a…maybe a friend would?” He hated using the word “friend”. He would’ve rather added something else in front of the word, but he didn’t want to scare Izaya away. He wanted the raven to accept Shizuo of his own accord.

“Yeah! Go with Shizu-nii’s family!” Mairu cheered, looking up at her brother pleadingly. “Christmas trip!” Kururi added, tugging on Izaya’s leg with the same pleading look. Izaya just watched Shizuo, an unreadable expression in his eyes.

Then a soft smile passed over his pink lips and he nodded, turning to face Shizuo fully. “Alright.” He agreed, his fingers curling gently with Shizuo’s to hold the larger boy’s hand. “Let’s do it.”

Shizuo tried to quell the ecstatic feeling that bubbled up in his chest at the thought of going somewhere with Izaya, as well as the lightning bolts that shot from his hand and up his arm at the physical contact they were making, but it was useless. He was way too happy right now.

Barely managing a nod while his head was off in that happy daze, Shizuo turned to call back into his house: “Mom! Dad! We have some visitors who are coming with us!”

There was an immediate sound of scuffling and Shizuo’s mother came practically running around the corner, dashing up to the front door in excitement. “Oh please tell me it’s your new boyfriend! Please let it be your new boyfriend! Your new adorable, wonderful, sexy boyfriend!” She chattered at lightning speed, stopped short at the door and squealing in excitement when she saw Izaya. “It is!” She said happily, grabbing Izaya’s face in her hands and kissing him on either cheek before looking back into the house.

“Kichirou!” She yelled. “Your future son-in-law is coming with us!”

“Izaya’s here?” The voice called back. “Alright! Time to get some lovebird action on the family camera!”

Shizuo felt his cheeks blush bright right as he avoided eye contact with Izaya, not sure what the shy boy would be thinking of all this. But so far, Izaya’s hand was still resting firmly in his own, and his tiny thumb was even brushing gently over Shizuo’s knuckles. It was almost…tender.

“Oh! And so are your future daughter-in-laws!” Shizuo’s mom yelled again, bringing Shizuo back to the present.

“Those adorable twins from yesterday who fell in love with Kasuka? Got it!” Shizuo’s dad sang back, and Shizuo groaned as he looked down at Izaya nervously.

But, to his shock, Izaya was smiling at Shizuo’s mother, a sort of glitter in his ruby eyes. “Um… thank you, Namiko-san.” He said quietly, gently pushing on his girls’ back to signify that it was okay to move around. “It means a lot.”

The twins happily ran over to Shizuo’s mother, grabbing her legs happily and chattering eagerly about how much they missed her.

Shizuo watched his mother’s face light up with maternal affection and she immediately swooped down to scoop up the girls in her arms, taking them back into the house without further ado, cooing gently at them and kissing their foreheads all the way.

Which left Shizuo and Izaya alone on the porch, holding hands like an awkward couple.

It was Izaya who broke the silence first.
“I’m glad your family is happy.” Izaya said softly. “I don’t really have a lot of social experience beyond…questionable people, so I didn’t know how they would react to us.”

“They love you!” Shizuo said immediately, grabbing both of Izaya’s hands in his own and pulling Izaya closer. “I love you.” Shizuo added in his head, squeezing the small hands slightly. “Of course we would let you come along.”

Shizuo realized that Izaya was still standing out in the winter snow.

“Oh! Come inside. We aren’t leaving for a few more minutes.” Shizuo said awkwardly, pulling gently on Izaya’s hands.

“Oh, okay.” Izaya responded just as awkwardly, stepping into Shizuo’s house and removing his hands from Shizuo’s so he could take off his coat.

Shizuo stood by with a red face, scratching the back of his head and staring at his feet awkwardly.

“Um…so about last night…” Izaya said slowly, and panic filled Shizuo’s chest.

“I know it’s awkward to think about but I really don’t regret anything!” Shizuo blurted out before he could stop himself, face turning even redder than before when Izaya turned to look at him in shock.

“I enjoyed it, well by that I mean to say it was nice. Or, that it felt great! Or, well maybe…” Shizuo wasn’t sure what he was doing anymore, eyes darting all over the hallway and refusing to land on Izaya.

Real smooth Shizuo. Way to go. You’re a real lady killer.

“I was only going to say,” Izaya’s gentle voice broke in, and a smooth hand landed on Shizuo’s cheek, directing his face to look down at Izaya. Shizuo stared into Izaya’s red eyes, and Izaya stared up at his gold ones. “I was only going to say,” Izaya said again, even softer this time. “That you’re a really good kisser for someone who’s only been kissed twice.”

Shizuo felt his heart soar with that statement, and he laughed nervously, shuffling his feet in the hallway as he tried to think of something to say. He had no experience with romance. What would someone who had experience say?! What would Kasuka say? What would Kasuka say…

“A-And your lips were really soft so I wouldn’t mind kissing them again.” He stammered out, instantly wishing he could take the words back and shove them down his own throat. Izaya’s cheeks blushed red as he stared with wide eyes at Shizuo, and Shizuo coughed as he looked the other direction.

“R-Really?” Izaya asked hesitantly, and Shizuo coughed again, stepping away from Izaya and trying not to look at the smaller raven as his eyes darted around the hallway. “U-Uh, I mean it’s just an amateur opinion.” He babbled, hoping he wasn’t blowing this as badly as he thought he was. “And I was tired last night s-so I might not have been thinking at my best, uh, analytical capacity.”

What the heck did that mean?! That he was tired so he couldn’t be sure whether Izaya’s lips were soft or not?! What in the world was he saying?!!

“If that’s the case,” Izaya’s shy voice broke into Shizuo’s panicked thoughts. “Then now that you’re wide awake, I’ll let you have another chance to analyze.”

Shizuo looked back down in shock at Izaya. “Wha-” He started to say, but before he could get any more words out, that pink mouth was fit over his own, lips connecting with his in the most delicious manner possible.
Shizuo’s hands instantly wrapped around Izaya’s waist, pulling him closer as he kissed Izaya back, a hot feeling curling up in his stomach. Shizuo felt his tongue poke at Izaya’s lips, quietly asking for entrance, just like he’d done in some of his fantasies.

Izaya seemed to hesitate just the tiniest bit, and then he widened his mouth and pressed deeper against Shizuo, allowing his tongue to enter his mouth. Shizuo was probably a bit too eager as he delved his tongue inside Izaya’s mouth, tasting every inch that he could as he rubbed his hands up and down Izaya’s sides. Izaya let out a small whine, and Shizuo pressed even deeper against him, wanting to drag more sounds out of his delicious mouth.

Izaya shifted his head to one side, small hands coming up and tangling themselves in Shizuo’s hair. Shizuo happily let him do so, growling a bit against Izaya’s mouth as he slid his hands under Izaya’s shirt, rubbing the smooth skin that was there. When he licked Izaya’s darting tongue, a moan escaped Izaya’s mouth, and the raven moved himself forward until his crotch was pressed against Shizuo’s leg. He rubbed himself on Shizuo’s leg, making Shizuo’s head dizzy with delight.

Before Shizuo could react to anything, Izaya let out a strange yelp and leapt away from Shizuo, his face flaming red.

Shizuo stared at him in confusion, mind still fuzzy from the euphoria of the moment, until he glanced over Izaya’s shoulder. His stomach nearly dropped to the floor when he saw Kasuka pressed up behind Izaya, a single hand groping Izaya’s butt as his other hand encircled the raven’s waist.

Kasuka looked at Shizuo with his usual straight face. “Share.” He said simply.

Shizuo felt anger course in his veins at the same time that mortification did, which was a rather odd combination that made his head feel like it was going to blow up as his cheeks flushed red.

“No!” He yelled out, grabbing Izaya and yanking the raven into his chest, wrapping his arms protectively around the smaller boy as he glared at his brother. Izaya squeaked a bit as he pressed into Shizuo’s chest, but Shizuo was acutely aware of the way his tiny arms wrapped around Shizuo’s back, holding him closer.

He could feel the happiness soaring through his chest, but he couldn’t let that show on his face as he glared at his brother.

“I’m n-not sharing.” He managed to grit out, gold eyes flashing dangerously at Kasuka. “I-Izaya isn’t a toy to be messed with and passed around. H-He’s a person who deserves one person who will be devoted and loyal to only him. And he d-deserves to choose who that person will be.” Shizuo gulped down the nervous feeling that was bubbling in his throat, holding Izaya close and praying that he wasn’t going to scare the raven off.

“So just leave him alone. Unless he comes to you, promise me you’ll leave him alone. Or at the very least, stick with flirting.” He ordered, voice a little stronger as he glared at Kasuka.

Kasuka watched him for a few seconds, the ghost of a smile flickering over his lips for just a second before he nodded. “Alright.” He said, bowing slightly to Shizuo. “I’ll stick with flirting for now. But I’m still in the running, got it?”

Shizuo nodded once, and his brother straightened up again, that same ghost smile flickering back onto his face. “We’re leaving in about five minutes.” He announced, which was probably the reason he’d come to the hallway in the first place. “You might want to be finished devouring his face by then.”
And with that elegant parting, Kasuka spun around and exited the hallway, leaving Shizuo and Izaya standing there.

Shizuo wasn’t sure what to say to Izaya, with his head pressed into Shizuo’s chest and not a sound coming out of his tiny body. Should he try talking to the smaller boy? Should he pretend the kiss just now had never happened? What would Izaya want him to do? He had no idea.

“Shizuo…” Izaya whispered, startling the blonde and making him jump in place. Then shock filled the tall boy at the fact that Izaya had just used his full name. Not Shizu-chan or Shizu-nii, but Shizuo.

“Y-Yes?” Shizuo asked, heart pounding in his chest as he waited to see what Izaya would say next.

“Did…did…” The words Izaya was trying to get out were obviously very hard for him to say. The raven took a deep breath, mustering up his courage before looking right up into Shizuo’s golden eyes.

“Did you mean what you said just now?” He asked, voice barely more than a whisper. “About loyalty and devotion? And letting me choose?”

Shizuo was surprised. Of all the things Izaya wanted to talk about, he wanted to talk about the most obvious?

“Of course I meant it.” He said instantly, cocking his head a little bit at Izaya. “You deserve that. Everybody deserves that.”

Something akin to wonder filled Izaya’s eyes as he stared at Shizuo, the ruby gaze never leaving Shizuo’s golden one. Izaya slowly stood up on his tiptoes and pressed a gentle kiss to Shizuo’s lips, letting it linger there for just a few wonderful seconds, before pulling back with a smile. “I…I don’t know what to say.” He admitted shyly, brushing a loose strand of raven hair behind his ear. “Just… Thank you. Thank you, Shizuo.”

Izaya beamed up at Shizuo, happiness glowing from the perfect face as he smiled at the love-struck blonde. The joy that filled his eyes was the same as the one that had filled them on Christmas Eve. The joy of belonging and gratitude. The joy that said Izaya belonged with Shizuo.

Izaya reached a hand up to Shizuo’s face, placing it against Shizuo’s cheek tenderly and smiling that beautiful smile, looking into Shizuo’s eyes with adoration.

“Thank you.” Izaya said one more time, kissing Shizuo on the cheek before pulling out of Shizuo’s arms, and turning to walk down the hallway.

Shizuo stayed in the hallway for a while after that, thinking about Izaya’s reaction just now.

He’d seemed shocked by Shizuo’s beliefs in loyalty and devotion, even more so by the fact that Shizuo thought he deserved to choose who he loved. And the way he thanked him just then…like the very words Shizuo had spoken were enough to make him fall in love. Enough to make him believe in love.

It wasn’t like Izaya was used to devotion, what with the way his parents were always gone. And considering the unspoken ex-boyfriend…Shizuo was beginning to have a sneaking suspicion that this ex-boyfriend had betrayed Izaya in some way. Probably some way involving loyalty. Perhaps… perhaps he’d cheated on Izaya.

Izaya. A boy who was already uncertain in how much he was worth to anyone, and who already had no real idea of what loyalty was, or what it felt like to be loved. A boy with little to no social
experience who would barely let anybody inside his defenses at all. A boy that was scared of his own emotions and set up two masks in order to protect himself from displaying them to anybody that he didn’t trust. A boy who would be crushed by a lie that would tear him apart and keep him away from romance for a long while afterwards.

Shizuo thought about the beautiful smile that made Izaya more radiant than an angel. He thought about the adorable big brother version of Izaya that he was with his sisters. He thought about Izaya’s hidden cooking skills. He thought about Izaya’s sweet shyness with romance and his slightly mischievous side that would occasionally rear its head. In general, he thought about Izaya and what an incredible person his private tutor was.

“Shizu-chan? We’re leaving now! Are you ready for us to come down the hallway?” Izaya cheerful voice called from somewhere off in the household, followed by the laughter of Shizuo’s family.

The thought of the ex-boyfriend who had somehow hurt Izaya filtered into Shizuo’s mind upon hearing the happy, trusting voice of the raven.

Shizuo felt his fists clench at his sides at the thought of this ex-boyfriend. Whatever he had done to Izaya…Shizuo was going to beat the shit out of him for doing it.

Chapter End Notes

Yeah! Go Shizuo! Who else agrees with his decision?! And ooooooh! Izaya and the twins are going on a trip with Shizuo's familyyyyyyyyy! What will happen to them? And not to mention Hajime's father. 〇□〇 What will he do?!

And so that thing about my mother...you guys all know that one person who wants you to join them on an errand and they swear it won't take a while and then they magically remember 15 things they have to do AFTER you're on the road? Then you can't go home because they're the one driving the car and you don't have your vehicle to drive back so you get stuck for hours doing errands you did not sign up for? Yeah...that person is my mother. Sorry about the latish update, guys! I didn't forget! I promise!

Anyway, I'll see you with the next chapter as things begin to escalate! <3
I'm gonna put out a confession right now: I keep a screenshot collection of my favorite comments from you guys and it is an absolutely wonderful thing to look over. Seriously! I absolutely love hearing all the things you guys have had to say about my work so far and it not only brightens my day to see people like my writing, but it really inspires me to write more. I love you guys SO MUCH! And I know I've said that many times before so we're just gonna move on before I dive into another spiel about that. XD But really, I LOVE YOU ALL.

Okay! Now we get to see their family trip! Enjoy! <3

Shizuo felt like a guy on his first date. Which, he supposed, he technically was.

Shizuo had never been in a relationship before, let alone gone on a date with anyone. Pick any person in school, off his street, or who'd had contact with him in general and you would hear the horror stories about how violent and terrifying he was. Not exactly the best reputation to find a girlfriend with.

Although now Shizuo was beginning to realize that he wasn’t looking for a girlfriend. He was looking for Izaya.

Shizuo glanced nervously to his right, where Izaya was walking along right next to him. The raven-haired boy had an entirely different outfit on now than he'd had on when he brought his sisters to Shizuo’s doorstep.

Shizuo’s mother had kicked up a storm when she realized that all the Oriharas had to wear in the winter were semi-thick winter coats and worn-out mittens, along with boots whose soles were on the brink of wearing through. She refused to leave the house until all three children were properly clothed in full-on winter gear, from thick fur-lined coats and brand new mittens to scarves and thick winter boots, not to mention beanie hats and earmuffs. In fact, she’d dragged Shizuo’s dad to the corner store in order to buy said brand new clothes before any of them were allowed to leave the house.

Izaya was now bundled up with more clothes than Shizuo had ever seen him wear. He had a thick black fur-lined coat that buttoned down the front with little gold buttons that glinted in the sunlight. Along with the new coat, he wore cute black mittens with little fuzz-balls hanging off the wrists, and a long cat scarf that wrapped around his pale neck to protect it from the winter wind. He had a black beanie on his head and fuzzy white earmuffs that covered his ears from over the beanie, giving the pale boy double protection from the cold. And last but not least, he had brand new winter boots that crunched easily through the snow at his feet, leaving little footprints alongside Shizuo’s much larger ones as they walked.

The twins were also dressed in brand new winter clothes, with pink puffy coats that made them look like walking marshmallows, and pink wool hand mittens bundling their tiny hands up tight. They had long red scarves that wrapped several times around their necks, and shiny red winter boots which they happily stomped around in. Bright, fuzzy earmuffs covered their little ears, contrasting with their
dark brown hair. The only difference between the way the two girls dressed was their earmuffs, where Kururi had bright red ones and Mairu had hot pink ones. The twins looked adorable, all bundled up like that and waddling along with happy grins on their faces, holding Shizuo’s parents’ hands as they chattered eagerly about what they’d done at daycare the night before.

“And then Kuru-nee made a sailboat!” Mairu giggled, skipping as she walked and swinging Shizuo’s mom’s hand. “It floated better than all the other boats!”

“Went far.” Kururi added, smiling up at Shizuo’s dad as she clung to his hand. “Very happy.”

“Yeah! It made Kuru-nee so happy!” Mairu elaborated, grinning at Shizuo’s mom widely. “She’s so talented!”

“Yes she is, honey.” Shizuo’s mom agreed, kissing Mairu on the nose. “But you are too. Don’t forget that.”

Shizuo’s dad grabbed Kururi and swung her high into the air, grinning as she laughed happily and setting her gently on his shoulders. “You girls are both very talented!” He smiled, glancing up at Kururi while she clung to his head, eyes wide as she surveyed the world from her new vantage point.

“Hey! I wanna be high, too!” Mairu yelped, jumping up and down and tugging on Shizuo’s mom desperately. Shizuo’s mom laughed and picked up the cheering Mairu, placing the tiny girl on her new perch and waving at her sister with sparkling brown eyes.

Kururi laughed and waved back, looking next at Izaya with a wide grin. “Iza-nii!” She called happily. “Iza-nii! IZZZaaaaa-niiiiiiii!” Mairu agreed, turning around and waving wildly at Izaya. “Look at us! Look at us!”

“Yes, I see you.” Izaya called to them, smiling fondly at his sisters as he walked beside Shizuo. “You girls got so tall so fast! What have you been eating?”

The twins both laughed happily, returning to their original task of surveying the area as they chattered happily to the Heiwajima parents.

Shizuo felt a smile dance onto his face unbidden at the small scene, his own gloved hand tightening a little around Izaya’s smaller mitten-covered one. Because yes, he was not only walking beside the beautiful boy, but he was holding hands with him. Holding hands. They were walking along with Shizuo’s family and holding hands.

Shizuo had never been so happy and so nervous in all his life. Hence the feeling of being on his very first date.

Shizuo looked down at the lovely raven at his side, watching him with a gentle smile as Izaya held his hand and looked pointedly at his new black boots marching through the snow. Izaya paused in his focused marching looked anxiously over at Kasuka, who was walking on Izaya’s other side in his own winter gear, reading the brochure on the Christmas Festival this year.

Shizuo was fairly certain that Izaya was waiting for Kasuka to make another move, for his bubble of safety to burst, but Shizuo was never going to let that happen.

“So Izaya,” Shizuo said, squeezing Izaya’s hand gently. The raven’s head snapped over to look at him instantly, red eyes wide as they looked up at him. “Yes?” He asked, cocking his head slightly as they walked.
Shizuo felt his cheeks blush red and he quickly looked the other direction, trying not to focus on how utterly adorable Izaya was. “Ah, I was wondering what you felt like doing at the festival.” He grunted out, scratching the back of his head as he watched the snowflakes fall.

“We split up once we’re there? I thought it was a big family thing.” Izaya remarked in surprise, his body tensing up slightly beside Shizuo.

“Oh it is!” Shizuo said quickly, looking back over at Izaya and inadvertently clutching the smaller boy’s hand tighter. “I was just wondering which activity you wanted to do. We each pick one and the family goes and does it.”

Izaya ducked down behind his cat scarf to hide a small blush that was forming on his alabaster cheeks. “Oh-Oh okay.” He said shyly, staring at the ground as the two of them walked. “Well…then I would want to ride one of the rollercoasters.”

“A rollercoaster?” Shizuo asked in surprise, looking down at Izaya’s raven hair. “Which one?”

Izaya shrugged, biting his lip as he walked. “Just…a rollercoaster. I’ve never been on one and I always wanted to try.”

“Then even if it makes hell freeze over and heaven turn into a love hotel, we are going to ride one.” Shizuo thought instantly, pulling Izaya as he marched up to his parents. “Mom! Dad!” He called, making both adults turn around to look at him in surprise. “Yes, Shizuo?” His mom asked, a bit of a knowing glint passing into her eyes as she looked between the blushing raven and the determined blonde. “What’s up?” His dad asked happily, winking at Izaya and making the already embarrassed boy completely bury his face in his cat scarf.

Shizuo held Izaya’s hand tightly as he looked between his parents. “Izaya wants to ride on a rollercoaster. We’re going to do that.” He said firmly, leaving no room for argument.

The knowing glint turned into an evil one as Shizuo’s mom quickly placed her lips at her husband’s ear, whispering something to him that no one else could hear. His dad’s face lit up and an evil cackle escaped him as he whispered something back to his grinning wife. The twins looked curiously down at their whispering perches, heads cocked as they wondered what was going on. Clearly, despite having Izaya as an older brother, they were unfamiliar with the face of evil plotting.

“We would love to take you boys on a rollercoaster ride.” Shizuo’s mom purred, an evil light in her eyes as she looked directly at Shizuo. “In fact, we have one already picked out!” His dad sang, a wicked grin crossing his face as he pointed off into the distance.

Shizuo and Izaya both looked up to where he was pointing, and Shizuo’s jaw dropped.

Rising above the rest of the noisy carnival booths and milling crowds, above the structures already built in place and even the other rollercoasters already running, was a massive and terrifying track of steel and wheels. It rose freakishly high up into the air, at least 70 feet, before dropping sharply towards the earth, then twisted and turned its way along the ground before spinning itself into three consecutive loop-de-loops. After that, it snapped around to soar into the air once more, flipped its passengers upside down for a short while, then plunged back down to earth in one sharp twist, entering a final layer of twisting and turning before the track finally ended. And it looked like it did that three times in a row.

The name of the roller coaster was displayed proudly on the side of its tallest metal tower, in big yellow letters surrounded by flashing lights: SHOT OF COURAGE.
“Oh hell no.” Shizuo said aloud before he could stop himself.

“What? Why not?” Shizuo’s dad asked in mock surprise, walking over and wrapping an arm around his son’s shoulders. “Is our big tough son afraid of a little rollercoaster?”

“Little?” Shizuo repeated skeptically, glaring at his father. “That is not little.”

“It’s kinda big…and questionable in its safety levels…” Izaya said slowly, one of his arms wrapping around Shizuo’s arm almost unconsciously until he was hugging Shizuo’s arm. Shizuo instantly felt his mouth go dry and his face go red. And when he looked at his father and saw the villainous man wink at him, he realized what the evil plan was.

Get Izaya on a terrifying rollercoaster. Have him clutch Shizuo for comfort. Be the big strong guy throughout the ride. Instant boyfriend bonding.

That was a low, clichéd, underhanded, overused, dirty trick.

Damn his parents for making Shizuo agree to it.

“I’m…sure it won’t be that bad.” Shizuo grunted out, rubbing the back of his head as he stared at the imposing structure. “And they wouldn’t let people on if it wasn’t safe, right?”

“In 2016, there were an estimated 30,000 injuries associated with amusement park rides in the US alone.” Izaya rattled off instantly, red eyes wide as he stared at the massive steel structure. “However, deaths are no longer registered and recorded by the safety administration which used to be in charge of them. The last recorded number of roller coaster deaths was at 52 between 1990 and 2004.”

Shizuo paused where he stood, staring at the imposing SHOT OF COURAGE.

“I’m sure we’ll be fine.” He finally said, shooting his father the death glare.

His dad just snickered, patting Shizuo on the back before marching cheerfully over to his wife. “Of course we will! So let’s head over! Better to do these things first before we eat all the fair food, right?” He chirped, linking his arm with his wife’s.

“Exactly!” His wife agreed happily, practically skipping along beside him. “Let’s hurry over!”

“Yay!” Mairu cheered, clapping her hands wildly from atop Shizuo’s mom’s shoulders. “I have no idea what we’re doing!”

“Me neither, Mai-chan.” Shizuo sighed as they started their trek for the SHOT OF COURAGE. “Me neither.”

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Shizuo was signing his death warrant, that’s what he was doing.

The tall blonde gulped as they finally neared the check-in spot, the line surprisingly long for such a terrifying ride. Maybe there were a lot more suicidal maniacs in Japan than Shizuo had originally thought there were.

“Are all these people so unhappy with their lives that they’re willing to ride this metal monstrosity?” Shizuo muttered, glaring at the throngs of passengers all eagerly strapping themselves into the ride itself.

“Well, you get a free T-shirt for riding it.” Izaya pointed at the poster by the check-in, his tiny hand
clutching Shizuo’s for dear life. “Maybe they need new clothes.”

Shizuo snorted out a laugh, a smile somehow coming onto his face despite the less-than-ideal situation he was in. Izaya’s small attempt at humor was making things better, even though Shizuo knew the raven was just trying to distract himself from the terrifying ride he was about to be on. His first rollercoaster ride was going to be this horrific creation. Why had Shizuo gone along with this?

And more importantly, why the heck had he allowed his parents to chicken out?!

Shizuo snapped his head over to glare at his parents, who were waving cheerfully at them from the benches placed beside the rollercoaster. The twins and Kasuka were with them as well, with the twins eagerly fawning all over the straight-faced boy as Kasuka bounced them on his knees. None of those cowards were coming with them. It was only Shizuo and Izaya.

“Family activity” his ass.

“Sir, please step by the height measurement chart.” The roller coaster employee told him, gesturing Shizuo forward without looking up from his computer. If he had looked up, he probably wouldn’t have asked Shizuo to do that.

Shizuo coughed in embarrassment as he dutifully shuffled over to the measurement chart, standing next to the safety line with a red face. Yeah…he was definitely good on height. Standing at 6 foot 1, Shizuo was already a freak in class. Did that really need to be pointed out on the rollercoaster where he was taller than the height chart itself?

The employee finally looked up from his computer where he was apparently recording the people checking in on the ride, and jumped in shock when he saw Shizuo.

Shizuo bit his lip and refused to make eye contact with the gawking male, perfectly aware of the eyes raking up and down his body like he was a circus attraction. No one said anything for a long while, with Shizuo growing increasingly uncomfortable as the employee just stared at his freakish height, up and down and up and down. When was this guy going to be satisfied? Shizuo was tall! Big deal! Just let him get in the rollercoaster of doom already.

“Excuse me, sir.” A sweet voice called, and Shizuo looked over to see Izaya, batting his dark eyelashes at the rollercoaster employee with his pink lips spread into a pleasant smile. The employee looked over at Izaya next, his face flushing red as he saw the raven. “Y-Yes?” He managed to choke out.

Izaya stepped next to Shizuo, clinging to the blonde’s arm in an intentionally girly manner, nuzzling against Shizuo with something that was on the brink of a purr. “This is my man.” Izaya said sweetly, red eyes locking right on the employee. “So kindly stop ogling him before I castrate you.”

Instantly, the poor man’s legs snapped shut and he hid behind his booth, looking in fear at the misleadingly sweet raven. “G-G-Go on in.” He squeaked, terror coated his face as he gestured towards the loading area for the ride.

“Thank you!” Izaya chirped, pulling Shizuo along behind him.

Now in the part of his heart which was moral and good, Shizuo knew that he should feel bad about how they’d essentially just threatened the poor employee who was only trying to do his job. But Izaya’s words just then, “This is my man” had Shizuo floating on cloud 9.

With his head stuck in cotton-candy happiness, Shizuo numbly followed Izaya right to the landing platform, the both of them climbing into the ride as instructed by a second employee waiting for
them.

Izaya climbed onto the right side of the cart and Shizuo stayed on the left, both of them pressed pretty close together as the employee shoved the safety bar down over their laps. It was a two-person cart, just the two of them sitting side by side, and Shizuo could feel his cheeks turning red at the thought of sitting in such close quarters with Izaya for so long.

“Um…Shizu-chan?” Izaya’s uncertain voice broke through Shizuo’s happy daze, and the blonde instantly looked over at his partner. “Yeah?” He asked, automatically placing one of his gloved hands over Izaya’s little mitten-covered one. Izaya jumped a little as he looked down at the hand in shock, but he settled down after only a few seconds, his little hand relaxed under Shizuo’s touch.

“Well…I’m sorry if I offended you just now. By calling you my man.” The raven said softly, refusing to look up and meet Shizuo’s eyes. “I knew the employee was making you uncomfortable and I was getting a little jeal-” Izaya cut himself off before he could finish that sentence, shaking his head violently. “I knew you were getting uncomfortable so I said the first thing I could to distract him.” He said quickly, red eyes darting around without locking on Shizuo’s.

Shizuo was uncertain whether or not this bar would prevent his soul from escaping his body from sheer happiness. Had Izaya been about to say he was…jealous? Jealous of someone else staring at Shizuo?

“Calm down calm down calm down calm down calm down.” Shizuo repeated over and over in his head, knees bouncing with nervous energy as he thought about what to do next. What to say next. How was he going to go about this so he didn’t mess anything up?

Because it sounded like Izaya was starting to have some feelings for Shizuo.

“DON’T SCREW UP.”

“I’m not offended.” Shizuo said slowly, looking right at Izaya as he said so. “In fact…that made me very happy.”

Izaya froze and then looked up at Shizuo in shock, red eyes wide and lips slightly parted in his surprise. “It made you happy?” He repeated, confusion filling the red orbs. “How did it make you happy?”

Holy god of strawberry milkshake heaven, this was an opportunity for confession wasn’t it?! Shizuo could confess right now! He could literally confess his feelings!

But…but should he? Was it too soon? None of Shizuo’s Sherlock Holmes reading could have prepared him to analyze the perfect time for a love confession.

Literarily, this was one of the best times to slip in a love confession. Izaya had just asked why Shizuo was happy, Shizuo could easily reply that it was because he loved him. A dramatic moment of shock would ensue, the rollercoaster might take off at just the right time, Izaya would clutch to Shizuo in those heart-pounding moments of fear, the raven would realize he loved the blonde as well, the ride ends with a heated kiss. It might be perfect.

But at the same time, there might be a dramatic moment of shock, the rollercoaster might take off at just the wrong moment, Izaya might try to lean away from Shizuo during the entire ride out of sheer awkwardness, Izaya might let Shizuo know that he didn’t really feel the same way, and the ride ends with both of them walking away with a ruined friendship and Shizuo with a broken heart. Not perfect at all.
What should he do?

Shizuo gulped as he looked down at the raven, those beautiful red eyes trained entirely on him, expecting some kind of an answer, and Shizuo had no idea how to answer him. “I was happy because…” Shizuo tried to say, but his voice trailed off as his bravery left. Izaya kept watching him, not saying a thing and just waiting for Shizuo to continue.

Shizuo took a deep breath. “Because…” He tried to say again, but again his bravery ditched him at the moment of truth.

Shizuo felt like punching the crap out of whatever idiot had invented nervousness. It was ruining the pathway to Shizuo’s soulmate right now.

Whoa, soulmate?!! That was going a little far for this point in time. They weren’t even dating yet. Yet.

If Shizuo could just get these stupid words out, then it might not be a “yet” anymore!

But they were just caught in his throat, and they refused to come out.

“There!” Shizuo practically yelled, his face red as he tried to force the confession out. Once again, his voice died away and nothing happened. Frustrated, Shizuo raked a hand harshly through his dyed blonde hair, wishing the ride would just swallow him up already.

The small mitten-covered hand that was underneath his own gloved one suddenly moved, turning itself over so that it could clasp Shizuo’s hand gently. Shizuo looked down at their clasped hands in shock, then back up at Izaya right next to him.

Izaya smiled at him, red eyes soft and caring as they stared into Shizuo’s golden ones. “Because?” He asked encouragingly, thumb moving comfortingly over Shizuo’s knuckles.

Shizuo stared into Izaya’s eyes for a few heartbeats, wondering if he was fantasizing right now. If he wasn’t, then he couldn’t afford to miss this chance.

Shizuo tightened his grip on Izaya’s hand and turned to face him as fully as he could when pinned under the safety bar.

“Izaya,” Shizuo began, looking right into Izaya’s eyes as seriously as he could. “I wasn’t offended because I-”

Just at that moment, the rollercoaster decided to screech out of the loading platform, rocketing off to the skyscraper-height feature that made it so imposing from afar.

The look on Izaya’s face instantly changed from encouragement and care to absolute terror, and his head snapped forward to look where they were going with so much force, Shizuo was worried he was going to break his neck.

And just like that, the moment that Shizuo had read about in romance novels, seen in movies, and heard about in sappy love stories from his grandmother was gone.

He could’ve kicked himself for having missed his chance…if the ride hadn’t reached its peak point at that very moment in time and Shizuo hadn’t been able to look into the depths of hell over the hood of the cart.

Why in god’s name were they in the front?! He hadn’t even noticed that before!
The cart they were in tipped slowly forward, inching bit by bit towards the stomach-dropping fall back down to earth, dragging out the moment of tension in Shizuo’s terrified body like nothing else. He wasn’t afraid of heights, no that wasn’t it. He was only afraid of the threat of diving headfirst at the earth 70 feet below him and being smashed to oblivion by somehow falling out of the cart on the way down.

He looked beside him to see if Izaya was as terrified as he was…and his jaw dropped.

The look on Izaya’s face now that he was facing an image of death itself, a sheer 70 foot plummet face-first at the earth…was absolute delight.

His red eyes were wide and sparkling, soft lips pulled into a delighted grin, his alabaster cheeks were tinged pink from the wind whistling all around them, only bringing more color into his delighted face, and his raven hair whipped wildly around his head like a testament to how excited he was. He looked positively thrilled at the practically-a-version-of-suicide ride they were about to go on. He looked 100% crazy.

He looked as beautiful as an angel.

Shizuo found himself completely distracted for however long they were stuck at the top of that rollercoaster, staring at Izaya’s radiance like some kind of worshipper in church, unable to look away from the glowing excitement that was Izaya Orihara in that moment in time. Shizuo felt like he could’ve stared at that face for hours, and not have tired of a single detail.

In that moment, Shizuo could freely admit that he loved Izaya Orihara.

And then of course, the rollercoaster chose that moment to make its terrifying drop.

With the screams of all its passengers rocketing out of the stupid tin can, the rollercoaster plunged downwards at a speed that Shizuo didn’t care to estimate, whipping his hair back behind his head like a blonde comet, and essentially dragging him to his doom.

Shizuo faced the ground with only one thought in mind as it approached: “I will not show fear to the dirt that’s going to kill me, I will not show fear to the dirt that’s going to kill me, I will not show fear to the dirt that’s going to kill me.”

He repeated this mantra over and over as the rollercoaster neared the bottom of its plunge, his thoughts growing more and more determined as they neared the bottom, until Shizuo finally grit his teeth and instead of a scream coming out of his mouth like everyone else’s, it was a roar of defiance.

“COME ON! HIT ME WITH YOUR BEST SHOT!” Shizuo yelled at the top of his lungs, probably going completely unheard by most of the occupants of the rollercoaster as the wind howled around them.

A small hand moved to clutch his and Shizuo looked over in shock at Izaya, still staring in pure glee ahead of them as the tin can neared its demise, as he leaned a little closer to Shizuo to shout in the blonde’s ear.

“SHIZU-CHAN, I KNOW YOU MAY NOT LIKE IT AS MUCH AS ME, BUT DON’T DESTROY THE RIDE!” Izaya shouted, giving Shizuo a quick peck on the cheek just as the rollercoaster slammed into the bottom of its dive and began rocketing through the rest of the track.

For the rest of the ride, Shizuo was in a daze of happiness. That seemed to be happening quite often with Izaya these days. As they soared through twists and turns and loop-de-loops and upside down straights, and even as they went up the terrifying high dive two more times, Shizuo could feel a sort
of giddy smile on his lips, that only increased each time Izaya’s body brushed against his on the ride. The smile turned into a full-on grin when a delighted Izaya grabbed onto Shizuo’s arm for the third trip around, hugging it tightly as he let out a bright laugh with the final drop from the skyscraper plunge, only holding it all the more tightly when the plunge was over and the rest of the ride began. Shizuo reached over and grabbed one of Izaya’s hands, holding it in his own and pulling the raven as close to him as he possibly could, just breathing in the scent of the boy that used to drive him mad at school in total bliss. And the best part? Izaya giggled and moved closer, laughing in delight with each turn that the ride made and nuzzling contentedly into Shizuo throughout the whole thing.

When the SHOT OF COURAGE finally pulled into a stop at the station, there were thirty thoroughly terrified passengers who needed to be helped out of their seats, four thrill junkies who were crying out to go again, and two happy teenagers cuddling in the front seat like they’d just been through the Tunnel of Love.

In short, Shizuo had not been happier than this in a very long time.

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“Oooh, Shizu-chan they took candid photos of the passengers on the ride!” Izaya squealed in delight, tugging on Shizuo’s hand and dragging the tall boy towards the photo booth. “Let’s look at ours! Pleeeeeease?”

“Iza-nii and Shizu-nii!” Kururi agreed happily, waddling along beside Kichirou on the snow-covered ground of the festival. “Yeah! Let’s see the pictures of Iza-nii and Shizu-nii!” Mairu cheered, skipping as she held the hand of Namiko on their trek through the festivities. “It would be nice to see the two of you together.” Kasuka added, giving Shizuo some kind of pointed look that Izaya didn’t understand but which somehow made Shizuo’s face blush red.

Interesting. Izaya wondered what that pointed look could mean.

Well, in any case, Izaya just wanted to see what his pictures looked like! He’d never been on a rollercoaster before and that one was AMAZING!

“Come on, Shizu-chan! Let’s look!” He tugged on Shizuo’s arm, making sure to stick out his lip in a pout for effect as he looked up at the blushing blonde.

Shizuo glanced briefly over at his parents who simply nodded with some rather secretive smiles, before he looked back down at Izaya. “Sure. Let’s have a look.” He agreed, giving Izaya that same fond, caring smile he’d been displaying all day so far.

It was endearing…but at the same time, it was a little scary. After all, it was the same look Hajime used to give him all the time. Shizu-chan was different, Izaya was almost sure of it…but you could never be too careful.

Especially with your heart.

Izaya pushed aside the unpleasant thoughts and cheered, dragging Shizuo eagerly over to the photo booth proudly displaying their sign about the SHOT OF COURAGE candid photos.

No one else was in the booth yet (total score!) allowing Izaya to run right over to the electric display and start searching for their photos.

He found them after about two swipes, and squealed with delight as he opened them, tapping at his face excitedly.
“That’s me! That’s me!” He giggled, looking eagerly at his face at the top of the rollercoaster.

He looked just as thrilled as he had felt at that pinnacle of excitement, peering down those 70 feet and ready to tip over to begin the ride. His eyes were wide and slightly crazy, and a huge grin was spread across his face. Shizuo was watching Izaya in this picture…with a look on his face that Izaya couldn’t quite read. There was a smile present, and his eyes were very gentle. Was it adoration? Fondness? Well whatever it was, it made Izaya’s heart flutter in his chest.

Izaya dragged Shizuo over to look at the picture, pointing the two of them out so he could see them, and gesturing for the rest of the family to come over as well.

“Oh, Shizuo! You look distracted by something.” Kichirou teased, elbowing his son in the side. Shizuo’s face was blushing red as he rubbed his arm, glaring slightly at his father. “Shut up.” He muttered in response, only getting a snicker from the delighted man. Izaya had no idea why he was so happy…but whatever! Next picture!

Izaya eagerly moved on to the next one, which showed them on the actual descent of that huge drop. Izaya still had a delighted look on his face, and he was smiling widely as he laughed on the way down, in sharp contrast with all the screaming people around them. Also in contrast was Shizuo, who looked…

Izaya burst out laughing, pointing right at Shizuo’s face. “Y-You look bored with life, Shizu-chan!” He giggled, tears coming to his eyes as he stared at the flat-faced, slightly glaring image of Shizuo.

“He looks like me.” Kasuka remarked blankly, and the whole family started laughing at that. “I do not!” Shizuo protested, but on closer examination, he grumbled an admission that it was true. His face was completely emotionless and bored, aside from the small glare that his eyes were forming into.

Izaya flicked over to the next photo, which showed the very bottom of the drop. This rollercoaster sure took a lot of photos.

In any case, this one had captured the exact moment…where Izaya had kissed Shizuo on the cheek.

Izaya blushed red as the catcalls came out from Kichirou and Namiko, both parents eagerly leaning in closer to see Izaya leaning over, planting his lips on Shizuo’s cheek right at the bottom of the coaster, with a wide-eyed look of shock and happiness on Shizuo’s face. He actually looked really happy that Izaya had kissed him.

Izaya glanced furtively over at Shizuo, and saw that the blonde was looking at the picture with a fond smile, like he was remembering the moment with great satisfaction.

Izaya felt that happy flutter of his heart which he tried to tamper down (without much success) and he bit his lip to contain his smile as he moved on to the next pictures.

It seemed like there were tons of shots of various places on the ride, all with the general theme of everybody else’s fear and Shizuo and Izaya’s delight, and they took the shots at the same intervals on all three times around. By the third time around, the shots had changed to where Izaya had grabbed Shizuo’s arm while he was laughing, and he was hugging onto Shizuo like some giddy girlfriend on her first date.

Izaya felt his cheeks blush red when he saw that, and his own sisters clapped ecstatically at that.

“Iza-nii and Shizu-nii, sitting in a tree!” Mairu sang, poking Izaya’s leg with a meaningful and rather mischievous look in her eyes. Where did she learn to give looks like that? Izaya was seriously going
to have a chat with Suzuki-san the next time he dropped the girls off.

“K-I-S-S-I-N-G.” Kururi finished the chant for her sister, giving Izaya a gentle smile and wiggling her eyebrows a little in her own version of suggestiveness.

Yep. Definitely talking to Suzuki-san.

“I agree!” Kichirou declared, flicking to the other pictures where Shizuo had pulled Izaya close and they were essentially cuddling throughout the whole ride. “These two lovebirds are totally making out in between shots!”

Izaya bit his lip as he blushed furiously, looking at the way Shizuo held him so protectively, seeming like he was breathing in Izaya’s scent (which he could smell apparently, seeing as that was how he used to track Izaya all over the school) while Izaya nuzzled into Shizuo’s chest, giggling and laughing contentedly. The pictures perfectly caught the expressions of happiness on both of their faces and they really did look just like a cuddling couple.

Picture perfect.

“You and Hajime used to be picture perfect.” That stupid, stupid voice whispered, once again shattering Izaya’s happiness.

Izaya grit his teeth as unhappy memories started to surge through him, completely overwhelming the joy he’d just been feeling not two seconds ago. Having seen Hajime’s father barely an hour before wasn’t helping. Why couldn’t he just forget? Why couldn’t he just be happy?

“Izaya-kun,” Shizuo’s gentle voice broke into Izaya’s thoughts, and Izaya looked up sharply, his eyes locking with Shizuo’s as the tall blonde wrapped his arms around Izaya in a hug, frowning down at him in concern.

“Is everything…alright?” Shizuo asked slowly, brushing his gloved finger against Izaya’s cheek. When he took his finger away, Izaya could see a teardrop on the tip of it. Dang it. He was crying again! Why was he doing that so often?

“Yes, I’m alright.” Izaya lied, wiping quickly at his eyes and clearing his throat of all the tightness that had unknowingly formed in it. He refused to meet Shizuo’s eyes, unfortunately looking back over at the rollercoaster photos which Kichirou and Namiko were tittering over, trying to figure out which ones they should buy.

He saw the picture of them cuddling at the bottom of the drop, Izaya hugging Shizuo’s arm with one hand, and with the other clasping Shizuo’s hand tightly. Shizuo’s free arm was wrapped protectively around Izaya and his nose was buried in Izaya’s hair, his smile still visible around the whipping raven locks. And of course Izaya was pressed against Shizuo’s chest, his face frozen in an expression of bliss, a giggle on his lips, as he nuzzled contentedly into the body of the one holding him. Protecting him. Loving-

“No.” Izaya cut himself off right there, shaking his head furiously. No, Shizuo did not love him. Shizuo was only holding onto Izaya because…because Izaya was so light, that the blonde was worried about him flying out of the cart. Right. Right, that was it. Just ignore the happy, caring look on the blonde’s face, and the way he embraced Izaya like they were long-lost lovers reuniting after a year apart. Ignore it. Just ignore it all. It wasn’t what it seemed to be.

“It wasn’t what it seemed to be.” The voice whispered, although Izaya was perfectly aware that it was talking about something else entirely. About a different relationship, with the son of the man
he’d seen barely an hour ago. Something he wished he could forget.

“If you want to talk about it, talk to me.” Shizuo whispered, pressing a light kiss to Izaya’s forehead before wrapping his gloved hand around Izaya’s mitten-covered one. “Anytime you want to, okay? I swear I’ll listen.”

Izaya could feel tears welling up in his eyes as he heard those words. He knew. He knew Shizuo would listen. But…but he couldn’t let him. He just couldn’t.

Nevertheless, despite the aching in his heart that it caused to lie to Shizuo, Izaya nodded, smiling up at Shizuo and trying not to let more tears fall from his ruby eyes.

Shizuo paused when he looked at Izaya’s face, as though he could see through the mask, but he smiled anyway and turned away from Izaya, letting the matter rest for the moment.

Again, Izaya felt a surge of gratitude for Shizuo’s understanding actions. For a boy that was so dense, Shizuo could certainly be way more intuitive at times than any typical male had a right to be.

“Right! We’re just going to get all of them!” Kichirou declared mightily, racing for the checkout area within the booth and starting to select every photo of his son and Izaya that he could find. “Yes! Perfect idea, honey! Perfect idea!” Namiko cheered, grabbing Mairu and Kururi (one in each arm – that woman was a superhero!) and dashing over to join her husband.

“Come on, lovebirds.” Kasuka said to Shizuo and Izaya. “We have to make sure they don’t buy anything else on accident. And then there’s the rest of the carnival to see.” He took a few steps and then paused, turning back to look at Izaya.

“I don’t suppose you’d ride a rollercoaster with me?” He asked flatly, staring right into Izaya’s eyes.

Izaya instantly looked away, unsure of how exactly to say “no, I don’t have a thing for creepy closet perverts and I personally think your brother’s hotter” in a polite manner.

Thankfully, Shizuo saved him.

“Sorry, Kasuka. I get dibs for the whole carnival.” He said with a casual shrug as though it had already been decided. “Me and Izaya agreed to be partners already.”

Ah. So he was playing it off like it had already been decided. Clever Shizuo. Izaya might seriously be underestimating the guy.

Kasuka sighed once but nodded in understanding, turning to head over to the counter as his parents argued about which button selected all, and which one selected all of one segment.

Izaya could feel Shizuo’s hand tighten a little around his, and Izaya unconsciously tightened his own in return so that they were once more holding hands. Just like boyfriends. Oh boy, maybe he should stop holding Shizuo’s hand before he got sucked into a fantasy that he was trying to avoid like the plague. That was probably the wisest course of action right now. Was it too late to run up to Kasuka and let him know that Shizuo had just lied?

But when Shizuo bent over and kissed Izaya on the cheek, gently leading him over to the checkout area with a look in his eyes saying that Izaya was the most precious thing in the world…Izaya was helpless. Who wouldn’t want to be cherished like that? Even if it caused him emotional turmoil for the rest of the trip, at least some of it would make Izaya happier than he’d been in a long time.

Izaya let himself relax against Shizuo’s body, hand-in-hand with the taller boy, as they reached the
rest of the family.

Yes, he could allow himself this. Just for now.

He didn’t notice the tall businessman standing just outside the photo booth, frowning as his electric blue eyes trained themselves right on Izaya.

Chapter End Notes

( * ゜□゜ *) …… ! What is Hajime's dad doing there? Why is the universe determined to ruin our ship?! But hey...they're cuddling!
So this is one of the final chapters of cotton-candy fluff before everything starts to happen. I hope you enjoyed it! There aren't many more left...
Wow, that sounded darker than I intended it to! I promise the fic isn't turning super dark and gory. Cross my heart!
Right! Let me know what you think below! (*^▽^*)
Hurray for school! It looks like all the Wednesday chapters will have to be in the evenings from now on because of my class schedule. Sorry about that! I promise I didn't forget! (I feel like I say that a lot...)

Anyway, just a forewarning for this chapter: MAJOR FEELS. Like the level of fluff that the last chapter had has been translated into the level of feels that this chapter has. Just letting you know!

And also I won't be able to post a new chapter this coming Sunday. :( I'll be out of town for a competition and nowhere near my beloved laptop and stories. So that's going to be a real bummer but I'll be able to post again next Wednesday!

So those are all the announcements! I hope you enjoy the chapter! <3

It was late by the time they were done with the carnival. And Izaya meant really late. Like the sky was dark and the bus stations were closing and people were back in their houses, ready to go to bed.

“Oh dear. You kids have no way of getting home right now, do you?” Namiko asked in worry, her eyes darting over the three Orihara siblings as though she was personally responsible for their wellbeing.

“We can still take the trains. Those are open right now.” Izaya assured her, although he was well-aware that the girls would not be too happy with that option.

“Taking a train this late at night?” Kichirou asked in shock, his eyes squinting up at the dark sky in disbelief. “No. No I will not allow that! It’s winter break right now. You can just sleep over at our place.”

“W-What?” Izaya croaked, feeling a lightning bolt of surprise and a little bit of fear race through his body. “You want us to stay at your house?”

“Yes, that’s a wonderful idea!” Namiko chirped, clapping her hands and looking down at the twins with a maternal smile. “Would you girls like that? You can sleep with us in our room.”

“Sleep with Nami-san and Kichi-san?” Mairu asked eagerly, head snapping back and forth between the two parents. “Sleep with Mother and Father.” Kururi added happily, running over to hug Namiko’s legs.

Izaya felt his heart squeeze at that comment. Mother and Father. Oh god…they were getting attached.

When he looked up at the Heiwajima parents’ faces, he could only see wonder and love fill both of them. Some tears came to Namiko’s eyes as she looked down at Kururi, her hands shaking for a few seconds before she dropped to her knees and grabbed the little girl in a hug, squeezing her tightly. Kichirou pursed his lips, looking like he was stopping his eyes from forming tears themselves, as he
dropped to his knees and held out his arms to Mairu. Mairu eagerly ran into his embrace, lacing her arms around his neck in joy. “Daddy!” She cried happily, nuzzling into his neck. “I want to stay with Daddy!”

Izaya stared at his two girls as they happily latched onto the Heiwajima parents, calling them mother and father, finally looking like they belonged. Like they had a family.

Kichirou looked up at Izaya, and that loving smile was directed at him next. “And of course, you’re staying the night, too.” He said gently, eyes flicking over to look at Shizuo. “You can stay in Shizuo’s room. The two of you are quite close after all.”

Izaya thought about the logistics of the situation.

It was getting quite late at night, and Izaya knew the twins would be very tired in approximately thirty minutes. As a matter of fact, they might pass out just about then, and Izaya would have to carry them home. The train ride would exhaust him, and that would only make it all the harder carrying them home. Not to mention the fact that Mairu and Kururi desperately wanted to stay with…Mother and Father. And they were being offered a nice place to stay. All three of them. Logically, it only made sense to take the Heiwajimas up on their offer.

Izaya looked over at Shizuo, who had tensed up beside him and was now looking away from him. Did Shizuo not want him to stay the night? Why did that hurt Izaya so much? His chest felt tight and achy.

Shizuo quickly looked down at him, and apparently noticed the sad expression on Izaya’s face. “You should stay over!” The blonde blurted out, his hand tightening around Izaya’s as if trying to stop him from leaving. “I have a pretty big futon, so it shouldn’t be too hard to share.”

“My futon is bigger and I take up less space than you.” Kasuka said instantly, making Izaya’s head snap over to look at him. Kasuka’s emotionless gaze was directed right at him. “It would make more sense if you slept with me.”

“No.” Shizuo said roughly, and Izaya’s head turned the other way. Shizuo was glaring at his brother, gold eyes fierce as he placed one hand on Izaya’s hip. “Dad suggested he sleep with me. And he’s more comfortable with me anyway.”

Yeah, Izaya could feel the tension boiling up in the air between the two brothers. He would just have to fix that here and now.

“I’ll sleep with Shizu-chan!” He announced, wrapping an arm around Shizuo’s back and looking over at the closet pervert as apologetically as he could. “I am more comfortable with him, so it only makes sense.”

Kasuka seemed to frown just the tiniest bit before the emotionless expression filtered back onto his face and he nodded, conceding the point over to Izaya’s will. “Very well.” He said simply, his eyes flickering over to meet with Shizuo’s. “You two have fun sleeping together.”

Shizuo’s face turned bright red at that comment and he scowled at his brother, starting to pull Izaya along the sidewalk in the direction of their house.

Kichirou and Namiko snickered evilly from behind them, each parent picking up their chosen child in a piggyback ride and catching up with their brooding eldest son. Kasuka trailed along behind the rest of them, fiddling with his phone.

At the pace Shizuo was walking, it took them barely fifteen minutes to reach the Heiwajima
household (even though Izaya was sure it had been at least a thirty-minute walk), and Shizuo stormed right up to the door and glared at it pointedly, like his anger would open it up without a key.

Izaya just stood there awkwardly next to him, his hand trapped in the larger one as he looked over his shoulder at the Heiwajima parents, puffing as they ran to catch up with their son. Kasuka was jogging silently behind them, but even his face was coated with a small sheen of sweat. Just how fast had Shizuo been walking?!

“Step aside, son!” Kichirou declared mightily, a bit of a pant in his voice as he brushed Shizuo out of his way, brandishing the house key like a weapon of war. Shizuo obediently stood to the side and waited as the key was inserted, a sharp click alerting everyone to the wonderful ability to head inside.

“Ah finally.” Namiko sighed in relief, the door swinging open and all seven of the tired festival-goers pouring inside. “We get to sleep!”

Izaya couldn’t agree more as he felt his eyelids start to droop now that they were inside of a warm, cozy house, and a small yawn escaped him as he slipped out of his brand new winter coat. Izaya stared at the coat for a bit, wondering if Namiko expected it back when he and the girls left tomorrow. Knowing her and her maternal instincts, she probably expected him to keep it, tell her when he grew out of it, and then accept the next three coats she bought him to replace it.

Izaya rubbed his eyes as he hung the coat on the rack beside Shizuo’s, too tired to think about any ways he might be able to pay the kind woman back for her generosity. He didn’t want to remain in debt to her. He hated remaining in debt to anyone, hence all the jobs and favors he took on in order to make money, and the stout resolutions he had to completing said jobs. Izaya never backed down from something he’d promised, and he would handle it all on his own. He was strong enough to do that, even if most people who looked at him thought otherwise.

Izaya was tougher than he looked.

He almost fell over when pulling his boot off, thankfully landing against the wall so that he didn’t crash completely into the floor. He glared at the offending boot with his red eyes, feeling another yawn drag itself out of his mouth.

He was also way more tired than he thought.

He glanced to his right and thanked the heavenly spirits of childcare when he saw the Heiwajima parents helping the twins out of their winter gear. He didn’t have the energy to wrangle toddler clothes, and being 100% honest, he probably would’ve had them sleep in those coats and scarves once they were all home. He would’ve been sleeping in his own new clothes as well.

On the bright side, it would have saved them on the electricity bill since they wouldn’t have had to use the heaters that night.

“Izaya? Do you need help with anything?” Shizuo’s nervous voice cut into Izaya’s thoughts and Izaya looked up to see the blonde watching him with a concerned expression. Oh. He’d probably spaced out just then.

“No, I’m fine. I don’t need your help.” Izaya assured him, yanking his second boot off and setting both carefully on the ground before moving on to his scarf and other accessories. Shizuo nodded once, watching Izaya for a few more seconds before starting to shuffle off into the house. “I’ll be in the living room when you’re done.” He called over his shoulder. “Then we can just head straight to bed.”
That sounded nice. Sleeping. Yes, sleeping sounded nice.

“Mommy. Daddy.” Mairu yawned complaitively, holding out her arms with a demanding expression to the tired parents. Despite their obvious exhaustion, fond smiles crept over both the adults’ faces, and Kichirou even bent over to scoop the little girl up.

“Allright! Let’s get to bed, my little princess.” He said sweetly, kissing Mairu on the forehead before settling her comfortably in his arms. “Mairu-sama!” Mairu said happily, nodding her head in agreement with the nickname before yawning widely and relaxing against the man’s chest, head drooping in sleep as exhaustion overtook her.

Namiko turned to Kururi and held her arms out encouragingly. “You too, flower. Come on.” She smiled gently at the quiet girl and Kururi happily waddled into her embrace, looping her little arms around Namiko’s neck so she could lift the child up and carry her easily.

As Kichirou headed off to their bedroom, Namiko looked back at Izaya. She smiled warmly at him, a maternal twinkle in her eyes. “Iza-chan honey, you better get to bed soon.” She told him, and Izaya could almost feel a lump forming in his throat at all the love and affection filling the words. He would not cry, though. It was just a few kind words from a kind woman. He would not cry.

“And it’s late so you can skip brushing your teeth, but remember to do it first thing tomorrow morning.” Namiko added, fixing a few strands of Kururi’s hair as she rocked the tired girl gently in her arms, helping her fall asleep even faster.

Okay, now Izaya was about to cry.

No one…no one had ever spoken to him like that before. Had given him instructions or advice on what to do. Had helped him out when he was too tired to think. Had cared about what he did not only in the moment but later on down the road. Had looked at him with that caring, selfless devotion, as though he was the only thing in the world that mattered.

This was a mother. This was what it was supposed to feel like.

Izaya gulped down the harsh lump that was really more of a brick in his throat and nodded, willing the tears to go away from his eyes. He was stronger than that. But…he was very happy right now.

“Yes ma’am.” He said obediently, slipping his hat and earmuffs off and setting them down by his boots so that Namiko couldn’t see his face.

“Goodnight Izaya.” The kind woman said, and Izaya’s eyes widened as he stared off into space.

Goodnight Izaya.

A last farewell to be exchanged before bed.

A statement declaring a desire for the wellbeing of the recipient while they slept.

A statement that had never before graced Izaya’s ears.

A statement that mothers were supposed to say to their children.

“Goodnight.” Izaya managed to choke out, listening to Namiko’s footsteps softly pad away, off to her bedroom with the small sleeping toddler in her arms. Ready to go meet her husband who was no doubt already in bed, with the other child tucked in beside him, safe and warm and sleeping peacefully at last.
“…Mom.” Izaya finished his statement in a whisper, the words sounding foreign on his tongue. Rusty and unused, like a machine part that had been set aside for years and was just now fitting into place on the rest of the device. But it was fitting into place. It was where it belonged.

“Goodnight…Mom.” Izaya said again, tears filling his eyes as he thought of Namiko and not Kyouko. “Goodnight…Dad.” And the image of Kichirou with his smiling face and dorky antics was there, full and vibrant, instead of the dull and faded image of Shirou.

“Goodnight Mom…Goodnight Dad…” Izaya whispered over and over, squeezing his eyes shut as the salty droplets of water began to pour down his cheeks, biting his lip to stop any audible sobs from coming out. He wiped harshly at his face, staring down at his feet without moving from his spot.

“Mom…Dad.” He croaked, trying his best not to let this strange feeling overcome him. What was it? Was it sadness? Loneliness? Happiness? Belonging? A desperate wish? A silent plea? It felt like all of that at once, powerful and demanding inside of his chest.

Izaya opened his mouth to speak the words again, just one more time, but a different sound filled the air instead.

It was a buzzing sound, combined with the vibration of his phone in his pocket. His phone. Izaya had completely forgotten it was there. Numbly, he slipped his hand into his pocket and pulled it out, staring at the screen.

At the top he could see several missed messages, including one from Keiji with the topic: Video Games.

So…that was all good then.

But even that harsh reminder of the dark reality that he lived and operated in wasn’t what broke the powerful emotion welling up in his chest at the moment. No. That would be the caller ID on the face of the screen, letting him know who was calling him at that moment in time.

Izaya stared emptily at the name, feeling no attachment to it whatsoever. He had no drive to answer the phone, no true care about whatever would be said in the ensuing conversation. He could hang up right now without any regrets, even if he found out the caller had died ten minutes later. He read the name one more time, just to see if any emotions would rise up, but nothing came.

Orihara Kyouko.

It meant nothing to him.

Blank-faced, Izaya’s thumb hit the answer button, and he held the phone up to his cheek. “Yes Mother?” He asked, and the words were clean and polished, used all the time and familiar to his ears. Pristine condition and nothing strange about them. But they didn’t fit. That part didn’t work with the machine. It felt wrong.

“Izaya. Excellent, you picked up.” The cold voice on the other end of the line evoked no more emotion within Izaya’s chest than a Scottish tap dance would evoke in Kasuka. In fact, upon hearing the coldness of the voice directed at him, Izaya only felt emptier.

“Yes, I picked up. What do you need?” He asked, his own voice just as flat and distant as the one ringing in his ear.

“I’d like to alert you to our next arrival.” Kyouko said, and Izaya could hear some paper shuffling on the other side of the phone. “We’re going to have a short visit in one week. For a single day your
father and I will be back home for a party we are hosting.”

Izaya’s fingers twitched in annoyance at his side, and a frown slipped over his face as his eyes darkened with anger. They were just deciding to come home. To come home randomly for one day in the year and take over the house for their party. As if it belonged to them? As if they paid the electric and water bills when they were due? As if they took care of the occupants of the house and were thus responsible for the household? As if they had any right whatsoever to barge in, change the entire household into a bonanza for some business guests, barge back out, and expect Izaya to pick everything up like the good little boy he was?

Typical.

“It’s very important, you’ll understand.” Kyouko continued, completely unaware of her son’s brewing rage. “We have some business partners visiting that area of Tokyo, and we’d like to open a new trade route with them through informal conversation.”

Informal conversation. Right.

“You are to set up the house in the style of an elegant gala. Use any preparations you feel are necessary. Send pictures when you have finished, and leave everything untouched and ready for guests.” Kyouko ordered, her tone sure of itself and almost bored as she issued the commands. As though she were speaking to a loyal subordinate rather than her own son. “Make sure that a full-course meal is laid out – I expect you to cook it. Anything broken must be fixed, anything imperfect made perfect.” There was a slight pause on the other end of the phone. “And speaking on that note, I’d like you to remove the twins from the house on the day of the party. They simply won’t do.”

Izaya felt his fist slam into the wall before he even registered that he was throwing the punch.

His red eyes flashed angrily as he grit his teeth, his whole being burning with hatred as he glared at his fist, pressing deeply into the wall. He could feel his spirit seething over with the unchecked rage and aggression that filled him with anything his parents did. Anything at all. Nothing they did ever involved the needs of anyone but themselves. They were horrible, rotten scumbags living the high-life in God knows what country while their children struggled to make ends meet at home. They paraded around, living la vida loca, and expected red carpets and eternal gratitude upon their brief returns. And they spoke badly of their own children, on top of everything else.

Izaya the terrible genetic screw-up, who came out looking more like a demon than like his wonderful parents. Thank goodness he was a pretty demon, or that poor couple would’ve been forced to dispose of him. How awful for them.

And then those pathetic twins. Rugged little animals, they were. Bouncing around and laughing and playing like cretins from the Stone Age. Abominable! Better hide them so no one even knew they existed.

Poor Kyouko and Shirou. They had been dealt such awful hands when it came to their kids. Worthless piles of trash.

Izaya knew he was a pile of trash. He knew that he was diving into the world of gangs and the underbelly of crime and that he was a horrible person for locking up his emotions, forcing everyone away, and screwing up everybody’s lives at school. He was an evil bastard and even though he was doing it all to make his own way in life and to support himself and his sisters, he enjoyed it to a degree. He knew that he enjoyed it at least a little bit - the rush of power, the feeling of independence and superiority - and that his brain was messed up to like something like that.
But his sisters…no. His sisters were angels. They were demonic angel spawn. Sure, they had their faults and their odd quirks and their annoying antics. They were toddlers! They were supposed to be like that! But they were caring little girls, and they loved each other. They loved him, which was more than he could say about anyone else on the face of the earth. His girls were faulty, annoying, demonic, stubborn, and troublemaking little girls.

They were perfect.

“I don’t think Kururi and Mairu need to be removed from the house at all.” Izaya snapped out bitterly, his eyes narrowed as he thought of his mother’s calm, distant face. “I think they’re perfect right where they are.”

There was stunned silence on the other end of the phone, as if Kyouko couldn’t believe that her son had actually talked back to her.

“IZaya…” She finally said, clearing her throat and resuming her business-like tone almost immediately. “I unfortunately disagree, and I could care less what you think on the matter. Fix up the house to my specifications. Prepare a meal. Find someplace to put the twins for a day. You must stay at the house and present yourself accordingly during the party, in a suit and tie, as you know. The appropriate funds will be wired to you.”

Without a word of farewell, Kyouko hung up, leaving Izaya fuming in the hallway, his hand clenched so tightly around the phone that he almost thought he would crack it. That woman…how dare she…

“Of course she’d give us money now that our wellbeing directly impacts her.” He hissed, feeling tears of anger blur his vision. “Except it’s not even our wellbeing, is it? It’s just appearances! A party! A business venture!” He let out a harsh laugh, hot streams of tears running down his cheeks as his chest shook with the force of his breath. The laugh wasn’t like anything he’d let out today in the presence of the Heiwajimas. This laugh was manic and angry and hurt. It raked the air around him like iron nails, forcing anything and everything away from him. It cut him harshly away from reality and planted him on his own, laughing at the distance between himself and the rest of the world. His chest didn’t ache from that strange feeling of earlier, when he was thinking about the Heiwajima parents. Now it ached with the bitter anger and loneliness of his reality. Who was he kidding, mixing himself with the Heiwajimas? He belonged in this harsh life. Separate from others, depending on himself alone.

He was Izaya Orihara.

“And that’s all I’ll ever be.” Izaya breathed out, slamming his eyes shut and cutting off the flow of tears, his laugh stopping just as suddenly as it had started. He stayed like that, silent and frozen, phone in his hand in the dark hallway, for who knew how long.

He stood there, unable to move, his body frozen and disconnected from the rest of the world. Izaya Orihara. He was above everything else. He was below everything else. He was nowhere and everywhere at once. He didn’t belong.

“IZaya-kun?” A hand gently touched his shoulder and Izaya jumped in place, whirling around with a snarl and smacking the hand away.

He froze instantly when he saw Shizuo, looking down at him in shock, golden eyes wide. Izaya stared at Shizuo’s hand, hanging in the air to where it had just been smacked, a tiny spot of red forming on the skin, like a mark of rejection.
A hollow pit began to fill the inside of Izaya’s heart, but he refused to allow it anywhere near the surface. He’d gotten too comfortable today, leaning on Shizuo and acting all cuddly and cute. Letting himself feel loved by someone he…someone he…

He’d gotten carried away. Shizuo deserved to know what a horrible person he was.

For that reason alone, Izaya let his red eyes flick up to meet Shizuo’s golden ones, and he almost flinched when he saw the emotions filling them.

Confusion. Hurt. A hint of anger. But more than anything else...concern.

“Izaya-kun? What are you doing?” Shizuo asked slowly, lowering his hand from the air and letting it hang at his side.

Izaya took a deep breath and glared up at Shizuo, crossing his arms in front of his chest. “Why, Shizu-chan.” He purred, in that same voice he used at school. The one that symbolized how distant he was from everything and everyone. This voice that would show Shizuo what he was getting himself into, and get him out of it before it was too late. “I’m just showing you my true colors.”

Shizuo’s eyes darkened and his brow furrowed in confusion. “No…you’re not.” He said sternly, shaking his head and frowning at Izaya. “I know those aren’t your true colors. Those are the old colors that I used to know you by. I know you by other ones now. Where did those go?”

Izaya barked out a harsh laugh, letting a cruel grin shine on his face up at the concerned face of Shizuo. “Those colors faded, Shizu-chan. They moved behind the others because they aren’t as strong. These colors are deeper and more vibrant. They’re the ones you should get used to.”

They’re the ones that would push him away.

But Shizuo’s face just hardened. “I refuse to accept that, Izaya.” He said softly, hands still hanging by his sides.

Izaya felt his heart twist with those words. “Then you refuse to accept me.” He said coolly, trying not to let his face show how much that affected him. “Because that’s who I am.”

Shizuo shook his head, a bit of a fond smile playing on his lips. “No, Izaya-kun. You’re something else.” He insisted.

Izaya could feel something getting caught in his throat. Shizuo wasn’t accepting him. He wasn’t accepting this aspect of Izaya. In short…he didn’t want Izaya.

“So…you only accept what you want to see.” Izaya said in a quiet voice. “I thought you were different.”

Shizuo sighed, grabbing Izaya’s hands and bringing them up in front of his face. The action dragged Izaya’s eyes back to meet with Shizuo’s, and the intense look Shizuo was giving him trapped him right where he stood.

“Izaya.” Shizuo said seriously. “You are a rainbow.”

Izaya blinked, staring up at Shizuo blankly.

“I have no idea how to respond to this.” Both Izaya and the small voice in his head were on the exact same page, staring at Shizuo and wondering if Izaya had just heard him right.
“I’m…a rainbow?” Izaya asked skeptically, raising one eyebrow as he looked Shizuo up and down doubtfully. “Did you hit your head while you were in the living room?”

“Listen to me.” Shizuo said harshly, the glare on his face instantly locking Izaya’s attention on him once more.

“You are a rainbow. You have a ton of colors. Some of them are prettier than others, and some of them seem to outshine the rest at different times. But each of them blends with each other, and you can’t have one without them all. Izaya,” Shizuo squeezed Izaya’s hands, a frown still set firmly on his lips. “I physically cannot distinguish between your different colors. I can’t accept one without the others. I already knew what a jerk you were, remember? I was the brunt of your evil deeds for quite a while. I like many of your other sides better, but I still accept those other colors as a part of you.”

Shizuo’s golden orbs bored right into Izaya’s eyes, right into his soul, as the blonde said: “I accept you, Izaya. You as you are. You as I know you, and the you that I don’t know about yet. Understand? Even if I don’t know everything about you, I still accept you.”

Izaya didn’t know what to say. His brain had stopped working. Shizuo’s words, as usual, were just what he needed to hear. Just what he wanted to hear. It was like Shizuo himself had been made just for Izaya, to say everything Izaya had ever wanted said to him, to do everything Izaya ever wanted someone to do, and to be everything Izaya had ever wanted his partner to be. It was like the universe had made Shizuo, just for him. It was too perfect.

But Shizuo didn’t know everything. He didn’t know about the gang activities or the drugs. He had a vague idea of the neglect, but he didn’t know to what extent it went. He had a vague idea about Izaya’s ex-boyfriend, but he didn’t know the specifics of Izaya’s broken heart. He didn’t know the depth of the darkness that was in Izaya’s heart. He said he could accept it, but could he really? Could Izaya even dare to think about someone who would try to cross that insurmountable distance between him and the world?

“Shizuo…” Izaya whispered, not sure how to tell the blonde. Not sure what to tell the blonde. That his amateur sleuthing was quite a bit darker than Shizuo knew? Should he start there? Or should he tell Shizuo that his parents had left Izaya at the age of two, using babysitters alone to care for him until he was five, and that he’d been completely alone since then? Maybe he should start by detailing the story of Hajime, and the utter betrayal he’d experienced. He could also talk about each and every depraved day of his life where he’d scrounged around and battled for food, how he’d built his reputation up on the streets around certain areas of town, how he had learned to be tough on his own and wasn’t used to leaning on someone else for anything. He could say any number of things to tarnish the girly, cute image of Izaya that he’d been portraying for Shizuo.

No…that he’d been allowing Shizuo to see. The girly, cute side that existed along with the tough, unbeatable side. How many sides did he have?

He was an overprotective brother. He was a lonely and neglected son. He was a mischievous student. He was a tough information broker. He was apparently a cute boyfriendish kind of guy. How much else was there to learn about him? Even Izaya didn’t know.

Shizuo was right…he really was a rainbow.

“Shizuo, I don’t know what to do.” Izaya said softly, staring at the ground at his feet. “I…I don’t know which face to use right now. Which one will help me? Which one will force you away?”

“Forcing me away won’t help you.” Shizuo said firmly, resting his hand on Izaya’s shoulder. “And there isn’t a face you could make that would scare me off.”
“Wanna bet?” Izaya asked softly, thinking of all the horrible things he was capable of. The phone with proof of that via a message from Keiji felt heavy in his hand. He let it fall to the floor, a hollow thud accenting his question that hung in the air.

“I do.” Shizuo’s voice was smooth and easy, completely sure of itself in every way. “Show me your worst, Izaya-kun. I’ll take it all, whenever you’re ready to give it. One step at a time, I’ll learn every one of your colors.”

Izaya closed his eyes, letting those words ring in his ears for just a bit. Perfect. It was all too perfect.

“You deserve someone better than me.” Izaya mumbled, unwilling to look up at Shizuo. “There’s always someone better than you. Isn’t that what they say? Well, you deserve one of those people who is better.” Because that was what someone like Shizuo truly deserved. Someone who was better than Izaya.

Shizuo’s hand only tightened on Izaya’s shoulder. “But there’s no one else like you. Isn’t that what they also say?” The blonde asked in response, pulling Izaya in for a gentle hug. “And I wouldn’t want anyone who wasn’t you.”

Izaya stood there, warm in Shizuo’s embrace, wondering what on earth he could’ve done in his life to earn something like this. To earn someone as wonderful as Shizuo.

“You’re a better person than you think, Izaya-kun.” Shizuo muttered into Izaya’s hair, planting a gentle kiss on the top of his head. “I want to help you see that. In return, you can help me see everything you think I ought to know about Izaya Orihara.”

Izaya pressed his face into Shizuo’s chest, breathing in his scent. It was sort of like pine trees, but infused with some kind of teenage musk. Musky pine trees. Nothing too clean and nothing too dirty. It was…Shizuo.

“I don’t think you’ll like what you see.” Izaya admitted, fingers curling into the back of Shizuo’s shirt. “And…I don’t know how I feel about that.”

“I would tell you not to worry about that but I know you worry about everything.” Shizuo sighed, smoothing Izaya’s hair slowly and comfortingly. “So I’ll just say this: Sherlock Holmes and the Adventure of the Blue Carbuncle. James Ryder.”

Izaya froze in Shizuo’s arms, the old mystery blooming in his mind instantly.

James Ryder, a room attendant in the Hotel Cosmopolitan, had stolen a precious jewel known as the Blue Carbuncle from the Countess of Morcar while she was staying there. After some tricky business involving the countess’s maid, an attempted cover-up, a gambling salesman, and a goose, Sherlock Holmes figured out James Ryder was the culprit. However, Sherlock Holmes judged that Ryder was unlikely to try committing any more crimes and acknowledged that it was Christmas, so he let the man go. He knew the crimes that Ryder had committed…but he forgave him.

“After all, Watson,” Shizuo said softly, hand still stroking Izaya’s hair. “It is the season of forgiveness.”

Izaya’s tears welled up in his eyes before he even registered what they were. “That’s right.” He managed to choke out past the sob caught in his throat. “It’s Christmas, isn’t it?”

He could feel the smile that Shizuo’s lips curled into as the blonde nodded his head. “Yes it is.” He responded simply.
They stood in place, Izaya wondering where in the world he should start, and why in the world he was even considering this.

“Let’s get to bed, okay?” Shizuo suggested, pulling away from the hug and tugging once on Izaya’s hand. “We’re both really tired right now.”

Izaya wiped the tears away from his eyes and simply nodded, letting the blonde lead the way to his bedroom. He never even gave a thought to the phone still laying on the ground, its face glowing in the dark hallway alone.

He didn’t see the phone light up with a new name or hear it start buzzing as a call came in. And he certainly didn’t see the caller ID of the person on the other end, which he'd never been able to bring himself to delete.

*Shishizaki Hajime.*

Chapter End Notes

Like I said...FEELINGS...I actually cried when I was writing a small portion of this. WELL! Now things are getting closer and closer to their boiling point! I think we only have one more sweet chapter (the one after this) and then everything will explode! O~O HAJIME IS CALLING NOW! IT’S GETTING CLOSE! Well, I’ll see you next Wednesday! <3
Hello everyone! I am back! In case you were wondering and didn't read the explanation in the last chapter, I didn't update this Sunday because I was gone for a competition over the weekend. I'll tell you how that went in the later comments, if you care to know!

Now, as an apology for not updating, I literally just sat down and wrote an entire birthday one-shot for Shizuo that I thought of driving home from school. Like just now. So that's why this one is sorta late. Sorry! Anyway, that'll be going up as a part of this series once I'm done posting this chapter! Haven't decided if I'm going to make it canon or not...we'll just have to see! Okay! Here's the next chapter (finally)! Enjoy! <3

Shizuo had dodged a bullet. And not just one bullet. No, he felt like he'd just faced down an entire firing squad and escaped by a hair, his life barely intact. But intact it was, and Shizuo was glad for it.

Izaya had seemed very different when he stood there in the hallway, all those crazy emotions flying through his tiny body at lightning speed. Shizuo wasn't even sure if the raven knew just how many “faces” he'd gone through in those few minutes as he looked at Shizuo.

Shizuo had seen anguish, guilt, anger, regret, wonder, sadness, wistfulness, confusion, helplessness and a dozen other things soar over Izaya’s delicate features, all in the space of a few seconds. It was like he had so many conflicting personalities inside himself that he didn’t know what to do with them all. With a mind like Izaya’s, and the strategy that he’d had all his life to compartmentalize his emotions and split himself apart, it was no wonder that the genius of a boy was having difficulties now that his situation was trying to throw them all together. His sides were all clashing, and he hadn’t trained his brain to let that happen. He was far too intelligent for his own good, letting his brain take control over everything else. Emotions were foreign to him, and when his different sides each displaying different emotions clashed, Izaya couldn’t handle it.

Shizuo wanted to help Izaya become one person, one person that embodied all his aspects and emotions at once, and to fix the broken boy that he could see in front of him. He knew some of those aspects were darker than others, and he was positive that he hadn’t seen just how dark they were. He also knew he’d only scratched the surface of some of the sides that he was familiar with, and that there was a lot more to Izaya that he still had to dig deep and find.

For now though, his one goal was to get Izaya to bed.

“Here. You can pick whichever side of the futon you want.” Shizuo offered, gesturing towards the flat mattress on the floor. Izaya peered at it and nodded, but made no move to get closer to it. Instead, he fidgeted in place, picking at his shirt nervously.

Shizuo was a little too tired at this point to figure out exactly what Izaya was thinking. It had taken a rare spark of brainpower to conjure up that Sherlock Holmes reference right when he had. He had absolutely nothing left in his thick skull.

Shizuo held back a yawn, rubbing his bleary eyes so he could look at Izaya at least a little more
clearly as he stood next to the futon. “What’s wrong, Izaya-kun?” He asked tiredly, golden eyes locked on the uncomfortable raven.

“Um…well…I don’t have any pajamas.” Izaya admitted, avoiding eye contact with Shizuo.

And despite how tired Shizuo thought his brain was, it apparently had enough brainpower left to spin another one of its famous Izaya Fantasies.

He could see Fantasy Izaya standing there in front of him, raven hair mussed from the effects of sleep, yawning slightly as he rubbed his eyes. He wore only one of Shizuo’s shirts, which hung down to his knees like a small dress on the petite boy, and his pale legs were displayed fully to Shizuo’s line of sight. His cheeks were flushed with the barest trace of red, and his eyes were directed shyly at Shizuo.

“Shizu-chan…” He said softly, playing with the rim of Shizuo’s shirt. “I wanna go to sleep.”

“Then come to bed.” Shizuo said in response, holding out a hand towards Fantasy Izaya. Fantasy Izaya looked up at him with a shy smile, slowly sauntering over towards him.

“I love you, Shizu-chan.” Fantasy Izaya whispered, taking Shizuo’s hand and laying down on the futon on his back. He looked up at Shizuo, an adoring look in his red eyes and a smile on his face. Shizuo laid down on the futon beside him, smiling right back at Izaya. “I love you, too.” He said easily, the words slipping out just as smoothly as “hello” would.

Fantasy Izaya sighed and snuggled down into his pillow, completely comfortable in his place at Shizuo’s side. “I love wearing your clothes, Shizu-chan.” He said softly. “I’m surrounded in Shizu-chan’s scent and I feel so protected.”

Shizuo wrapped his arms around Fantasy Izaya, pulling him closer on the futon. “You’ll always be protected with me.” He promised, and Fantasy Izaya looked up at him with an expression of absolute trust. “Whenever I start to think that you may be smarter than you look, you always seem to prove me wrong.” He sighed.

Shizuo blinked. This was an unexpected turn. “What?” He asked dumbly, scrunching his forehead in confusion.

“You idiotic protozoan. Are you even listening to me?” Fantasy Izaya continued, the tone of voice growing in annoyance.

Shizuo shook his head harshly and snapped his eyes open, jolting himself back into reality.

Izaya was staring at Shizuo, crossing his arms uncomfortably in front of his body as he shuffled in place, still wearing the clothes that he’d been wearing all day.

“I said I don’t have any pajamas.” Izaya repeated, pulling awkwardly on his shirt and pouting a little at Shizuo. “Do you have any that I could borrow?”

Shizuo felt his face flame red (stupid, stupid, stupid fantasies!) and he quickly nodded, stumbling over to his dresser and stammering some kind of apology about spacing out and whatnot. It probably sounded totally fake, but that wasn’t really as much of an issue as the threat of diving down into another fantasy was at the moment.

Shizuo sifted through his dresser, trying to push past all the messy, tangled clothes that had just been shoved haphazardly within the drawers, muttering under his breath and wishing that he’d folded his clothes at least once in his life. He managed to find a large T-shirt which had often served him as a pajama top in the past and he quickly grabbed that, chucking it over to Izaya who caught it with a
look of surprise.

“O-Oh.” The raven said with a soft stammer, red eyes looking down at the T-shirt in shock. “I assumed you would get me something of Kasuka’s…since we’re closer sizes and all…”

Shizuo felt a bout of possessive jealousy surge up in him at the thought of Izaya in someone else’s clothes. “Kasuka is probably asleep already so it’s no big deal if you just wear mine.” Shizuo said in as casual a voice as he could manage, turning back to sort through the rest of his clothes in an attempt to find pants for the tiny raven. He probably wouldn’t be able to find anything. That T-shirt would be big enough on the small boy already – if Shizuo’s fantasies were to be trusted – but Shizuo doubted Izaya would be comfortable with baring his legs so openly on their first night together, so he would try his best to find something.

Their first night together…well that just made everything take on a whole new turn didn’t it?

Shizuo could feel his face heating up as he struggled to focus on what he was doing, acutely aware of the soft stripping sounds of Izaya removing his clothing right behind him, changing in his bedroom.

Gah! Focus, Shizuo! Focus!

Shizuo’s gold eyes kept trying to stray behind him, and eventually he allowed them just a flicker of a glance, enough to catch the last glimpse of the beautifully smooth white skin of Izaya’s back before Shizuo’s T-shirt fell into place, blocking it entirely. Izaya hummed as he bent over and picked up his own shirt, folding it neatly and looking around the room for a place to put it.

Shizuo bit his lip to stop a fond smile from creeping over his face as he watched Izaya nervously pad around the room, tiny footsteps barely making any noise at all as he moved around. He poked his head around the bookshelf placed by the wall, huffing softly as he looked for a clear spot at its base, and then tiptoed over to the bedroom door, watching the floor as he went. When he reached the door, he spun around in a circle to survey the area, completely unsure of where it would be okay to put his things down.

He was so cute. Like a little cat examining a new house for the first time.

Shizuo found his arm stretching out as he pointed to his closet. “Just set them by the closet door.” He informed Izaya, who glanced in surprise over at the designated area and gave a simple nod, tiptoeing nervously by like he didn’t want to disturb Shizuo’s searching as he set his clothes down by the closet door.

Shizuo fought back his smile again as he returned to searching for something to cover Izaya’s legs, trying to get the adorable image of Izaya padding around in his old dinosaur T-shirt and skinny jeans like a lost kitten out of his head.

“Izaya-kun,” Shizuo called, lifting up some fuzzy pajama pants, but frowning at how long they were. “Are you okay with really long pants?”

He heard Izaya’s soft chuckle from somewhere behind him, and felt a gentle pat on his shoulder from Izaya’s comforting hand. “You can just give me shorts or something.”

Shizuo felt an electric shock race through him at the contact from Izaya, but he managed a nod, forcing himself to begin looking for shorts in the place of pants. He’d only sifted through a few sets of clothes before a pale hand shot past him, grabbing an article of clothing before Shizuo could even register what it was.
“This will work! These look great!” Izaya’s voice chirped excitedly, and there came an instant sound of jeans dropping to the ground, causing Shizuo’s head to snap directly down to look at his hands, heart pounding wildly in his chest as his face flushed with embarrassment. He could hear the sound of Izaya grunting a bit, clothes sliding over skin in something way too intimate for a tutor and his pupil to be sharing.

The oblivious raven hummed once in approval before grabbing his jeans and trotting over to the closet, folding them up to place them beside the rest of his clothes.

“Shizu-chan!” He said happily. “How do I look?”

Shizuo took a deep breath and turned around, eyes nearly popping out of his head when he saw what article of clothing Izaya had selected to cover his rear end.

Izaya was wearing that overly big dinosaur T-shirt, holding his arms out to the sides as if proudly displaying his outfit, the orange fabric hanging off his small frame in a comical manner. It was utterly adorable, like a little kid showing off some cool clothes he’d found that were still a bit too big for him.

That was all well and good…as were the black boxers which Izaya was donning proudly as shorts.

Shizuo squeaked out something unintelligible, probably closer to an alien language than Japanese, as his gold eyes locked on the black boxers fitted snugly around Izaya’s tiny waist. Well, the waist was tiny…something else was…definitely not.

“I was worried about your shorts not fitting me because you’re so much bigger than I am,” Izaya was saying, barely glancing down at the “shorts” in question as he fiddled with them, nimble fingers twisting and twirling the edges of the god-damn lucky boxers. “But it seems like even though you’re waist is bigger than mine, my butt is big enough to fill out the material that the rest of me doesn’t fill!” Izaya finished happily, grinning widely at Shizuo as his red eyes sparkled.

Shizuo just stared at him, with no idea at all of how to respond.

The clothes that he wore which rubbed against his most private parts…were now rubbing against Izaya’s parts…that was essentially his parts rubbing with Izaya’s parts, right? So that was like a form of intimate contact, right? That was like a sexual thing, right? So they were sort of having an indirectly sexual moment which was causing a very special part of Shizuo to stand up at attention and want to join in!

Shizuo’s mouth was dry as his pants seemed to tighten uncomfortably, gold eyes locked on Izaya’s sexy little form, standing in front of him in his T-shirt and boxers.

Izaya cocked his head, red eyes gaining a bit of a confused tint as they looked at Shizuo. “Shizu-chan?” He asked slowly. “Is there a problem?”

Oh, there’s a problem alright. It’s called little Heiwajima and it is very much awake. Shizuo shuffled a little bit on the ground, feeling that stiff organ refusing to give as it pushed harder against the front of his jeans, creating uncomfortable friction that wanted to be solved fast.

Shizuo felt like his lower regions were practically throbbing as he swallowed the nothingness in his mouth, trying to clear his throat and get out some partially coherent words.

Izaya watched him struggle to speak, seeming absolutely stumped as to what the cause of Shizuo’s sudden problem might be. Nevertheless, he waited as Shizuo stuttered and stammered, incredibly patient in the face of Shizuo’s difficulties.
After about fifteen seconds of absolute failure, Shizuo managed to croak out the word, “Shorts.”

His cheeks blushed red as Izaya stared at him, clearly not comprehending the importance of that word. “Do you… not like the shorts?” Izaya asked slowly, glancing down at his lower body.

“No!” Shizuo blurted, moving to jump to his feet and then wincing as his “problem” prevented him from doing so. His face flushed an even deeper shade of red as Izaya’s head quickly snapped up to look at him. Shizuo coughed and looked the other way, trying to think of what on earth he could say to try and fix whatever awkwardness his stupid comment had just caused.

As Shizuo soon found out, the awkwardness had only just begun.

“Are you okay?” Izaya asked in worry, causing Shizuo to pause and his mind to fill with confusion. But he’d barely even turned his head to start looking at Izaya before he found the raven right in front of him, nose barely two inches away, and small hands placed on both of Shizuo’s cheeks.

Shizuo froze in place, eyes wide as Izaya’s warm breath washed gently over him, the ruby orbs flicking over his face. “You winced just now. Are you in pain?” Izaya asked softly, pink lips turned down into a slight frown as he leaned slightly closer to Shizuo. Shizuo felt his “problem” swell even larger at the close proximity to Izaya, and his eyes immediately dragged down to those soft pink lips right in front of him, just begging to be taken by his own.

His mouth turned from a desert to a swamp as saliva started to fill it, Shizuo trying his best not to drool as he stared at the gorgeous pink appendages right there on Izaya’s gorgeous face. He was so close… barely a few inches away…

“Shizu-chan? Hey, talk to me.” Izaya’s concerned voice cut into Shizuo’s lusty daze, making Shizuo look right back up into those ruby eyes. Izaya moved one of his hands from Shizuo’s cheek to his chest, getting down onto his knees in the same position as Shizuo. He stayed a little raised on his knees, though, allowing himself to remain eye level with the taller boy.

Shizuo found himself unable to speak, only able to swallow the saliva repeatedly surging in his mouth as his lips flapped uselessly in front of him, Izaya seeming to grow more concerned with each attempt Shizuo made to talk. Eventually Shizuo took a deep breath, determined to get some words out if only to make Izaya feel better, but the universe screwed with him again.

Izaya, having apparently decided that Shizuo wasn’t well and needed comfort, shifted his position so that he was wrapping his arms around Shizuo’s torso, pressing his face into Shizuo’s chest in a tight hug, and all in all pressing his body closer to Shizuo’s. But the worst part? He stopped kneeling by Shizuo and simply sat on Shizuo’s lap.

Shizuo almost yelped as Izaya’s tiny body planted itself right on top of his, the perfect ass just… just grazing the basis of Shizuo’s problem. It was right next to it, all Shizuo would have to do would be to shift a little bit, and he’d been grinding away against the object of all his most vivid desires. So… close…

Shizuo could feel his hips starting to edge in that direction, his arms snaking their way around Izaya’s waist uncontrollably, the raven purring contentedly into his chest with no idea of what was happening. Of what he was doing to Shizuo. Shizuo’s hips twitched unconsciously upwards, his whole lower area throbbing with utter pain as relief perched with its perfect ass obliviously right on his lap. So close…

Just as Shizuo was about to make that final movement into the point of no return, the door to his bedroom slammed open.
“I totally forget to tell you!” His father said cheerfully, standing in the doorway of Shizuo’s house with a grin. “If Izaya’s feeling up to it, then the two of you should…” He trailed off when he saw Shizuo’s flushed face, arms wrapped around Izaya’s waist as the smaller boy perched on his lap, his own arms wrapped tightly around Shizuo. His wide eyes also flicked down to notice the rather large bulge that had formed a nice tent in his son’s pants.

Instead of the utter shock and embarrassment that a normal parent would feel, followed by the typical reaction of removing one boy from the room, an evil grin to rival Izaya on his absolute worst day spread over Shizuo’s dad’s face, causing his eyes to glitter darkly.

“The two of you should use protection.” He purred, snickering slightly as Shizuo choked on his own spit, mortification at the entire situation overcoming him.

Izaya’s head turned around to face Shizuo’s dad, confusion spread all over his face. “Protection?” He asked with a frown. “Protection against what?”

“Oh, please let this not be happening!” Shizuo begged in his head, staring in horror at his father as the evil man’s eyes lit up like a Christmas tree.

“Why, protection against the evil sword of penetrative doom!” He cried dramatically, winking at Shizuo mischievously. Shizuo wished he could punch himself and knock himself out to avoid this mortifying conversation, but he did not trust his father not to pull something like convincing Izaya to sleep naked beside him while he was unconscious. So he settled for glaring viciously at his dad, hoping the man would get out of his room, and praying for the heavens to bestow the gift of being deaf on his ears. Or better yet, remove his father’s power of speech.

Unfortunately, the universe just wasn’t that giving.

“The evil sword of penetrative doom?” Izaya repeated, his red eyes widening. “I’ve never heard of that urban legend! Is it from around here?”

Shizuo’s dad chuckled with a wide grin, looking right at Izaya. “Oh yes! This urban legend is well-known around these parts.” He purred, lifting his hands into the air and wiggling the fingers like a spell-caster or some kind of warlock about to do voodoo. “It comes to its victims veeeery carefully, typically in the middle of the night! Then it waits and waits for its chance to strike!”

Izaya gasped as he stared at Shizuo’s dad, his red eyes wide with wonder. “What then?” He practically whispered, the excitement plain as day on his face. Shizuo looked in fear at his father, wondering how far the man was willing to go.

“Well, my boy,” His father began, clearing his throat to launch into something that would crush Shizuo’s very existence. “It finds an opening within its victim, something it easily penetrates, and thrusts right in there!”

Shizuo choked on his lungs and looked down at Izaya in horror, half-hoping the raven would understand what was going on and make his father stop, and half-praying that he never imagined anything but a massive possessed sword thrusting into him.

Oh god…thrusting into him…

He could feel the tightness of his pants increase at the words.


“Stop, stop, stop, stop, stop, stop.” Shizuo thought frantically in his head, one of his hands
twitching towards the aching pool in his lap, desperate to create his own relief even considering the situation he was in.

“It pushes deep and it pushes hard.” Shizuo’s dad continued, a clear sign of struggle passing over his face as he tried not to laugh, trying to keep maintaining a serious face as though he was telling the truth about some urban legend. “It finds the weakest point within its victim and strikes right at that spot, over and over again, doing battle with the inner spirit of the unfortunate soul it chose.”

“Wow.” Izaya looked at Shizuo with wide eyes. “That sounds terrifying! You mean you live with that thing so close by?” He seemed truly impressed by that fact, red eyes taking on a note of adoration as they flicked over Shizuo, shyly up and down like they were admiring a hero.

Shizuo felt his throat close and he coughed nervously, avoiding eye contact as he scratched the back of his head. “Uh.” He said dumbly, not sure what the right thing to do here was.

“Ah yes! Shizuo has had many an encounter with the penetrative sword.” His father said wisely, nodding his head with a very solemn look on his face. “Typically, he grabs it by the base and doesn’t let go, riding that horrible thing up and down and up and down until it gives up the fight and retreats to whence it came.”

Shizuo felt his cheeks go red at the lewd description, jaw dropping as he gaped at his father in shock. Was this guy really describing the way Shizuo…the way he…masturbated?!

“You’re so strong, Shizu-chan.” Izaya purred, shifting slightly on Shizuo’s lap to press back against Shizuo’s chest again. “Fighting that monster all the time…I had no idea…”

Shizuo could feel Izaya curling back against his body, subtly molding his smaller form to Shizuo’s in his own way of flirting. Izaya was flirting with him. Because he thought Shizuo was some kind of hero who battled urban legends every night.

“I, uh…yep! I do that. That is a developed trait of my character.” Shizuo babbled, tightening his arms around Izaya’s waist and holding him in place against his chest, nervously angling his hips away so that Izaya couldn’t feel the…the sword of penetration as it started to appear once again.

Shizuo’s dad snickered, eyes lit up with delight as he crossed his arms, watching Shizuo with a self-righteous smirk. “My son is a hero!” He sang. “A great hero who defends us all!”

“Why do we need protection then?” Izaya asked, cocking his head as he turned his attention back on Shizuo’s dad. “Shizu-chan can handle anything that comes our way. He’ll stop the sword if it shows up. He can make sure it doesn’t hurt me.” Izaya said with certainty, smiling trustingly up at Shizuo.

God. Damn. It.

“Yeah, I’ll handle it so…you just go.” Shizuo grunted out, glaring at his father again. “Like right now.”

His dad snickered, slapping his thigh a few times as he gave Shizuo a mocking bow. “But of course, great hero! May your night be free of penetrative swords!” He said happily, but a quick glint entered his eyes right as he was about to exit the room. “Ah…but should something happen…” He purred, reaching into his pocket and throwing a small packet at Shizuo before he could register what it was.

Shizuo grabbed the packet and looked down at it, eyes bugging out of his head as he read the label. XL condom. A…a strawberry-flavored one. With pre-lube. His father had just given him a strawberry-flavored plus size condom that came pre-lubricated.
“Dad!” Shizuo choked out, shoving the packet in his pocket before Izaya could see what it was and looking in horror at his father. “You-”

“Just want to make sure that my son is being safe.” His evil father said with mock innocence, looking at Shizuo with big eyes. “My great hero can only do so much himself. Everyone needs a little help with their battles now and then.”

“Get out already!” Shizuo yelled, his face red as he grabbed a book from the ground beside him (convenient – way to be a slob, Shizuo) and hurled it right at his father’s head. His father laughed as he ducked, giving both boys a jaunty wave before slipping out of the room. “Be safe!” He sang. “Oh! And the two of you should continue your tutoring lessons tomorrow if Izaya feels up to it!”

“That was probably what he originally came in here to say.” Shizuo thought weakly, glaring as the door to his bedroom shut.

It left him holding Izaya on his lap, a raging sword of penetration struggling to break free of his jeans and attack its “victim”, and the oblivious raven humming to himself as he perched on Shizuo’s lap. There was silence for a few seconds, neither boy saying anything as they just sat there on the ground.

“So!” The raven finally said, turning to look at Shizuo with a smile. “Wanna go to bed now, hero?” He chirped, a slight bit of mischief present in those ruby orbs.

Shizuo paused as he stared at Izaya, looking into those sly red eyes as understanding passed over his mind.

“You…you know the urban legend is totally fake.” He said flatly, not so much a question as it was a statement.

Izaya laughed, throwing his head back before leaning forward to plant a kiss on Shizuo’s cheek. His soft lips pressed deep against Shizuo’s skin, holding themselves there for a few seconds before Izaya pulled back, smiling happily at Shizuo.

“I’m not gullible enough to keep believing it.” He said skeptically. “I believed it for a little bit, but I’m not gullible enough to keep believing it.”

Izaya smiled coyly at Shizuo, tracing one gentle finger down Shizuo’s neck with a sort of fondness in his eyes. “Of course, I mean it when I say you’re strong. I don’t know many people who even come close to your strength.” He admitted, red eyes looking right into Shizuo’s gold ones. “But I have a lot of sides, Shizu-chan. My gullible one just isn’t as powerful as others.”

“Duly noted.” Shizuo breathed out, looking down at Izaya in wonder. “Thanks. For teaching me that.”

Izaya blushed and looked away, mumbling something to himself about idiotic protozoans, but Shizuo could practically see the happiness flowing through his heart at the fact that Shizuo cared. Cared about learning about him.

The conversation from the hallway drifted back into Shizuo’s mind. With a fragmented Izaya, so uncertain about what he should do, and a hidden past that was holding him in a grip of fear, keeping him from accepting any of his feelings. With Shizuo barely managing to grace his way into Izaya’s trust, and getting him to try and head to bed. With the two of them now sitting in Shizuo’s room, Izaya completely placing himself at Shizuo’s mercy and letting someone else take charge for once in
his life.

Shizuo just couldn’t use that absolute trust merely to have sex and satisfy his lusty desires. Izaya meant so much more to him than that. Izaya trusted him right now. He was opening himself up. Shizuo wasn’t going to take charge by ramming his dick up Izaya’s ass. No…he was going to prove to Izaya just how much he cherished him, and prove that Izaya could give Shizuo the reigns without Shizuo trying to break the mustang that he was.

That determination killed Shizuo’s erection instantly, replacing his lust with tender care, and Shizuo was able to shift fully to embrace the small raven, placing his nose in the crook of Izaya’s neck and breathing deeply. Izaya jumped a little bit at the sudden movement, but slowly relaxed into Shizuo’s arms, leaning into the blonde and holding him tightly. Letting him take control.

They stayed there on the ground, just hugging, until a yawn suddenly dragged itself out of Izaya’s mouth, reminding Shizuo as to why they were even in the bedroom in the first place.

“Oh! Sorry, let’s get to bed.” Shizuo said sheepishly, pulling Izaya to his feet and gesturing awkwardly at the futon. Izaya smiled at him, nodding once before padding over in Shizuo’s T-shirt and boxers, climbing onto the thin mattress and pulling the blanket over himself with a contented sigh.

He was completely relaxed.

Shizuo watched him for a few seconds, a smile on his lips, looking at the way the tiny body had settled so easily onto the futon, had curled up instantly under the blanket like he belonged there, had given in to Shizuo’s care. His eyes were closed and his breathing was even, his hair spread out on the pillow below him like an ink cloud staining the white, and not a drop of discontent to be found on his face.

This was far more perfect than any round of sex would have been.

Shizuo smiled as he watched Izaya just a bit longer, taking in the angelic sight before him, before turning to grab his own pajamas from where they’d been thrown on the ground that morning.

As he changed out of his clothes for the day, slipped into his soft cotton pajamas, and picked up his dirty laundry to throw it in his hamper, he felt something brush against his hand from the pocket of his jeans. Shizuo paused and reached inside the pocket, pulling out the condom packet that his father had given him.

Shizuo still flushed a bit when he saw it, but when he glanced over at Izaya, drifting happily off to sleep in total comfort on Shizuo’s futon…his fist closed around the packet.

Shizuo’s clothes made a low thumping sound as they landed in his hamper, a perfect shot that would’ve probably gotten him on the basketball team at school, and the packet let out a high-pitched thunk as it hit the bottom of his wastebasket, neither sound less satisfying than the other as Shizuo climbed into the futon beside Izaya.

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It got a little bit harder to sleep next to Izaya as the night wore on.

Shizuo discovered that the love of his life was one of those people who loved to hog all the blankets in the bed, no matter how freaking tiny his body was.

“Izaya, let me have some.” Shizuo grunted, grabbing the edge of the blanket and pulling it towards
him with a huff, rolling over so his back was pressed to Izaya’s as he bundled himself under the blanket.

Izaya gave a small whine of protest, his little hands grabbing their own portion of the blanket and yanking on it, tugging away absolutely every bit that Shizuo had just managed to reclaim and then some, burrowing underneath them like a gopher.

Shizuo glared at his sleeping partner, feeling the cold bite of the nighttime wash over his exposed legs as he grabbed the blanket again, snatching it away from Izaya and pulling it over his own lap. “You don’t need this much of the blanket! I’m bigger than you. I should get more.” Shizuo growled, trying to settle down on the bed and hoping to maintain his grip on the stupid thing.

Izaya was much stronger than he looked, apparently, because the blanket was ripped from his grasp with ease, vanishing as it was wrapped around Izaya’s tiny body, the spiteful raven deftly looping it around himself so that he was laying on the darn thing as well as clutching it fiercely to his chest. “You don’t need it! You make your own body heat.” Izaya mumbled tiredly, snuggling down into the pillow.

“So do you!” Shizuo argued, sitting up in bed and glaring down at the raven as he tried to find a loose edge of the blanket to grab onto. “Since you’re small, you should warm up faster!”

Izaya shook his head fiercely, only clutching the blanket even tighter. “Nuh uh! I get cold really easily as do many small creatures which end up creating burrows and nests and finding small insulated habitats to survive! By the laws of nature, I rightly deserve this blanket.” He huffed, nodding firmly as he curled up into a ball and hid under the covers, apparently deciding that the matter was resolved.

“Hey genius, we ain’t in nature!” Shizuo snarled, finally finding a single corner of the blanket that wasn’t covered and pulling harshly on it, unwrapping Izaya like a Christmas present.

Izaya pouted in protest as he glared at Shizuo, his red eyes almost glowing in the dark as he grabbed the blanket again and pulled it away from Shizuo, falling back over onto his side and wrapping himself up once more.

Shizuo groaned in frustration and raked his fingers through his hair, wondering what the best approach to this situation was. It was winter! He was cold and this was the only blanket in his room. He needed at least some of it!

Shizuo looked back down at the little bundle that was Izaya Orihara, poking his side with a glare. “Give me some of the blanket.” He ordered, hoping that maybe words might work.

“You don’t get the blanket. I am a burrito. I need to be fully wrapped at all times.” Izaya responded without even looking back, still cuddled within the fuzzy cloth.

Shizuo rolled his eyes, looking Izaya up and down to try and find another place to grab. He spotted one pale limb of Izaya’s poking out from under the blanket, pure white against the brown color of the blanket, which was made almost black by the dark room with only the glow of the moon spilling in through Shizuo’s window to provide any light.

“Hey, burrito.” Shizuo said, poking at the soft white limb hanging out in the open. “Your leg is sticking out.”

Izaya’s leg moved slightly, rustling over the top of the futon but making no move to retreat back under the blanket. “No one said I was a good burrito.” He huffed from under the blanket. “Taco Bell
wrapped me up.”

Shizuo snorted out a laugh at that, shaking his head as he laid down beside Izaya, a smile playing over his lips despite the cold still nipping at his body.

“I see. Well, remind me never to order a burrito from Taco Bell next time I go there.” He said into the darkness of the room, lifting his hand so it could rest on Izaya’s hip, just a simple form of contact between… friends.

Izaya hummed once, shifting a bit so that Shizuo’s hand slid from resting atop his hip to laying in the curve of his body between his hip and ribcage. Shizuo felt his heart flutter in his chest, wondering if that could be construed as an invitation of some kind. Maybe to wrap an arm around Izaya’s waist? To pull him a little closer?

He couldn’t be sure so for now, Shizuo just let his hand rest in the dip of Izaya’s waist, trying his best not to let his breathing speed up and show how affected he was. He almost missed Izaya’s next comment from focusing too hard on his exhales.

“You don’t go to Taco Bell.” The raven announced, his small voice even more piercing with no sound around to muffle it. “You end up at Taco Bell. I don’t think anyone goes there on purpose.”

Shizuo couldn’t stop the laugh that escaped him at the haughty comment, rolling over with a smile so his chest was pressed against Izaya’s back, allowing the hand that had been on Izaya’s waist to fall away and make room for his other arm to come around and take its place, wrapping steadily around the small boy’s body. It looked like all it took was a joke and Shizuo suddenly had enough bravery to pull Izaya in like his lover. Imagine that.

“Well…” Izaya started, the raven locks slipping and twirling around his pale fingers effortlessly, almost like a dance between the different parts of his body illuminated by moonlight. Shizuo stared at it, enraptured, watching the way the silky locks slipped in and around the elegant digits, streaks of inky black cutting over pearly white in the darkness, moving in a never-ending cycle together. It was beautiful…like everything else about Izaya.

Wait, what was he saying?

Shizuo managed to catch the last snippet of Izaya’s sentence, praying that the first bit hadn’t been too important.

“…or something romantic. So, I guess I would want to go to the aquarium. They have a new café on the second floor there.” Izaya finished, his fingers still rapidly twirling the locks of his hair, pink lips bitten by pearly teeth as he waited for Shizuo to say something.

Shizuo froze with his arm around Izaya, wishing desperately that he’d heard the first part of that sentence. Izaya had used the word “romantic”, right?! Had he just been talking about romance? Or romantic locations to eat? Was he trying to hint at something?!
“Uh…that’s nice.” Shizuo said stupidly, not sure what else to say in that moment in time.

An elbow instantly drove itself into Shizuo’s gut, making the taller boy grunt as he doubled over, still pressed closely to Izaya despite the aching feeling in his gut.

“Stupid, Shizu-chan.” Izaya hissed, and Shizuo could see a tinge of red on the alabaster cheeks, even in the dark. “You’re supposed to ask me when I’d like to go.”

Shizuo’s heart skipped a beat in his chest, and his mouth went dry at the insinuation behind Izaya’s words. Oh god. Oh god oh god oh god.

“A-Alright.” Shizuo managed to squeak out, coughing a few times before clearing his throat, cheeks completely red as he asked, “When would you like to go?”

Izaya shrugged nonchalantly against Shizuo’s chest, but his fingers were still twirling his hair like crazy. “Maybe next weekend. They’re having a dolphin show, too.” Izaya said softly, not even turning to look at Shizuo.

Shizuo gulped down the dryness in his mouth and nodded numbly, the weight of Izaya pressed against his chest feeling much hotter than it used to be.

“That sounds like fun.” He choked out, hoping his voice sounded at least half as casual as Izaya’s.

Izaya just nodded once, fingers still twirling his hair as the two of them lapsed into silence.

Shizuo could feel his heart pounding like crazy in his chest. He needed to talk here. He was supposed to speak up now! He was supposed to ask the question. The question that would possibly bridge the gap of friendship that they’d barely managed to create just a few weeks ago. But he couldn’t force the words from his throat. They were just stuck there, stubbornly refusing to come out.

His chance was going to slip away again! Just like it had on the rollercoaster!

In the total silence, Shizuo could feel Izaya tensing up beside him, almost like the pain of rejection was already shooting through the small boy’s body. Shit! He needed to speak now! He needed-

“Do you want to go to the aquarium with me next weekend?” Izaya blurted out, cutting off any train of thought that Shizuo might have had.

Shizuo froze in shock, staring down at the head of the small boy right next to him, wondering if his dreams had just come true. “W-What?” Shizuo croaked, disbelief thickly coating every syllable.

“Do you want to go to the aquarium with me next weekend?” Izaya repeated, still not looking back at Shizuo as he huddled under the blanket (which Shizuo had all but forgotten about at this point). “Just for a few hours around lunchtime.”

Shizuo tried to steady his breathing, but he felt like Izaya could feel the frantic pounding of his heartbeat against his back anyway, so that didn’t really matter too much. “U-Uh…like to hang out?” Shizuo asked, and then instantly felt like slapping himself in the face.

God, that was such a friend-zoning statement! It sounded like Shizuo was nervous about the prospect of romance and wanted to keep everything at the friendship level. What was wrong with him?! He was scaring Izaya off!

He opened his mouth to try and say something, anything, to fix the problem, but Izaya’s voice cut him off again.
“I know you can be really stupid at times, Shizu-chan, but I was hoping you would at least understand this.” Izaya sighed, but his fingers at this point were practically starting a fire with his hair, moving too fast for Shizuo to even see anything but a blur, and completely undermining the casual boredom in his voice.

The raven finally tilted his head so he could look Shizuo in the eye, and to any normal person, his face would seem completely calm and even slightly bored. But Shizuo knew him better. He could see the nervousness that was practically overflowing from the raven’s eyes as he looked at Shizuo, gulping almost imperceptibly before speaking again.

“I’m asking you out on a date.” Izaya said firmly, red eyes locked with Shizuo’s gold ones. “Do you wanna go or not?”

The room fell silent for a good long while, as Shizuo stared at Izaya and Izaya watched Shizuo, the former struck dumb by shock and the latter determined to keep a casual poker face on despite the raging panic flowing through his veins.

Neither one of them moved from their position, not Izaya pressed up against Shizuo’s chest nor Shizuo’s arm wrapped protectively around Izaya’s front. They just laid there, looking at each other, the very universe itself seeming to hold its breath as it waited to see what would happen.

“Sure.” Shizuo finally managed to get out, the single word breaking the silence that had fallen over the room, almost in the same way that his fists broke whatever they punched through: roughly and effectively.

Izaya’s eyes widened a little as they looked at Shizuo, utter disbelief passing into their orbs as he stared into Shizuo’s gaze. “Y-You mean you want to?” He asked softly, letting his surprise and fear of denial crack the mask of calm that he’d placed on his face. “You want to go on a date with me?”

“Yes!” Shizuo tightened his grip around Izaya, hoping he didn’t seem as desperate as he felt. “I would love to go on a date with you! We could let my mom and dad watch the girls, and you and I could go get some lunch together. We can hang out for a few hours, or all day if you want! I’ll even pay!” He offered, biting his lip as he looked down at the shell-shocked Izaya.

They were both quiet for a while, but Izaya finally lifted a finger to Shizuo’s lips, pressing against them gently. “We’ll split the check.” He said quietly, red eyes trained on his finger. “I hate being in debt to people and I always support myself. Okay?”

Shizuo could feel bubbly happiness radiating throughout his chest as he firmly nodded, a big smile stretching his lips as he looked down at Izaya. The boy he was going on a date with. He was going on a date with Izaya!

“And I’m not going to act totally girly the entire time, either!” Izaya announced, still staring at his finger as it pressed against Shizuo’s lips. “I may be girly sometimes, but I’ll be other things, too. I’m going to be more of myself. So you just keep that in mind, Shizu-chan.”

“You never leave my mind.” Shizuo said aloud before he could stop himself, and he watched as Izaya’s cheeks blushed a deep red, the small boy scowling a little as he removed his finger from Shizuo’s lips, pressing his face into Shizuo’s chest instead and curling up against his front. “Stupid Shizu-chan.” The small boy muttered, his voice muffled by Shizuo’s shirt. “Embarrassing me like that. I’m still just trying to get a grip on my emotions and figure out what I want to say to you.”

“As long as you’re saying something, and you’re by my side, I’ll be happy.” Shizuo responded easily, wrapping his arms protectively around Izaya and pulling him in close.
He could hear Izaya’s little intake of breath at that comment, and he felt his little hands fist themselves in Shizuo’s shirt, like he didn’t want to ever let go. “The opposite.” He mumbled softly into Shizuo’s chest, so soft that Shizuo almost didn’t hear it. “That’s the exact opposite of what he said to me.”

Shizuo felt his heart stop at that, and a frown overtook that goofy grin that had made its way onto Shizuo’s face.

He.

The ex-boyfriend.

Shizuo felt his grip unconsciously tighten even more around Izaya, as though he could shield him from the past as well as anything in the present if he just pulled him close enough.

“It doesn’t matter what he used to say to you.” Shizuo said in a low voice, pressing his lips to the top of Izaya’s black head and kissing the soft hair beneath his mouth. “Because he isn’t ever going to be anywhere near you ever again. I’m going to make sure of that.”

Izaya’s body shook a little, and Shizuo was distinctly aware of something wet that seemed to be seeping in through the front of his shirt. He ignored it, focusing solely on holding Izaya close and breathing in his addictive scent.

He wouldn’t let this guy hurt his Izaya again. Izaya was the strongest person Shizuo knew (himself included) and a scumbag like that wasn’t worth his time. The time of a boy who single-handedly raised two twin girls without a sign of his parents. Who worked his butt off doing all kinds of dangerous things in order to make ends meet. Who managed to hold the position of top student at school despite all the other activities demanding his attention. Who found the time in his day to tutor an idiot on top of all that, and who never complained, asked for help, made things easier for himself, or held back even the slightest measure of effort. Not even once.

“He’s never going to get near you.” Shizuo swore, kissing Izaya’s head again. “And if he does, then I’ll punch him so hard that Shinra will be his only hope for retaining a face even reminiscent of a human being.”

Izaya laughed a little at that, and he shifted in Shizuo’s arms a tiny bit, fiddling with something in the dark as he spoke. “It might be harder than you think to take care of him…but if anyone can do that, you can.” He said softly, and Shizuo felt a light weight drop on top of his side, covering him from the cold of the room that had started to turn his toes numb.

He glanced at his body and noticed…the blanket.

Izaya had unwrapped himself and spread it evenly over the two of them as their bodies pressed closely together.

Shizuo stared at the gesture of kindness for a while before looking back at Izaya, a fond smile on his face. “I can’t believe you shared the blanket.” He said quietly, running a gentle hand through Izaya’s black hair, the tender caress skimming over the raven’s head.

Izaya hummed once, wrapping his arms around Shizuo’s back and leaving his face pressed into Shizuo’s chest. “Yeah, well you better compensate for the heat I’m losing by being so benevolent.” He muttered, a pink tinge just barely visible on the parts of his cheeks that Shizuo could see.

Shizuo chucked a bit, rubbing Izaya’s back up and down to spread warmth throughout his surprisingly chilly body. “I intend to.” He responded softly, feeling Izaya’s body begin to relax in his
embrace as the small boy drifted off to sleep.

Izaya made a small noise in response, his eyelids fluttering shut as his breathing deepened, muscles loosening throughout his body as he fell into the throes of slumber.

After a few minutes of pure silence, with only the sound of Izaya’s even breaths to provide any sound, and Shizuo still very much awake, the blonde boy whispered,

“And I’ll never let you go.”

Chapter End Notes

Ooooh! Izaya asked Shizuo out on a DATE! Yay for the lovebirds! They are getting closer and closer! But as I said before, this is the last chapter of fluff before *dun dun duuuuuuuh* Hajime shows up! Yes! In the next chapter, Hajime will appear, ladies and gentlemen! Come on, come all!! Don't miss it! Reserve your seat and all that jazz!! Don't worry: entry is free!

Anyway, so my competition went really well. My team won first at regionals and we get to go to state competition now! I got first and third in two of my individual events, so that's really cool. I did pretty well! :D

Right, and final order of business, the birthday one-shot for Shizuo is called "Happy Birthday, Master". And that should be going up not too long after this one! Okay!

Thanks for reading! <3
Aaaaalright! So I’ve been warning a few of you in the comments about this and I’ll warn all of you in the notes right here: THIS CHAPTER IS FULL OF HATE. LOTS OF HATE, LOTS OF THINGS THAT CREATE HATE, THIS IS A TRIGGERING CHAPTER. AND IT ALL CENTERS AROUND HAJIME. Because hey! Hajime is finally showing up! That's right, ladies and gentleman, the one and only Shishizaki Hajime has finally made his appearance! Be prepared to hate him even more than you might have hated him before!

So without further ado, let's get into this "wonderful" chapter!

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

“And you’re absolutely certain that it was Izaya?” The smooth voice asked, its owner slipping easily into his jacket and buttoning it up with nimble fingers, listening for the response.

“I don’t know anyone else with ruby-colored eyes, hair blacker than ink, pure white skin, and a perfect derriere.” The gruff reply came, the tall man already waiting by the door with his hand on the knob, ready to leave. “Not to mention those sisters that you mentioned were with him on the train.”

The first speaker hummed lowly, walking over to the door and slipping his shoes onto his feet. “Fascinating. And he was with a blonde boy at some festival after that?”

His father nodded, examining his watch briefly before opening the front door. “That is correct. There was some kind of blonde teenage boy. He was tall and gave off a bit of a delinquent vibe, but the two of them seemed to get along quite well. Like I told you, it seems as though this boy may be Izaya’s new boyfriend. They were cuddling and hugging and holding hands throughout the entire festival. I thought that you would like to know, seeing as you seemed so focused on that phone call.”

Hajime felt the corners of his mouth quirk up a bit at the memory of the call. That had been quite a funny thing.

He’d been relaxing in his room, doing homework from one of his classes, when his phone had just started to ring. It was set with the generic ringtone, nothing special or individualized, and so it couldn’t have been very important. By all rights, Hajime should have just ignored the call. But something told him to see what it was.

When he recognized the number of the daycare, the one where one of his exes had always brought his little sisters, he’d answered the call.

He could still remember every word of that conversation.

“Hello?” He’d asked, not even the slightest bit surprised that the daycare was calling him. He’d figured that one of them would be asking for his help with Izaya at some point. There was just no two ways about it. After all, Hajime was the only person who could control and tame that little mustang of a boy. Izaya belonged to him. And everyone knew it.
“Hello. I need you to do something for me.” The voice on the other end of the phone sounded strangled, unsure, like it didn’t know whether or not this was a good idea. But Hajime nonetheless recognized the voice right away.

“Suzuki-san. It’s been a long time.” Hajime greeted, setting down his homework and turning his full attention on the call. “May I ask what brought on this need for a favor?”

There was silence on the other end for a bit, along with some muttered words and heavy breathing, before Suzuki returned to the call.

“That’s not fully important. You just need to know that it involves…him.”

Hajime felt his lips curl up in a smug smile, and his electric blue eyes flicked over to look at his mirror in satisfaction. Behind that mirror, he kept pictures from all his previous relationships. They were organized according to how long they had lasted, and how long they had held his attention. Essentially, how long they’d been with him before falling in love, because once they fell in love, Hajime lost interest. He left them for others, broke their hearts, and that was the best part of being in a relationship.

At the centerpiece of his collection was an ebony box that contained more pictures than all the rest of them ever would. That one had lasted the absolute longest before falling for him. That one had held his attention right up to the end. In fact, Hajime had to admit that he still pulled out those pictures and looked at them from time to time, feeling excitement boil in his veins each time he saw that pretty little face. The face which had denied him for so long, until it finally offered itself up. When it finally trusted him, and that beautiful creature had become his. Yes, he still looked at those pictures, and not just for the satisfaction of knowing how many hearts he’d broken like he did with the others. No, he looked at those because their subject still fascinated him. Because he could still get aroused by seeing those shy smiles and mischievous smirks. Because he could still get hard and jerk off in the middle of the night looking at those pink lips and that perfect ass. Because his lust still flowed heavily each time he imagined lips on his, and his cock rubbing against shapely legs and a curved bottom.

Simply put, he looked at those pictures because they were pictures of Izaya.

Hajime licked his lips now as he imagined a few of those pictures, some of his favorites like the one where they’d gone to the beach and he’d convinced Izaya to wear a tight black speedo. Or where they were on that boat trip for school and Izaya had pleased him by wearing a nightgown whenever they were alone in their room. He knew Izaya didn’t really like cross-dressing. It made him feel demeaned and girly, and weaker than he actually was. But that was precisely what Hajime loved about it. He loved putting Izaya down, setting the raven beneath him, making the tiny boy bow to him as his superior and forcing submission from the proud creature. He loved breaking his spirit down to where Izaya depended on him for everything, acquiesced to his every whim, and felt ashamed of his own wants in the relationship, easily putting them aside to make way for Hajime’s. Hajime was the ruler in their relationship. He loved making sure that Izaya knew that as well.

Forcing Izaya’s already delicate self-esteem to crumble, making the boy unsure in everything about himself, transforming himself into a crutch that Izaya couldn’t live without and bringing him to his absolute lowest so that he could never rise on his own again. God. That was the sort of thing he loved. And he loved doing that with Izaya. Such a prideful, independent, fragile, breakable boy.

Hajime quickly brought himself back to the present with the phone call, easily removing himself from the thoughts of Izaya and turning his attention back on Suzuki.

“It concerns, Izaya, does it?” He asked, making his tone bored even as he could feel his arousal growing in his pants. “And what exactly do you want me to do?”
“I… I need to know more about his family situation.” Suzuki said on the other end of the line, his voice almost helpless. “He won’t tell me anything, and he’s way too stubborn to talk to me no matter how many times I approach the subject. You were the only one who could get him to open up. Please. I need your help.”

Hajime almost laughed at that. Get him to open up. It wasn’t really “opening”, in his mind. It was more like “breaking”.

“What would be in this for me? You know very well that he and I have no contact anymore.” Hajime continued, forcing himself up from his bed despite his growing “problem” and padding over to his mirror. He let his fingers trail over the glass, reaching the handle placed on its side and swinging its face out to reveal the cabinet within. His eyes immediately landed on the ebony box and he smoothly clicked it open, smiling as the pile of pictures was revealed. “It would be quite a bother for me to have to reinitiate contact with someone that I barely care about anymore.” He continued, pulling out one photo and examining it thoughtfully.

It showed the two of them taking a selfie right in front of the ice skating rink in Shibuya. Ah right. The couples’ lesson. Izaya was all bundled up in winter clothes, his face shining with happiness as he clutched Hajime’s arm, cutely nuzzling into him as he held him affectionately against his body.

Rubbish. He needed more skin.

Hajime placed the photo on the side and continued searching through the pile, pulling out the next one to judge it.

“After all, I was the one who cut contact. Wouldn’t it seem odd if I suddenly changed my mind?” He asked Suzuki next, discarding that one as well (a little shot of Izaya eating cotton candy for the first time. Nothing special there.) and picking up another photo.

“Yes, I’m aware of that!” Suzuki said on the other end, sighing in exasperation as the sounds of footsteps padding back and forth could be heard through the phone. “But I really need to figure out what’s going on. Isn’t there something you want that could convince you to do this?”

“I have no interest in Izaya anymore.” Hajime said flatly, his electric blue eyes sparkling as they finally landed on a picture of value.

Izaya bent over the side of a boat railing, trying to touch the surface of the water with a determined look on his face. Probably to pet a manta ray or something, Hajime didn’t really care about that. What he cared about was the way Izaya’s supple ass was displayed right towards him, wrapped in a skin-tight black Speedo, all perched and prepared for his viewing pleasure.

“He’s a thing of the past and I keep no connections with the past.” Hajime unzipped the front of his pants, letting his sore cock fall into his hand as he set the photo in front of him and locked his eyes on his object of interest. Slowly, he started to move his hand up and down, imagining that it was Izaya’s body around his cock, Izaya’s tight heat surrounding him as he moved up and down.

“It’s utterly pointless to call me.” Hajime finished, his voice completely normal and calm even as his hand jerked roughly, shooting bolts of pleasure through his system as he stared at the wonderful picture, his heart rate increasing as his lust shot up.

“I know, I know.” Suzuki continued, utterly oblivious to what Hajime was doing on the other end. “How about… how about if I pay you? Would you do it then?”

Hajime felt a smirk twitch over his lips as he stared at Izaya’s ass, bucking his hips into his hand as
lewd thoughts swirled into his mind. Izaya was begging. Izaya needed him. Izaya was broken and lost without him. Izaya was Hajime’s loyal servant.

“I might consider it. How much would you give me?” He asked in a bored tone, increasing the pace of his hips as pleasure created a maelstrom within his body, his erection growing almost painful as he pictured Izaya’s tear-streaked, pleasure-ridden face beneath him. All his to command as he jacked off in his bedroom to the boy’s picture.

“Does…does five thousand yen sound like enough?” Suzuki asked hesitantly.

Hajime scoffed, reaching out a hand to stroke the picture before him, fingers trailing over the curve of Izaya’s ass as his pupils blew wide with lust. His hips were bucking like a bull out of control now, or some crazy dog in heat trying to impregnate a helpless dog beneath him.

Ooh…yes, he liked that comparison. He was the alpha wolf, the dog in heat, holding all the power over Izaya. The helpless female dog who was entirely at the mercy of his passion. His bitch.

That thought alone nearly made Hajime cum as he breathed deeply, staring intently at the photo before him of Izaya bent over, reaching down to that sparkling water below. Hajime couldn’t even see the rest of the picture anymore. All his focus had gone to the beautiful butt making the centerpiece of the shot. That was all that mattered.

“Come now, Suzuki-san. That sum is far too cheap. Make it fifty thousand, and we’ve got a deal.” He said smoothly, feeling a white-hot pain start to curl in his lower stomach as he neared his peak.

“Fifty thousand?! Are you crazy?!” Suzuki yelled on the other side of the phone.

“I’m dealing with Izaya for you. I need compensation for something so…unappealing.” Hajime practically purred out the last word as the pleasure built even higher up, his hand moving faster and faster, gripping tighter and tighter, his eyes locked firmly on the delicious rear end that belonged entirely to him.

Suzuki was silent for a few seconds, allowing Hajime to hear nothing but his hand rubbing frantically over his cock, and the small puffs of breath that were beginning to escape him as his ecstasy came closer.

Then a loud sigh could be heard on the other end, followed by the sound of footsteps stopping in their tracks.

“Deal. Fifty thousand.” Suzuki said tiredly. “Make Izaya tell me what’s going on with his family. I’m worried about him and I need to know at any cost.”

“You’ll know.” Hajime promised, letting his eyes finally roll back in his head as his eyelashes fluttered, images of Izaya in all sorts of lewd positions flashing vividly enough in his mind so he didn’t need the aid of the picture. “And I’m permitted to use any means necessary.” It wasn’t a question so much as a statement and Suzuki knew it.

Hajime could practically see him nodding in defeat on the other end as he said, “Yes. Any means necessary.”

Hajime’s smirk stretched into a full-on grin, and a wonderful vision of Izaya tied and stretched helplessly by ropes in the air before him, gagged and bound beyond escape, beaten to his lowest point with nothing left but Hajime to depend on, showed up in his mind. The vision was so life-like, the pain and pleading on Izaya’s face so palpable, Hajime felt like he could taste his sweet lips already, and could hear the needy whines of a voice that he hadn’t heard in such a long time.
Too long a time, he decided.

“Very well. I’ll take your job. Expect your answer in no more than a few months.” Without any other form of goodbye, Hajime hung up the phone and flung it on his bed, tipping his head back and letting himself get lost in his release of bliss.

It was wonderful, perfect images of his perfect servant flashing through his head, each one more appealing than the last, all driving more bursts of cum from his draining cock as he came all over the picture that had started it all.

When Hajime was finished, he stared at the picture, noting with mild annoyance how the strings of sticky cum had managed to cover everything but his face. Figures. It covered all the good parts. He’d have to clean and dry the photo off later. You never knew when it might come in handy.

Hajime brought himself back into the present, looking over at his father as he waited by the door.

“Yes, I am very invested in that phone call.” Hajime informed the man, walking past him to leave the house. “After all, I’m getting paid just to make Izaya talk about his family.”

“Doesn’t he have a difficult family life?” His father wondered, shutting the door behind them and locking it as they began their usual weekend trek to the Shinjuku area. It was where his father worked, and Hajime often walked his father to work so they could have some informative conversations like these before he didn’t see the man until late into the evening. On the weekends, however, they just liked to walk around and look at businesses that his father might surmise buying out at one point or another.

Today, they were supposed to be looking at entertainment buildings since his father was trying to expand the recreational portion of his company: toy shops, zoos, aquariums, and such. There was supposed to be a big show at one of the aquariums in Shinjuku. They were going to go see it and judge its value.

“Yes, but I don’t particularly care.” Hajime admitted, shrugging his shoulders as he thought about the way Izaya’s parents had never been home the entire time they’d dated. It made it far easier to plan plenty of dates as a result but Izaya always seemed more focused on the “emotional” aspect of it. The fact that he was neglected and lonely and tired, blah blah blah. Why couldn’t he find the positives like getting to sneak out late at night, or finding more time to bend to Hajime’s will? Also known as the only parts Hajime actually cared about?

“I’ll make him talk if it means money. And who knows? He might realize what a mistake he made in leaving me and come crawling back to where he belongs.” Hajime smiled at the thought. He’d make Izaya beg to be his again. Wear some maid outfit and call him master, and beg for Hajime’s love on his knees. The perfect make-up scene, right?

His father hummed beside him, seeming to frown a bit as they walked. There was doubt clouding his features and Hajime noticed it instantly. “Father?” He asked slowly, and the electric blue eyes that matched his own flicked down to look at him.

Hajime watched his father’s face carefully, looking for any other give-aways of emotion. “What are you thinking about?” He asked, the two of them stopping at a crosswalk as they waited for their turn.

His father was silent for several seconds, the time ticking by as they waited at the crosswalk, and then he revealed his misgivings to his son.

“I was just uncertain about the likelihood of the second phase in that plan.” The tall man admitted
gruffly, beginning to stalk across the street as the swarm of people they were in surged forward. “You didn’t see him with this blonde boy at the festival. I did. They truly were very close.”

Hajime frowned at this, and a bit of a dark shadow crossed over his mind.

He’d thought his father was talking about just a generic “relationship” sort of situation. Some hand-holding, some kissing, maybe a few jokes here and there, but nothing serious. The way he was looking at Hajime, with a meaningful glance in his eyes, it was like he thought Izaya…

“Are you saying he’s in love with this blonde?” Hajime asked skeptically, frowning at his father. “That’s impossible. Izaya is in love with me.”

His father huffed out a sigh, avoiding eye contact with his son as they made their way towards the train station, ready to buy some tickets and head out for Shinjuku. “He might have been, back when the two of you were together. But now…” His father pulled his phone out of his pocket and opened the gallery. He scrolled upwards on the screen, electric eyes flicking over all the pictures at lightning speed until they landed on one in particular. He brought it up and showed it to Hajime.

“Now, I believe someone else might hold that place in Izaya’s heart.” His father said flatly, and Hajime couldn’t believe what he was seeing.

There was Izaya, a little matured from when he’d been dating the raven, with fuller lips and slightly longer hair, but no less of the beauty and perfection to his delicate features that made him unparalleled when compared to anyone else. His ruby eyes were glittering like precious gemstones, and his mouth was pulled into a wide grin as he laughed, the moment of pure joy caught on camera. He was bundled up in winter clothes, ones that Hajime didn’t recognize and certainly not the ones he’d gotten for the raven long ago, but ones that nonetheless accentuated the elegance of his figure.

All of that was wonderful, and Hajime was tempted to add this picture to his collection, if it weren’t for the one imperfection in the scene.

Izaya’s arms were wrapped lovingly around the arm of someone else, his entire body angled towards that someone else as though they were the center of his whole universe. His face beamed with happiness and joy, and even without the obvious shape of laughter on his mouth, Hajime could clearly see the love radiating from his eyes as they looked up at the face of the person he was with.

Love.

There was love in his eyes.

Love directed at someone else.

Hajime let his eyes move away from Izaya to take in the fool he was with. A tall blonde boy with golden eyes. A few shadows on his face that indicated he scowled or growled often. A physique endowed with lean muscle that was surprisingly reminiscent of his own, only a little more built and clearly much greater in height. His skin had the lightest of tans, and his own winter clothes gave him something of a childish aura despite the rough, masculine definition of the rest of his character. There was no trademark growl of rage on his face, and his lips were pulled into a soft smile directed right at the raven nuzzling into him, but Hajime could immediately recognize who he was. He was infamous around their school, after all.

Heiwajima Shizuo.

“The monster of the school.” Hajime muttered, glaring at the blonde who was being so familiar with his Izaya. “I can’t have that.”
“Well,” His father said, pulling his phone back and slipping it into his pocket. “You won’t be doing anything about it right now. Today, we’re going to the aquarium. Tomorrow, you can track down the blonde who stole your ex-boyfriend.”

Hajime sighed, but his father was right. He nodded to signify his agreement and followed his father up to the ticket counter. Aquarium now. Revenge later.

“Izaya belongs to me, Heiwajima-san.” Hajime thought in his head, a deadly smirk coming over his mouth. “Now and forever.”

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“Shizu-chan! Shizu-chan! Look at this one!” Izaya laughed in delight as he placed his hands against the glass, grinning eagerly at the fish swimming around behind it.

Shizuo walked obligingly next to his date (his date!) and stared at the fish behind the glass.

It was a pretty funky looking one, nothing like any of the creatures Shizuo thought about when he heard the word “fish”. But Izaya seemed to like all the funky ones that no one else did. So it made sense that he would like this one as well.

“It’s so cuuuuute!” Izaya gushed, laughing as he pressed his face to the glass, red eyes looking eagerly at the fish who’d stopped to stare at the one person in the whole building who seemed to be interested in it.

Shizuo cocked his head and his brow furrowed as he tried to figure out just what could be “cute” about this one fish.

It had a flat body, like a sting ray, but that was the closest comparison Shizuo could give it to any other marine creature that he could freely recognize. Well, beyond a shark, he supposed. It had two fins on its back that reminded Shizuo of the shark fins he saw all the time in movies, and two more fins on each of its sides like little arms and legs. Throw in the vertical tail fin that moved side to side like a shark, and you had a very strange case of a sting ray and a shark falling in love. However, a third lover must have gotten involved in order to produce this “fish’s” most stunning feature of all.

Jutting out from its face was a huge…saw.

Yes, Shizuo just said saw. He had no idea what else to call it! It looked identical to the blade of a chainsaw, except it wasn’t moving, and it was huge! Just swaying back and forth on that thing’s face as it swam around, looking razor sharp and ready to slice open or impale whatever prey was unfortunate enough to come near the serrated blade that was its nose. It was a sting ray combined with a shark combined with a chainsaw. Oh yes. Very cute.

“Um…” Shizuo tried to think of something to say, staring at the freaky looking fish as it stared right back at them, changing its direction so it could swim up to meet Izaya at the glass.

Izaya squealed in delight, smashing his face as far against the glass as he could and grinning madly as the creature swam up to him, bumping its serrated nose against Izaya’s through the glass. Shizuo blinked at the odd sight, looking around him real quick to see if anyone else was watching.

The rest of the families and couples who were here were all watching the colorful fish, or gathering around the petting area with the kid-friendly starfish and manta rays, laughing and pointing at all the prettiest fish they could find. And Izaya was over here, bumping noses with one of Shinra’s experiments gone wrong, looking like a madman as he giggled at the monstrous creature.
Shizuo felt a fond smile creep over his lips. He wouldn’t have it any other way. Because it wouldn’t be Izaya if it was just like everyone else.

“Hey Izaya.” Shizuo crouched down next to the raven, cocking his head at the fish as it turned slightly to point its massive nose at him next.

“Yes, Shizu-chan?” Izaya asked, smiling happily at the strange thing and gently tapping on the glass to draw its attention back over to him.

The fish gladly switched its gaze, bumping its nose against the glass once more and inducing another giggle from Izaya.

Shizuo frowned. Was…was this fish flirting with his date? He knew that was impossible, yet he felt like this freaky fish was somehow hitting on Izaya. It kinda made him wanna jump in the tank and chase the fish away to the other side.

Man, he was possessive! It was just a fish!

Shizuo shook his head and looked over at Izaya next to him, trying to get his paranoid mind off the strange scenario of Izaya eloping on him with…a fish.

He had issues.

“What kind of fish is this thing?” Shizuo managed to asked, peering around for a name plate of some kind and finding none. He was certain that Izaya knew even without the name plate though so it didn’t really matter.

And he was right.

Izaya turned to him with a happy grin, red eyes sparkling as he got ready to take Shizuo to school. “This is called a pointed sawfish!” He declared, gesturing grandly at the thing floating by their heads. “It’s endangered and mostly found in the Indo-Pacific ocean. Part of the sawfish family, the pointed sawfish takes the place as the only member of the family in the anoxypristis genus!”

Shizuo just nodded like he understood what that meant, and Izaya happily continued with his lecture, even as he turned back to face said endangered chainsaw-faced fish. Oh gosh. Shizuo had just come up with a great name for it!

Chainsaw Face!

“The pointed sawfish can grow to be 3.5 meters long.” Izaya was rattling off, his head bobbing eagerly around in the air like he was trying to gauge how large this particular specimen was. “That’s around 11 feet, if you go by the American system! Although there have been very questionable and disreputable tales of far larger specimens. Like ones that go up to 7 meters long! That’s 22 feet!”

Izaya pulled back from the glass with a bit of a disappointed look on his face. “Looks like this one’s only about 2 meters long.” He sighed, but his excitement quickly came back as he pressed up against the glass once more. “The pointed sawfish’s snout is covered in tiny ampullary pores, which allow the sawfish to pick up electrical fields produced by fish and other prey. Once located, its “saw” becomes a longsword used to stun and impale said prey.” Izaya looked over at Shizuo in glee, an almost mad look in his eyes. “In fact, some species of sawfish, including the pointed sawfish, can slash with enough force to completely sever their prey!” He said happily, a prompting look on his face like he expected Shizuo to say something now.

Shizuo’s brain was still struggling to keep up with what that explanation just now had even meant.
He’d gotten something about electric fields and voodoo shit with the snout where it used the force to sense prey then made sushi out of them…He was pretty sure that was the general gist.

“Uh…sounds cool.” Shizuo finally said, gold eyes flicking over and glancing at the freaky sawfish. “I wouldn’t want to tangle with one in the water.”

Izaya giggled, dragging Shizuo’s attention back to him even as he turned to face the fish again. “Silly Shizu-chan. The only place around here that you’d find a pointed sawfish would be way off the southern coast of Japan. And I have no idea what you’d be doing out there.”

Shizuo watched Izaya look eagerly at the fish, noting the excited look in his eyes and the happiness that covered his face at seeing this example of freakiness in front of him. He recalled the nerdy lecture he’d just received and the condescending reprimand he’d just been given about the chances of him running into a pointed sawfish in the wild.

Super smart, attracted to weird things, high and mighty, independent, unique. That was Izaya.

Shizuo smiled at his date who was now completely caught up in counting the serrated blades jutting from the side of Chainsaw Face’s snout, a big grin on his face even as his red eyes narrowed in intense concentration.

Subtly, the blonde pulled his phone out of his pocket, aimed it at the raven, and took a quick picture.

He quickly hid it behind his hand as he checked the picture to make sure it had turned out well, smiling when he saw the adorable scene of Izaya checking out a freaky chainsaw-faced fish, his only care in the world being to count its teeth.

He was so going to make this his wallpaper.

“Oh, Shizu-chan!” Izaya suddenly jumped to his feet, grabbing Shizuo’s arm as he shot up and pulling the startled blonde up with him. Izaya started yanking Shizuo off in another direction, much as he’d been doing throughout the whole date, determination shining through his face as he marched. Shizuo rolled his eyes but smiled nonetheless as he slipped his phone back into his pocket and moved his arm through Izaya’s grasp to where he was lacing his fingers with Izaya’s and making them hold hands instead of him getting dragged along. Well, he was still being dragged along, but he didn’t mind that at all. He didn’t mind letting Izaya take the lead. The raven knew what he was doing and what he wanted. There was no way Shizuo would ever be able to tell Izaya what to do.

As long as he got to be with Izaya on this crazy whirlwind that was the raven’s life, Shizuo was the happiest person alive.

“We have to see the seahorses next, Shizu-chan!” Izaya told him, his tone leaving no room for discussion. “Seahorses are super weird!”

Shizuo raised an eyebrow, letting his thumb trail smoothly over Izaya’s knuckles as they walked together in the direction of the seahorse exhibit. “Seahorses are? I always thought they were kinda…I dunno, normal.” Shizuo shrugged, frowning a bit. “I mean, what could be so weird about seahorses? Everyone knows what they are.”

Izaya shot Shizuo a wide grin, swinging their arms between them as they walked. “Did you know that their eyes can move independently and that their snouts allow them to track prey and stalk their exact movements so they aren’t detected?” Izaya purred, smirking a little at Shizuo.

Shizuo hummed for a bit and then shook his head. “No.” He admitted. “But I don’t know a lot of things. There are probably some other, weirder looking fish who could do that too.”
“Do other, weirder looking fish have a ventral pouch that allows their males to give birth?” Izaya challenged, wiggling his eyebrows at Shizuo.

Shizuo balked at that, his eyes wide as he stared down in shock at Izaya. “What? No!” He argued, surprise clearly showing all over his face.

Izaya laughed, a wide grin plastered all over his face as he nodded at Shizuo. “It’s true!” He chirped. “Male seahorses can give birth to live young, just like females!”

He patted his belly as if to enunciate the weirdness of male pregnancy and then pulled Shizuo along, giving a little shout of joy as he hurried over to a tank full of seahorses.

Shizuo followed numbly along, trying to take in this new information that he never would have expected. When they reached the glass tank, Shizuo stared inside at all the little seahorses, noting all their vibrant colors and delicate frills as they floated around, totally happy in their fake habitat.

He wondered if any of them were pregnant.

Before he could ask Izaya about how someone could tell if a seahorse was pregnant (never a question he thought he’d be asking), the speakers placed above their heads all throughout the aquarium crackled to life and an announcement came on.

“The dolphin show is going to be starting in about five minutes.” The gentle voice called throughout the building. “Please make your way to the main amphitheater if you wish to see it.”

The announcement was repeated a few more times and then the speakers shut off, filling the air with the noise of people rushing around, the majority of them trying to head to the amphitheater to catch the dolphin show.

Shizuo glanced over at Izaya, noting the way he was pouting and staring longingly at the seahorses like he wanted to stay longer and look at them just a little bit more.

Shizuo’s head quickly scanned the area around them, golden eyes landing on the perfect solution in a small stall right next to the exhibit. He ran over and reached into his pocket, pulling some yen out and giving them to the man sitting in the stall, pointing to what he wanted and hoping Izaya wouldn’t notice him while he was doing it.

By the time Shizuo rushed back over, hiding his new purchase behind his back, Izaya had sighed and stood up from his position crouched by a…flock? Herd? School? Gaggle? Whatever. A group of smaller seahorses. He seemed to have resigned himself to sacrificing seahorses for the dolphin show.

Shizuo held out his hand and smiled at Izaya, making sure his other hand with the gift was safely out of view. Izaya smiled back and thanked Shizuo, grabbing his hand and starting to lead them both in the direction of the amphitheater. He knew where everything was, after all. It was best to leave that to him.

Shizuo just hoped he could hide his gift long enough for them to get seats and settle down while they waited for the show to start.

It took them maybe three minutes to reach the amphitheater, and then just 30 seconds to find some seats up near the top row. Not a lot of people seemed to like those ones, and Izaya eagerly snatched them up so he could survey the crowd as well as the show.

Once they were in their selected seats, with the countdown on the wall giving them about 45 more seconds till the show started, Shizuo turned and tapped Izaya’s shoulder.
Izaya looked over at him in surprise, his initial survey of the people below them interrupted. “Yes, Shizu-chan?” He asked, cocking his head. “What is it?”

“I know you wanted to keep looking at the seahorses so…” Shizuo began awkwardly, hoping his gift wasn’t stupid or anything. “I got one for you to keep looking at.” He brought his hand out from behind his back and handed Izaya the present from the stall.

It was a stuffed plush of a seahorse, an orange one, with little red stripes throughout it and big blue eyes on the sides of its head. It was really soft (which Shizuo knew well seeing as he’d been carrying it this whole time) and he knew it was mostly the kids that got them. But still…

Izaya’s eyes were wide as he stared at the plush, and he didn’t seem to know what to say. Did he hate it that much?!

Shizuo instantly pulled the plush back, feeling red-hot embarrassment coat his face instantly. “I-I know it was a stupid idea.” He stammered, wishing he hadn’t tried so hard and ended up making a fool out of himself. “Sorry to bother you. Um, I’ll go return it or something.”

“And dunk my head in a toilet, praying the universe swallows me up on the way back.” Shizuo added miserably in his head as he stood up, ready to give Izaya some alone time from his dumb-as-rocks date.

But small hands latched onto his wrist with surprising power, pulling him back down into his seat.

“No!” Izaya insisted, his red eyes locked with Shizuo’s as he held Shizuo’s arm tightly to his chest. “No, I really like it.” He slowly reached out and took the seahorse from Shizuo’s hands, holding it in his lap so he could look at it with a small smile, turning it over and examining all the colors. “The prehensile monkey-tail of a seahorse has several interesting qualities.” He said softly, poking at the curled up tail of the plush. “It’s comprised of thirty-six bony segments. Each segment has four L-shaped corner plates connected by small joints. When exposed to pressure, like when something tries to bite it, the joints allow the bone plates to glide and pivot freely over one another without being damaged.” Izaya ran a delicate finger over the swirls of the tail, elegantly tracing out its shape with a gentle look in his eyes. “The bones in the tail can be compressed by nearly 60 percent of their original width before permanent damage occurs to the spinal column.” He smiled and looked over at Shizuo, a happy look shining in his eyes. In fact, in the dim lighting of the amphitheater, Shizuo would almost venture to say that there were the start of tears in those ruby orbs.

“Thank you, Shizu-chan.” Izaya whispered, looking back down at the plush and hugging it tightly against his chest.

Shizuo felt his own chest surge with joy, and a goofy smile crossed his face as he looked at the happy Izaya, knowing that it was himself who had made the raven so happy. Shizuo turned to face the dolphin show below where the trainers were starting to come out amidst the applause of the audience, but he could barely hear anything for the happy daze his head was swirling around in.

Izaya scooted over subtly in the seat next to him, slowly letting his head lean onto Shizuo’s shoulder as he clutched the plush, red eyes also trained on the show as it started. Shizuo felt electricity shoot through his body at the physical contact, and he carefully wrapped an arm around Izaya’s shoulders, waiting for a bit to see if the raven was okay with that. He knew Izaya hated feeling girly and he wouldn’t want to demean the raven in any way. He was so strong and beautiful. Shizuo thought anyone who would try to ruin that would have to be related to the devil himself.

But while Izaya did tense up for a few seconds, he relaxed into Shizuo’s touch and stayed in his
position leaning on the blonde’s shoulder, holding the plush tightly and watching the show with a smile on his perfect face.

Shizuo felt his own goofy grin come back, and he glanced around real quick before slipping his phone out of his pocket again and taking a very quick selfie of himself and Izaya. “Hey!” Izaya whined, grabbing at the phone like he wanted to delete the photo, but a small smile still playing on his lips. “You better not plan on keeping that.”

“Oh, I plan on keeping it.” Shizuo assured him, looking through his gallery and spotting the picture almost instantly. The two of them, cuddled up together in the dark amphitheater, their faces barely illuminated by the blue glow of the show below them, Izaya holding his plush and Shizuo grinning like an idiot. Yeah, he was so keeping this.

“Look at us! We’re adorable.” Shizuo insisted, showing Izaya the picture. Izaya’s face turned red and he pushed the phone away, muttering something about stupid Neanderthals not knowing the difference between cute and embarrassing, but there was still a happy look in his eyes. Shizuo kissed the top of his head and shot back some retort about Izaya being the one who thought a chainsaw-faced fish was cute, but he couldn’t really care less about who won the argument as Izaya settled back down against him and both of them returned to watching the show.

They stayed like that for a while, just the two of them cuddling and reacting with the crowd as the dolphins performed below them, jumping and doing tricks and even dancing for a good long while. It was pretty entertaining, and Izaya’s little snarky remarks about people in the stands here and there made it even better.

In fact, everything was going perfectly. That is, until the end of the show when Izaya started shivering.

At first, Shizuo thought he was just cold. He began to rub his arm up and down Izaya’s body, trying to warm him up, but the shivering didn’t stop.

When Shizuo looked down at his date to see what was wrong, he was shocked to see his face. It was pasty pale, like the underbelly of a dead fish, and his lips were quivering and parted in horror. His red eyes were wide and an undeniable light of fear was filling them, not to mention with what seemed like a sheen of tears pooling at their base. His hands were shaking in midair, and his whole body was curling away from something like he’d just been struck.

“Izaya?” Shizuo asked in worry, grabbing the smaller boy’s shoulders and directing his gaze to look up at Shizuo. When Izaya’s eyes met Shizuo’s, they were glassy and unfocused, like they weren’t really seeing him at all. His vision was clouded over with fear. What? What had just happened?!

“Izaya, are you okay?” Shizuo asked in a low voice, hands tightening on Izaya’s shoulders as he wondered if he should get them out of the amphitheater now. Had something in the show scared him? That didn’t make any sense! As far as Shizuo could tell, nothing particularly scary had happened. There certainly wasn’t cause for claustrophobia this high up in the stands, and unless Izaya was suddenly afraid of heights, there wasn’t anything remotely terrifying about their current location.

Izaya didn’t even respond to him. His head just lolled to the side, red eyes locking on whatever it was that was freaking him out so badly.

Shizuo looked instantly over in that direction, ready to punch whatever it was, but he didn’t see anything suspicious. He just saw more people sitting in the stands. There was this one business-
looking guy who was really tall, so that was a little strange, but not terrifying. Next to the business-guy there was a teenage boy, about their age. He looked familiar but Shizuo wasn’t quite sure how. He had piercing electric blue eyes that were…that were…that were locked on Izaya.

Slowly, Shizuo turned his head to look back down at the shaking boy in his arms, heart pounding wildly in his chest. It couldn’t be. It just couldn’t.

But Izaya was staring at the boy like he was an apparition from his past. “I-I-It’s him.” The raven rasped, his voice barely breaking into the spectrum of a whisper. His entire frame trembled in fear as he leaned away from the boy, looking like he wanted to disappear. “It’s…Hajime.”

Hajime.

Shizuo was about to ask who the hell that was (just so he could yell an appropriate insult before he punched the guy into oblivion), but a smooth voice cut him off, making him jump in shock.

“Long time no see, Iza-chan.” The voice drawled, and a single finger traced Izaya’s cheek in an almost loving manner. Except it wasn’t loving. It was mocking.

Shizuo glared murderously at the boy who’d just appeared out of nowhere. Shizuo hadn’t even seen him move…what was the deal with that?

The boy looked down at him with a bored look, something almost disdainful crossing his face before he turned his head and smiled at Izaya. “You’re looking well.” He commented, leaning down until he was right in Izaya’s face.

Izaya flinched away, trembling so hard that Shizuo was almost worried his tiny body would break.

Shizuo snarled and shoved the guy away from Izaya, protectively shielding the raven’s body with his own. The other boy took barely half a step back, hardly even affected by Shizuo’s rough shove as he shot an annoyed glare down at Shizuo. He was resistant to Shizuo’s strength. Who was this guy?

“Who the hell are you?” Shizuo demanded, holding Izaya even tighter as a growl escaped from low in the back of his throat. “What do you want?”

The guy laughed, a horrible mocking sound that seemed to embody all your worst thoughts about yourself into one crushing blow, directing it right into your brain. He grinned down at Shizuo, and the only words that Shizuo could think of to describe his face in that moment were “wolfish”, “smug”, and “evil”.

“Why, I’m Iza-chan’s ex-boyfriend.” The bastard purred, stroking a hand over Izaya’s knee. He directed his electric blue gaze right at Izaya, dragging out a frightened whimper from the raven with just a look, and that made Shizuo boil over with so much rage that he almost missed the next thing the asshole said.

“And I want to take back what’s mine.”

Chapter End Notes

Yeah...THINGS ARE HAPPENING! Like I’ve been saying, that last chapter was the last one of full fluff. Everything in this chapter and on has...well, things other than fluff. Will Shizuo beat the crud out of Hajime, or will it be harder than he thought? Will the
truth about Izaya's trauma surrounding Hajime be revealed? Will Izaya stand up to this jerk who ruined his date? What will happen next?! Find out on Wednesday! See you then! <3
The Wolf and the Cat

Chapter Notes

Okay...this chapter is one of the big ones. One of the REALLY big ones. This is the long-unspoken story about Izaya and Hajime's past. Get ready for a flashback, people! We're going to see the end of Izaya and Hajime's relationship, the circumstances under which they broke up, and the reason Izaya is so terrified of seeing Hajime again. And I apologize: there is no fluff to make it better. I REPEAT: THERE IS NO FLUFF IN THIS CHAPTER TO MAKE IT BETTER.

Right...now that we have that disclaimer out of the way, here's the thing many of you have been dreading! Let's hit Izaya's past! And yes, it's a very long story.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

This is a brief warning for this chapter not included in the notes: about halfway into the chapter, there are elements of non-con in play. Elements only, but non-con reminiscent scenarios still present. Skip that part if you don't wish to read it.

“Haji-chan! Haji-chan! Let's look at this one.” Izaya beamed happily at his boyfriend, bending down so he could peer at the turtle waddling over the ground.

“Iza-chan, why do you always choose the oddest things to look at?” Hajime asked, shaking his head, but a fond smile on his face tarnished the message his words sent as he crouched down beside the smaller boy.

Izaya laughed, kissing Hajime on the cheek affectionately before grinning at the neon-striped turtle again. “But you love me for it!” He sang, and Hajime laughed, wrapping an arm around Izaya’s shoulders.

He didn’t actually respond to the statement.

Izaya hummed happily, placing a hand on the glass separating himself from the turtle, watching its slow procession across the zoo habitat with glittering eyes.

“It’s a painted turtle. The most widespread native turtle of North America.” He told Hajime happily, and the blue-eyed boy sighed deeply, frowning at the raven next to him.

“Izaya.” He said softly, placing a gentle hand over the smaller boy’s mouth. “You know how I feel about your random, useless fact lectures.”

Izaya’s cheeks blushed red and he ducked, biting his lip in shame as he stared at his hands. “Sorry.” He whispered, the words barely making it past the boundary of Hajime’s hand.

Hajime smiled and moved his hand from Izaya’s mouth to his chin, tilting the smaller boy’s head to face him as he leaned in to press a slow kiss to his lips.

Izaya obliged, like he always did, letting Hajime take whatever he wanted from his pink lips for as long as he wanted, allowing the larger boy’s tongue to slide into his mouth, pinning his own tongue to the base of his mouth obediently.
Hajime kissed Izaya for several seconds, waiting until Izaya pressed back into the kiss, eyes fluttering closed, before pulling away himself and wiping his mouth, standing up to his full height.

Izaya stumbled where he was still crouched at Hajime’s feet, thrown off balance now that the support he’d just started leaning into was suddenly gone. Hajime watched him in amusement as the raven fell over, eyes glazed over and stuck in a confused daze as he looked around, trying to figure out what had just happened. Hajime lifted a foot and pinned Izaya’s leg gently against the ground, making the raven’s head snap up to look at him, confusion still splayed over his delicate features.

“I forgive you.” Hajime said gently, pressing his foot slightly into Izaya’s leg. He didn’t press hard, not hard at all for him, but Izaya winced nonetheless, and Hajime knew a bruise would form on his pale leg later. It had nothing to do with Izaya’s body bruising easily: it was more to be attributed to Hajime’s inhumane strength. He had enough power in his body to smash a steel box under his foot like paper mache…a little press was more than enough to remind Izaya who was in control.

“Just don’t do it again.” Hajime finished smoothly, removing his foot from Izaya’s leg and reaching a hand down to his boyfriend with a smile, kindness radiating from the action despite what he’d just done.

And despite what he’d just done, Izaya’s lovely face still broke into a happy smile at the show of kindness, and he gladly took Hajime’s hand, looping his arms around Hajime’s arm and nuzzling into his side once he was back on his feet.

He knew Hajime liked it when he did that. And what Hajime liked, Hajime got.

The two of them left the reptilian area of the zoo, and Izaya knew perfectly well why. It was a subtle reminder to him not to spew any more useless facts. If he knew a ton of facts about reptiles, then not seeing any more of them would be the perfect way to prevent him from spewing off things that didn’t need to be said. Of course, he also knew a ton about many other species of animals, but the initial punishment of not being able to see any more reptiles for the rest of the trip was still a big enough reminder to keep his lips zipped shut.

Izaya knew he deserved this, but his heart still sank in his chest. The only reason he’d asked Hajime to take him to the zoo was because he wanted to see one of the new snake exhibits that had just opened. Hajime knew that, too…but it looked like they weren’t going to see any more reptiles on this trip despite that.

Stupid. Why couldn’t he have kept his mouth shut?

Izaya nuzzled into Hajime’s arm, mentally berating himself for being such a loudmouth, a frown coming over his face as he thought about what a stupid mistake he’d just made. As Izaya and Hajime walked through the zoo to wherever Hajime wanted to go next, Izaya wished his boyfriend would return his affections to make him feel just a little better. He didn’t want a lot, since he knew he’d just messed up, but a hug would be nice. Or holding his hand. Or a kiss on the forehead. Something…

Hajime walked with Izaya nuzzling into his arm, knowing perfectly well that the raven was silently wishing for his attention. He could always tell when Izaya wanted something and wouldn’t say it. In some cases, he was too prideful to ask. In others, like this one, he was too ashamed.

Hajime felt a smirk creep over his lips and a self-righteous feeling pass through his chest. Izaya thought he was in the wrong, and thus he couldn’t bring himself to ask for anything because he didn’t think he deserved it. Hajime had trained him that way over the eleven months they’d been together. Whenever Izaya did something Hajime didn’t approve of, Hajime made sure Izaya knew that he was wrong, and consistently reminded him through rejection, scorn, and the ever-effective the
cold shoulder just how bad that was. And over those eleven months, Hajime had whittled the raven’s self-confidence down to a nice little shape of submission, where anything Hajime didn’t want was wrong, and anything Izaya wanted came second.

He supposed that if Izaya knew this well enough, then that was reason to reward him.

Hajime turned and pressed a sweet kiss to the top of Izaya’s head, making sure there was just enough sweetness in the gesture to show that he “cared”, but not enough sweetness that would make Izaya forget what he’d done wrong. It was all a very carefully planned thing. Hajime was an expert at it now, though.

Izaya felt happiness surge throughout his body when he felt Hajime’s lips on his head. Hajime loved him. Even though he made mistakes all the time, Hajime still loved him.

Izaya sighed and leaned against Hajime with a smile, resolving not to mess up again on this trip. Everything would go the way Haji-chan wanted. Haji-chan was always right.

“Izaya,” Izaya purred, hugging Hajime’s arm tightly. “I love you.”

Hajime seemed to pause when Izaya said that, the two of them coming to a stop in the middle of the zoo.

Izaya blinked, unsure of what had just happened.

Hajime wasn’t moving. He was simply standing in place, with Izaya hanging off his arm, the sounds of the zoo ringing all around them. People rushed by, laughing and talking and ready to head off to the next exhibits, all absorbed in their own little worlds. Izaya’s red eyes locked on a few of the kids walking by, and he briefly eyed the plushes they were holding to their chests of various animals with envy. They looked so soft and cuddly and anatomically accurate. He wanted one…

But that didn’t matter right now. What was wrong with Hajime?

Izaya pulled back from Hajime’s arm so he could walk around in front of his boyfriend and look at his face. “Haji-chan?” Izaya asked softly, placing his hands on Hajime’s cheeks and gently tilting his head down so those beautiful electric blue eyes could meet his own boring red ones. Blue and red. Roses are red and violets are blue. That was the first kind of poem Hajime had written for him, in honor of their eyes. Thinking about that poem, another sweet gesture from his wonderful boyfriend, made Izaya’s lips quirk into a gentle smile as he looked at Hajime.

“Izaya,” He repeated, cocking his head to the side. “Is something wrong, baby?”

Hajime was just looking at Izaya, with an unreadable expression on his face. Slowly but surely, however, a grin began to spread across his handsome features.

“Sorry, Iza-chan.” He practically purred, grabbing Izaya’s hands and holding them in his own. “But could you repeat what you just said?”

“Izaya,” Izaya asked in confusion, cocking his head to the side.

Hajime sighed in frustration, rolling his eyes at Izaya. “No, not that. What you said beforehand, obviously.” He muttered, glaring at Izaya, who ducked his head in guilt.

“Oh, S-Sorry.” He muttered, wishing he wasn’t such a bad boyfriend. Izaya cleared his throat and looked back up at Hajime. “I said I love you.” He said honestly, smiling happily at his boyfriend.
A dark light seemed to enter Hajime’s eyes as he nodded. “That’s what I thought you said.” He murmured lowly, trailing a finger over Izaya’s cheekbone. “Just wanted to make sure.”

Izaya was confused by his boyfriend’s behavior. He’d never acted so…what was the word…untrustworthy. Yes, the word was untrustworthy. Hajime looked downright shifty right now, with that grin on his face and that evil look in his eyes. It was like he was planning something, or thinking about some horrible secret.

“Haji-chan?” Izaya asked slowly, wondering if he’d said something wrong.

“You should stay at my house tonight, Iza-chan.” Hajime announced, smiling kindly at his boyfriend.


Hajime held Izaya’s hands to his mouth, brushing a kiss over the back of his knuckles. “There are some…things I want to do tonight.” He said carefully, a dark undertone to the words that Izaya dismissed. It couldn’t mean anything. Not with those kind eyes and that loving smile directed right at him. No one had ever looked at him like that, but Hajime did. Hajime couldn’t be planning anything ulterior. He just couldn’t.

“What kind of things?” Izaya asked, relaxing into Hajime’s touch and leaning his head against his boyfriend’s chest with a happy sigh.

Hajime’s fingers combed through his inky black hair, raking the top of his scalp gently and affectionately. “Just a few important things that I want to do to y-er, with you…before tomorrow.” He said smoothly, petting Izaya’s head. “Nothing important. Just something I’ve been meaning to do for a while.”

Something about Hajime’s wording was throwing Izaya off. “What do you mean by “before tomorrow”?” The raven asked, pulling back a bit to look up at his boyfriend’s face. “What happens tomorrow?”

Hajime smiled, bending down to press a kiss to Izaya’s lips again.

The kiss lasted for a few seconds, just a few seconds of total confusion, before Hajime pulled back with a glint in his blue eyes. “Don’t worry about it, Iza-chan.” He purred, stroking Izaya’s face lovingly. “You’re my little darling, right? You don’t have to worry about anything if I tell you not to.”

Izaya nodded slowly, leaning back against Hajime’s chest. “Right…” He said softly, closing his red eyes. “I…I won’t worry.”

“Good.” Hajime said, kissing the top of Izaya’s head. “Just depend on me, yeah?”

Izaya nodded, eyes still closed as he listened to the sound of Hajime’s heartbeat.

Was it a lying heartbeat? Was the pounding trying to warn him about Hajime’s words? Or was it just Izaya being paranoid? And if it wasn’t…would Izaya even be able to hear the lies in Hajime’s heart past the honey in his words?

A sudden thought occurred to Izaya, and he pulled back instantly, looking up at Hajime in fear. “But what about the girls?” He asked worriedly, noticing a slight bit of strain entering Hajime’s smile but brushing it off immediately.
No ulterior motives. He trusted Hajime.

“I can’t leave my girls alone for a night.” Izaya insisted, looking right up at his boyfriend. “And I
don’t have any plans for them to stay somewhere else. I can’t just leave them at the daycare. What
am I supposed to do about my girls?”

“Don’t. Worry.” Hajime ordered, a smile still on his lips, but a tone of harshness undeniably present.
“I’ll call my father and he’ll arrange something for them.”

Izaya bit his lip, looking down at his feet and shifting nervously from foot to foot. “But…But I can’t
just leave them alone.” Izaya said weakly, squeezing his eyes shut and shaking his head. “That’s
what they do. I can’t do that to my girls.”

Hajime rolled his eyes and did his best to restrain the annoyed groan that was so desperate to come
out of his mouth. Again with the parents! What was such a big deal about having neglectful parents?
Oh, I was all alone as a child. Oh, my parents left me all the time. Oh, I’ve never felt loved before.
Poor, poor me. And how could I possibly do the same to my darling sisters who I talk about way too
much?

Sometimes Izaya was just…too needy. It was weird. One second, he was too freaking independent,
expecting to be held in the same level of equality as Hajime, and the next, he was needier than a
baby bird, wanting support for his abusive past and heavy responsibilities. Thank goodness he was
pretty. At least that was one redeeming quality.

“My father will take care of it.” Hajime repeated, trying his very best not to break the caring image
he’d been portraying for eleven months straight. Not now. Not when he was so close to the finish
line. “You can call them later tonight if you want. How does that sound?”

“It better sound fine.” Hajime thought in his head. “It’s all you’re getting.”

He waited for a few agonizingly slow seconds before Izaya nodded, leaning back into Hajime’s
chest with a little sigh. “Okay. Okay, I trust you, Haji-chan.” He said sweetly, closing his eyes and
hugging Hajime tightly.

Hajime felt a grin spread over his face even as he hugged Izaya closer to himself. “I know, Iza-
chan.” He purred. “And that is a very bad decision.”

***

Staying the night. Izaya had stayed the night with Hajime before, of course, but somehow it seemed
different this time.

Before, Izaya had always been allowed to take his own possessions over. Like his own pajamas and
his own toothbrush and all those sorts of things. But this time, Hajime told him to just come in his
regular clothes, and not bring anything else. He wasn’t even allowed to go home beforehand just in
case he wanted to grab an extra jacket or some books for homework. Hajime just brought Izaya
straight over and didn’t let him stop anywhere else.

That in itself was already strange enough.

And then there was the peculiar fact that Hajime’s parents were gone.

Izaya had only personally met the Shishizaki parents one time, at dinner, and they had seemed nice
each. A little business-like perhaps, but still much nicer than his own parents. They’d told Izaya
that they were almost always home at the end of the day, even if it was very late when they returned,
and that they rarely took on foreign excursions that would lead them away from home. So when Hajime told Izaya that his parents wouldn’t be home this evening, on the one evening that it seemed Hajime was starting to change up the rules, it made Izaya a little nervous.

And of course there was that new glint in Hajime’s eyes.

Those electric blue eyes which always held such lofty promises of comfort and concern were now tinged with something darker that Izaya couldn’t place. Maybe he just didn’t want to place it. Maybe he knew exactly what it was and he was just ignoring it. Either way, he didn’t want to think too hard on what this new glint could mean about Hajime, and so he didn’t.

There were several signs that things were about to go wrong, but Izaya ignored them all. Hajime loved him. Hajime would never hurt him in any way.

When it was late in the evening and time to head to bed, Hajime insisted that Izaya sleep with him in his room. Izaya had never been into Hajime’s room before. It was sort of like how the pet wasn’t ever allowed in the owner’s bedroom, even to sleep. Izaya had never been allowed into Hajime’s room, and Hajime always said it was because he just didn’t want Izaya rummaging around in his personal things. That was probably a well-founded suspicion, Izaya realized, upon entering the room. He could glance at the mirror and immediately tell that it was also a cabinet, and that something had to be behind it. He wanted to look, but a single harsh glare from Hajime stopped him in his tracks.

There were also two closets within the large room, and one of them even had a “PRIVATE” sign on it. Izaya desperately wanted to see what could be so private, but again he was banned.

All he could do, it seemed, was wander around the room in the pajamas that Hajime had given him without touching anything and hope that he didn’t go somewhere he wasn’t supposed to. Izaya was fairly certain that he’d be nervous with entering other people’s rooms and walking around in them from that moment forward.

The raven watched as Hajime set up the bed (he had an actual bed, not just a futon), fluffing some pillows and arranging the blankets in a manner that he liked, eventually judging everything to be satisfactory and gesturing Izaya over.

Izaya was almost scared as he climbed into the bed, pushing on it gingerly and looking up at Hajime for approval before slowly getting in, slipping under the covers and trying his best not to move as Hajime examined the new set-up of the bed with Izaya in it. Izaya was worried that he was laying wrong. Or maybe he’d climbed in too slowly or too quickly. Perhaps he’d wrinkled the covers in a bad way, or he was laying on Hajime’s side of the bed. There were a thousand things that he could be doing wrong, just by getting into the bed, and Izaya was almost hyperventilating as Hajime’s calculating blue eyes looked everything over, judging what was right and what was wrong.

Eventually, the larger boy smiled gently at Izaya and pressed a kiss to his forehead, climbing into the bed next to him. Izaya relaxed a little after that, and even rolled over on his side to get more comfortable.

He got cold very easily and so it was a habit of his to bundle himself up in blankets whenever he slept, to compensate for the body heat he lacked. Stealing blankets was apparently not something Hajime approved of in a sleeping partner, however.

The instant Izaya was settled down, all wrapped in wonderful warmth, that warmth was yanked harshly away from him, sending cold night air crashing down on his body in an unpleasant jolt. Izaya yelped and sat up in the bed, clutching his arms for warmth and looking over at Hajime.

Hajime was glaring at Izaya, and it was that special glare of his. The one that compounded
everything Izaya could have ever imagined was wrong with him, and sent it crashing back into his
eyes, revealing him for what a screw-up of a human being he was. Izaya bit his lip and averted his
eyes, already feeling guilty for having made another mistake. Stealing the blankets. They were
Hajime’s blankets, after all. What was he thinking? What right did he have to warm himself up with
them?

Izaya settled back down on the bed without a word, welcoming the cold chill that enveloped him and
sank into his bones. It was winter, after all. The biting freeze of the air was even worse than usual,
but it served well as a punishment. Stupid, stupid Izaya. He’d made another mistake.

But he could feel the blanket being settled gently over his lower body, and a warm hand rubbing
smoothly around his back, soothing him to sleep. Izaya felt his whole form relax, and a soft smile
slipped onto his face as his eyes fluttered closed. Hajime was such a good person. He accepted Izaya
even despite all the horrible flaws that he saw in the raven. Here he was, comforting him, even after
he’d made a mistake.

Izaya didn’t deserve Hajime. He was such an honest, forgiving, caring person.

“Izaya…” Hajime whispered in the middle of the dark room, sending warm breath over Izaya’s ear.
“Yes?” Izaya whispered back, all attention immediately turned on the boy behind him.

He could practically feel Hajime smiling by his ear as the larger boy asked, “Do you love me?”

And Izaya responded without hesitation, “Yes. Yes, I love you Hajime.”

The smile seemed to widen and Hajime pressed a kiss to Izaya’s ear. “That’s good.” He purred, hand
still rubbing warmth into Izaya’s cold body. “That’s very good.”

Izaya was confused by the wording his boyfriend had chosen there. Why wasn’t he saying that he
loved Izaya back? He’d said it before, that he loved Izaya. It was part of what had gotten Izaya to
trust him so easily. Why wasn’t he saying it now? Now that Izaya also loved him? Now that they
loved each other? Shouldn’t this make him happy? Instead of…smug?

Izaya shook his head, trying to steady his breathing and focusing on going back to sleep. He was just
begin paranoid. He knew Hajime loved him. Hajime probably just assumed that it was already
known and so he didn’t need to say it again. He was just being paranoid.

Hajime loved him…he was the only one who did…he was the only one who ever would…the only
one…the only…

Izaya felt his eyelids drag closed as sleep overtook him, the warmth of the blanket and of Hajime’s
soothing hand quickly spurring him into oblivion. He let out a contented sigh, leaning deeper into the
pillow and letting Hajime’s scent surround him. It was something woody with a hint of cologne, the
scent of youth mixed with an undeniable measure of business. It defined Hajime perfectly. His
perfect Hajime…

Izaya sighed one more time, relaxing into his boyfriend’s touch, and let his mind drift off entirely into
sleep.

Except it never made it there.

After a few minutes, Izaya could feel Hajime’s hand moving. It kept rubbing circles, like it had been
doing before, but this time it was rubbing lower. It was sliding down Izaya’s back, and down to his
butt.
Izaya tensed up, a feeling of alertness starting to seep slowly back into his tired bones. What was Hajime doing? They’d agree long ago that he wouldn’t touch Izaya there because it made him too uncomfortable. Maybe it was an accident. Yes, that was it. It was just an accident and soon Hajime would realize what he was doing and stop.

But he didn’t stop.

Hajime hummed low in his chest, a deep and guttural sound with an undeniable tone of satisfaction, rubbing his hand smoothly over Izaya’s butt while his other hand slipped around to the front of Izaya’s body and pressed against his pale stomach. Izaya jumped a little, feeling the beginnings of fear start to curl up inside of him. What was going on?

Hajime hummed again, and his hand started to slip back up Izaya’s body, away from Izaya’s butt. Izaya relaxed at this, thinking that Hajime had finally realized what he was doing. Hajime’s hand brushed up against the loose edge of the silky pajama top he’d given Izaya to wear, pushing it up a bit to reveal Izaya’s back.

Izaya shivered as the cold hit his bare skin, wondering what Hajime was doing.

Hajime seemed to purr as he stroked the smooth skin of Izaya’s back, trailing small, lazy patterns over it with his fingers. He trailed his fingers down, down, down, ever so slowly, back to the lip of the pajama bottoms he’d given Izaya. They weren’t really all that good as far as pajama bottoms went, and they were really just very silky and very short shorts, barely reaching three inches down his thighs and hugging tightly around his curves. Izaya felt too revealed in them but it was all he had had to wear, so he’d donned them. Now, Izaya was beginning to feel a bit more nervous about the silky, revealing clothes he’d been put in, and a keen memory of something he’d read flashed into his mind.

In some Aztec tribes, when they performed virgin sacrifices to the gods, they donned the virgins in the finest silks of the land, a material that was thought of as beautiful but was also delicate and easily destroyed. It helped to symbolize the virgins themselves.

That was what Izaya felt like right now. Some kind of virgin sacrifice, donned in silk, about to be ripped apart and destroyed.

Izaya firmly shook his head, struggling to keep his breathing under control and slip back into sleep. He was overreacting. That was all. Hajime just didn’t have anything else that could possibly fit him. That was…it…

Izaya froze as Hajime’s lazy fingers hooked around the edge of the silk shorts, another low hum escaping the boy as he slowly started to pull them down, and the underwear that was underneath with them.

“H-Hajime?” Izaya croaked out, feeling panic surge up in his chest as he started to wiggle slightly away from his boyfriend. “W-What are you doing?”

Hajime didn’t respond to him, not in words anyway. He just gave another hum and kept sliding the clothing down Izaya’s body, baring it to his eyesight without a thought for Izaya’s privacy.

Izaya could practically feel those electric blue eyes raking over him, judging him, taking in every aspect of his milky skin as it was illuminated by the dim glow of the moon outside, and he started to struggle a little more, wanting to get out of Hajime’s grip.

But it was a foolish endeavor and as Izaya pulled on Hajime’s hands, thrashing his body around and
trying to get out of the grip of Hajime’s hand against his stomach, which pressed him into the hand that was now reaching up to cup Izaya’s bare ass, Izaya was beginning to realize just what sort of situation he was in.

Hajime was a formidable person, well respected around their school community. It wasn’t just because of his imposing looks and shrewd intelligence, but also due to his physical abilities. They’d met initially because Izaya and Shizuo had been fighting, running throughout the school like usual, and Hajime had decided to stop the fight. He’d jumped in front of Shizuo and restrained him, halting the beast completely in his tracks by grabbing his wrists and holding him in place, and no matter how much Shizuo had struggled and snarled, he couldn’t break free of the equally strong grasp. Izaya hadn’t been able to move, so shocked he was at seeing Shizuo find someone of equal strength to him, and when Hajime turned to look at him, he’d bolted. Now, even if Hajime was as strong as Shizuo, there was no way he could catch Izaya. No one in the school could do that…except Hajime could. He’d easily caught up to Izaya, grabbing him by the back of his shirt and lifting him into the air as easily as he might lift a kitten. Izaya’s initial reaction, now knowing that this boy was as strong or stronger than Shizuo and as fast or faster than him, had been to fight dirty. He’d pulled out a knife and was fully ready to jam it into Hajime’s chest, but the kind look in his eyes had stopped him. A kind, loving look that had never been directed at him before. He’d been frozen in place, made more powerless by that look than by physical disadvantage.

That had been their first meeting. It had also been the day when Izaya had gotten his first boyfriend. But as wonderful as all that was, it was a stark reminder to the reality of what Izaya was now facing. He couldn’t break out of Hajime’s grasp. Hajime was way too strong for him to fight, especially in these close quarters, especially without any sort of weapon at all. He didn’t have anything of his here to fight with! And even if he did manage to break free, Hajime could chase him down and catch him again. Izaya…was completely helpless.

It was the fear shooting through Izaya with that realization that froze him, that numbed his whole being as Hajime caressed his body, humming and purring in satisfaction as he slipped the hand on his stomach under his shirt instead, brushing it over his skin to play with his nipples next. Izaya was completely helpless, unable to do anything as Hajime’s hands roamed his body, one of them kneading his ass, pinching it hard in some places and leaving deep bruises that wouldn’t fade away for a while, and the other flicking at his nipples until they stung, then twisting them so harshly that a cry came out of Izaya’s mouth despite the numbness still overtaking his mind.

Hajime chuckled at the yelp, seemingly encouraged by it as he twisted even harder, biting Izaya’s hair and pulling viciously on it with his teeth, digging his nails into Izaya’s ass, all at the same time. Izaya yelped again in pain, feeling a few tears jerk unbidden into his eyes as his hair was yanked, his body being pulled in two directions by a force far stronger than his own.

Hajime really seemed to love his yelps, and he trailed his mouth away from Izaya’s mouth despite the numbness still overtaking his mind. Hajime chuckled at the yelp, seemingly encouraged by it as he twisted even harder, biting Izaya’s hair and pulling viciously on it with his teeth, digging his nails into Izaya’s ass, all at the same time. Izaya yelped again in pain, feeling a few tears jerk unbidden into his eyes as his hair was yanked, his body being pulled in two directions by a force far stronger than his own.

Hajime really seemed to love his yelps, and he trailed his mouth away from Izaya’s hair to a tender point on his neck, biting harshly into it like he was trying to eat him. Izaya bit back a shout of pain as the teeth tore into his skin, squeezing his eyes shut and making his mind up not to scream even as he felt blood start to trickle from his neck, and felt Hajime’s fingers dig even deeper into the flesh of his ass, drawing blood from there as well. His nipples were abused horribly by Hajime’s other hands, being twisted first this way then that, almost to the point where Izaya was sure Hajime’s goal was to tear his nipples clean off. Izaya begged inwardly for the pain to stop, for him to wake up from this thing that must surely be a dream, but the pain just kept coming.

He refused to let tears fall, closing them off with the same determination with which he was now trying to escape Hajime’s grasp, the logic of knowing he could never escape being overridden by the
panic of knowing what Hajime was about to do.

Hajime hissed a little as Izaya tried to escape, and with a harsh tearing sound, he ripped his teeth away from Izaya’s neck…taking a chunk of Izaya’s skin with him.

Izaya screamed at the pain that blossomed in his neck, feeling blood flow down his skin as red-hot pokers of pain stabbed at every vessel along it. Hajime laughed at Izaya’s misery, and Izaya could now feel something hard poking against the entrance to his anus.

His mind seemed to empty out with terror, being replaced only by a single thought: “I can’t let him rape me.”

Even in his state of panic, Izaya’s mind came through for him, and a desperate plan formed in his brain through all the pain and the terror of the moment. It was all he had, his brain. His emotions were failing him right now. His emotions had led him into this mess. He couldn’t trust them any more than he could trust his heart…or Hajime.

But he could trust his brain.

Izaya waited as Hajime grunted and ground his hips against Izaya’s butt, the rough material of his pants grating on Izaya’s abused skin, creating even more raw pain as the bloody scrapes on his flesh were ripped further apart by the frantic motion of Hajime’s hips, sending more pain through Izaya’s body. Izaya closed his eyes, letting his mind take over as he waited for the right moment. He just waited. All he could do was wait.

The stinging on his ass increased, the burning of his bitten neck maintained, and a dizziness from blood loss arrived, all the while as the horrible aching from his nipples continued to ring out, Hajime’s hand still eagerly working at its attempts to tear them off his chest. Yet Izaya pushed it all aside, locking all the pain into the back of his mind for now, and focused only on his plan.

Waiting. Waiting.

Finally, the moment came.

Hajime was brought to full arousal by Izaya’s pain, and he tried to pull down his pants so he could accomplish what he’d been trying to start for a while now. Izaya waited motionlessly as Hajime struggled one-handed with the clothing, the raven’s heart pounding in his chest as he forced himself to find the most prime moment to strike.

Hajime found he couldn’t pull his pants down with only the hand he’d long since removed from Izaya’s ass in favor of grinding against it, and he growled with annoyance as he brought his other hand away from Izaya’s chest to help himself out, mind too dazed with lust to realize what he’d just done.

Izaya instantly leapt out of the bed, ignoring all the pain shooting over his body, and he yanked the silk shorts and his underwear harshly back over his stinging backside, racing out of the bedroom.

“Izaya!” He heard Hajime yell from behind him, but he slammed the door shut, barely taking the time to drag one of the tables in the hall in front of the door, just to hold him off a little bit longer should a chase ensue, before spinning on his heel and racing through the rest of the house.

He didn’t even bother putting on his shoes or grabbing the rest of the clothes he’d worn to the house before flinging open the door, welcoming the chill of winter as it washed over his exposed body, and fleeing out into the night.
One good thing about having not been allowed to take anything over to Hajime’s house was that he wasn’t leaving anything important behind.

Except his trust. And his emotions. And any feelings of safety he might have once had.

Izaya ran desperately through the freezing streets, perfectly aware of his name being shouted from behind him, feet pounding over cold pavement and skin kissed by stinging winter air, never slowing down even the slightest bit as he reached the train station. He dashed past the counter without ordering a ticket, and crammed himself onto the train just before it pulled out of the station, ignoring all the angry shouts of the train officials and the annoyed grunts of the late-night passengers as he pushed further into the back, managing to make his way into the very corner of the train before collapsing onto the seat.

There, he curled himself up into a small ball, his silk pajamas riding up on his skin and revealing the signs of abuse harshly illuminated by the fluorescent lights of the train overhead. Izaya could care less though as he tucked his head behind his arms and bit his lip to stop himself from crying. He wouldn’t cry over that beast. He wouldn’t. He would just sit here in his pajamas, praying no one molested him on the train, bleeding all over the seats and hoping no one noticed, until he got to the stop nearest to his neighborhood and headed home.

His girls. He wondered what Hajime’s father had done with his girls. More than likely, he’d just hired a babysitter and left them at home. That’s what he’d done the last time something like this had happened. Except…well nothing exactly like this had ever happened.

Izaya could only hope that if nothing else, Hajime’s father was going to remain the same, and he’d be arriving home to a house full of two little toddlers and one exhausted babysitter who were all very happy to see him.

As he curled up on the train, he heard a quiet gasp of horror from someone beside him, a woman, it sounded like, and he tried his best to ignore it.

It seemed the woman was right next to him, though, and it seemed like she’d seen the bruises and blood decorating his pale skin.

“Young man,” A soft voice asked, and a gentle hand landed on his shoulder. “Do you need help?”

Izaya flinched at the physical contact and shook his head, refusing to look up at the kind woman next to him. He couldn’t trust kindness anymore. Not anymore.

The woman retracted her hand in silence, and the two of them just sat there for a bit as the train rattled on.

“You know, my eldest son is always getting into fights.” The woman said calmly, and Izaya felt like if he looked up, he would be able to see the fond smile on her face that was in her voice. A mother who cared…that must be nice.

“Sorry.” Izaya muttered into his arms, voice muffled and distorted by the limbs blocking the sound.

The woman laughed kindly, and Izaya could feel his heart squeeze as he wished for a mother who would laugh like that.

“Don’t be sorry! He’s a very sweet boy. Very well behaved, and very good-mannered. He’s just got a temper problem and a few…well, a few special quirks that make it hard for him not to fight.” The woman explained slowly, a small sigh escaping her at the end. “Ah, but I love him. How can I not? He’s my baby.”
Izaya didn’t say anything in response. He couldn’t respond if he couldn’t relate.

The woman was silent for a little longer, and then Izaya could hear some rustling from beside him as she seemed to look through a bag at her side. “I always carry a lot of medicine around in case he gets into a scrape and I need to fix him up.” She said, and she let out a small sound of victory as she apparently found what she was looking for. “He says this spray works the best on sore skin, bruises, and scrapes without stinging, and that these bandages are always good to cover up larger wounds.” She said gently, and Izaya felt her slip a small bottle and box under his leg, into his little huddle on the bench.

Izaya stared down at the bottle and box, still not raising his head, and he could feel a few tears forming in his eyes at the wonderful act of the woman next to him.

“Thank you.” He managed to choke out past the tears constricting his throat, and the woman gave him a gentle pat on the back before the train conductor announced the Sunshine 60 stop and she gathered her things to go.

“Please be safe. I hope the rest of your night goes safely.” The woman said softly, letting her hand rest tenderly on Izaya’s shoulder for just a moment before she left with many of the other passengers, leaving the bottle and box with Izaya on the train.

Izaya kept his face down the entire time, even as he started crying tears of gratitude for the woman’s act of kindness, and it was only once the train was moving again that he uncurled from his position, wiped at his eyes and started to open the bottle, applying it to the various bruises and scrapes all over his body. She had been a kind woman, the kindest he’d ever met, even without looking up to see her face. And if he had looked up at her face, Izaya would have seen the face of Namiko Heiwajima, Shizuo’s mother, in their first true meeting over a year before they would meet again.

She would be no less kinder in over a year, and no less important to the raven, then she’d been that night on the train.

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The next day, Izaya felt like he’d made another mistake.

Perhaps he’d overreacted to what Hajime had been doing. Maybe Hajime had even been asleep or something. There was just no real way to tell. Not without going and talking to him face to face.

Izaya had managed to bandage up all his worst wounds, and coat every small scrape or scratch with the antiseptic spray from the kind woman on the train, and by the time he’d gotten home, he was almost feeling better despite having been traumatized barely thirty minutes before.

Thankfully, the girls were at home when he got there, being monitored by a babysitter as he’d expected, and all three of the house’s occupants were thrilled to see his arrival. The babysitter eagerly left the twins under his care, and Izaya tucked the girls into bed, playing his injuries off as the result of an epic brawl between gangs on the streets. Bedtime stories. Izaya was the best at them.

And the next day, being a Sunday, showed Izaya leaving the girls at a Sunday daycare event so he could go talk to Hajime about what had happened the night before.

Even though he’d panicked last night and sealed off his emotions, he was willing to give Hajime one more chance. One more chance to prove that there had actually been love present in their relationship. To prove that maybe this time, Hajime had been the one who’d made the mistake and
needed to apologize.

Izaya loved him, and he just needed to know now if Hajime loved him back.

So he took a train back to Hajime’s neighborhood and walked all the way back to the imposing household, ready to face his boyfriend again and fix the mess he’d found himself in.

Izaya knocked on the door, waiting for a bit, and was a little surprised when no one answered.

That was funny. Hajime never went anywhere on Sundays unless he and Izaya had planned a date.

Feeling a bit of anxiety begin to creep into his stomach, Izaya slowly opened the door to the house, becoming even more unsettled by the fact that it was unlocked.

He glanced around the house, wondering if he’d seen anybody right off the bat, but he saw no one.

Maybe…maybe Hajime was still asleep?

Izaya padded slowly through the household towards Hajime’s bedroom, never even noticing the new pair of shoes that had suddenly been added to the pile by the door. Red heels. And red wasn’t a color Hajime’s mother ever wore.

Izaya walked slowly through the house, unsure why dread was increasing within him the closer he got to Hajime’s bedroom. He could hear some sounds coming from the other side of the door, small creaking ones and maybe a muttering voice here and there. Was Hajime pacing the room or something?

Izaya gulped and placed his hand on the doorknob, staring at his white knuckles for a bit and wondering why he was shaking so badly. If he was about to fix everything and let them start over, then why did it feel like everything was about to end?

Izaya shook his head and pushed open the door to the room, opening his mouth to say something to Hajime.

Whatever he’d been about to say, it was snatched away into oblivion forever, and destroyed.

Everything he’d ever believed in about love was destroyed. About love and faith and forgiveness and honesty. It was all gone.

Just like the mind of the girl who was beneath Hajime right then was clearly gone, her eyes rolled back in pleasure as her mouth released moans and groans, entire being quivering with the force of the second being slamming into her. Slamming into her over and over, and releasing its own groans of pleasure as it screwed her beyond the point of enjoyment and into utter ecstasy.

Hajime was…he was screwing some other girl.

Izaya just stared at the scene, unable to look away or move, wishing, begging, praying to some nonexistent God that nothing in front of him was real. That he would blink his eyes and find his caring Hajime, his wonderful boyfriend, sitting there on the bed and waiting for him so they could talk things over. So they could make up and go back to being in love like they were before.

Except clearly…it had only been Izaya who was feeling love.

Izaya’s hand tightened on the doorknob, just enough to twist it accidentally to the side and let out a small squeaking sound. It could barely be heard in the room over the creaking of the bed and the
moaning of its naked occupants, and by all rights, nothing should have happened because of it.

But somehow, by some act of the devil (and perhaps this was enough evidence to prove the existence of the devil, if not God), Hajime’s head snapped up and over to his doorway, electric eyes landing right on Izaya.

Izaya stared right back into Hajime’s eyes, not saying a word.

He expected something. Shock. Embarrassment. Guilt. Panic. Regret. Anger. Just something that he could find in those electric blue orbs which he’d thought he’d known so well.

But Izaya didn’t see anything. It was like Hajime had expected him to show up. There wasn’t a flicker of surprise, not a moment of hesitation, he just kept screwing the girl beneath him, moaning and groaning and looking at Izaya with a perfectly calm face. As though nothing was happening.

As though it meant nothing that Izaya had caught him.

Izaya closed his fist entirely around the doorknob, his entire body shaking in things he never thought would be directed at Hajime. Disgust. Anger. Horror. Hatred.

It was funny how quickly love could convert itself into hate. Just a few seconds, and every positive emotion Izaya had ever felt had been dashed against his rock-hard heart and warped into something wretched.

He was leaving. He couldn’t stay here any longer.

Izaya spun around swiftly on his heel and left the room, not even saying a word as he strode to the front door of the house, ready to leave and never come back.

“İzaya!” Hajime’s voice called from behind him, just like it had last night. Izaya was suddenly very conscious of the gashes and bruises decorating his body. Put there by this…this…this monster.

Even Shizu-chan didn’t seem as monstrous now as Hajime did. How sad was that?

“İzaya, stop!” Hajime’s voice ordered even as Izaya flung open the front door and stormed out of the house, still not saying a word.

“İzaya!” Hajime’s voice yelled one last time, and Izaya spun around to glare fiercely at Hajime who was now standing in the doorway to his home, wearing pajama pants but nothing else.

“Oh how wonderful of you.” Izaya said sarcastically, crossing his arms and shooting Hajime an icy glare. “You had the decency to slip some pants on after sliding your dick out of her body and running after me.”

Hajime rolled his eyes, still not seeming the least bit surprised or frazzled by the situation as he crossed his own arms, sighing at Izaya. “Iza-chan, don’t be so dramatic.” He said tiredly, looking up at Izaya with that flat gaze. “It was just a quick screw.”

“Like last night was going to be, I suppose.” Izaya snapped, red eyes flashing dangerously. “Just a quick screw before you went and started sleeping around?”

Hajime laughed at that and shot Izaya a wolfish grin, one that pierced Izaya’s heart just to look at. This was Hajime? This was the boy he’d been dating for almost a year now?

“Oh please, Iza-chan. I’ve been sleeping around for a while now.” He said casually, as if Izaya had
just demanded to know why he wore mismatched socks.

Izaya froze, his eyes widening in shock as he took a shaky step backwards. “W-What?” He managed to croak out, hating himself for the way his voice sounded so weak and insecure. He supposed that was what he was now, though. Weak and insecure, and oh so vulnerable to whatever Hajime was going to say next.

Hajime had that same wolfish grin on his face as his eyes narrowed at Izaya, glinting evilly. “I’ve been screwing girls behind your back for at least nine months now.” He said easily. “Lord knows I needed to do it after spending so much time with you.”

Izaya ignored the dagger that was sent right into his heart with that comment, and swallowed back his hurt, glaring at his boyfriend. No. His ex-boyfriend.

“So sorry for not being adequate.” Izaya bit out, the words coming out as more of a hiss than actual human speech.

Hajime shrugged. “A prude like you can’t possibly be adequate for anyone. All anyone can see when they look at you is a hot body waiting to be fucked.” He explained simply, holding out a hand and gesturing Izaya towards him. “And now that you know the only thing you’re good for, why don’t you come back here and we can talk about the next phase for us.”

“There is no “next phase”, Hajime!” Izaya yelled, the hurt plainly evident in his voice despite his efforts to keep it hidden. “And there isn’t an “us” anymore, either! You and I are through! We aren’t dating anymore!”

Hajime laughed again, a cold cutting sound that went straight to Izaya’s deepest insecurities and ripped them open for the whole world to see. It made the raven want to curl in on himself and disappear. As it was, he flinched and took a step back, shaking a little at the harshness of the sound worming into his very being.

“Oh, I know we aren’t dating.” Hajime grinned again, waving a hand in the air like it was irrelevant. “I was going to break up with you after last night. I just wanted to screw you real quick and then dump you outside in the cold. No, we certainly aren’t dating.” He chuckled like the very idea of them staying together amused him, and he smirked coldly at Izaya, who tried his best not to show how much he was crumbling under the horrible words coming out of the mouth of the person he’d been in love with just last night.

Hajime gestured Izaya back over, a patronizing look on his face. “I was just thinking we ought to tie up the loose ends and go out with a bang.” He smiled at his little use of wordplay, but the very insinuation behind his words made Izaya feel sick to his stomach.

“Go fuck yourself.” The raven whispered, shaking his head violently as he took another step backwards, away from the boy in front of him. “And then go fuck some other foolish idiot who’s dumb enough to believe your lies!”

He spun around and started to walk off again, ignoring the swirling torrent of emotions crashing and fighting for space in his stomach, and praying that he would never have to see Hajime again.

“Don’t you dare take another step away from me, Izaya!” Hajime yelled after him, the voice harsh and commanding, causing Izaya to flinch briefly, but the raven straightened and kept walking, pointedly ignoring the command.

“If you do, you’ll be sorry!” He threatened, and Izaya simply raised a hand in the air to wave
goodbye without looking back. He was close to the end of the street now. He’d just take a simple turn, wait until he was out of Hajime’s sight, and then run at top speed for the train station. He’d just go straight home, and leave the girls at daycare for a while. They didn’t need to see him like this, and he needed some time alone.

“Those foolish idiots who are dumb enough to believe my lies?” Hajime called after him, and Izaya set his chin, ready to catch the inevitable insult about him being one of them, and just as ready to ignore it as the corner got closer and closer.

But he was dead wrong about who Hajime was going to mention next.

“If you turn that corner, they’re going to be your sisters!” Hajime yelled, and Izaya froze in place.

His heart pounded hard in his chest, trying frantically to beat itself right out of his body, almost like it wanted to run back to Hajime itself and kill him for even saying such a thing. His red eyes were wide and staring at the ground in front of him as every muscle in his body froze, unable to twitch even a centimeter as the words coursed through his mind. A threat that he couldn’t live with if it came to pass.

When Hajime saw that Izaya had frozen in place, a smug smirk slipped over his lips and he continued, making his voice carry all the way down the street to where his future fuck buddy stood, beautiful and sexy and covered in wounds that marked him as Hajime’s property.

“I’ll find your darling little angels.” He called, watching in glee as Izaya’s shoulders jumped at the comment. “I’ll beat them so badly that they won’t be able to even see where I’m taking them through their swollen eyes, and they’ll barely be able to breathe from their lungs that’ll be all tired from screaming for help.”

Hajime thought about what he would do once he had beaten and wrangled those little snot-nosed brats, and an evil grin replaced the smirk in an instant. “I’ll just drag them into some alley somewhere. A secluded, trashy one where no one around will care about what’s happening.” He decided casually, leaning against his doorway as his eyes eagerly watched the show of Izaya’s twitching figure at the end of the street, fear for his sisters no doubt grappling in his sexy body with the urge to walk away and preserve himself.

“In that alley, I’ll strip them naked. And then I’ll slap their bodies in all sorts of places until they’re reddened with the rushing blood in their bodies and bruising all over from the force of my hand.” He described, actually beginning to like the idea as it formed more clearly in his mind. “Once that’s over, and they’re crying and screaming for someone to save them, I’ll start fucking them. Maybe I’ll begin with the loud one. I’ll make her blow me so she can’t talk. Oh! I could do it so hard that she’ll never be able to talk again!”

Izaya’s fists had clenched at his sides and his entire body could be mistaken for being caught in a spasm now, violently trembling to the point of breaking. Perfect.

“I’ll switch to the quiet one once I’m done with the first brat, and screw that one in the face too just to be fair.” Hajime examined his nails, wondering how much of a fight two toddlers could possibly put up against someone like him.

None at all. That would be fun.

“And I’ll make sure to hit all of their openings and take every last version of their virginity from them. Strip their purity away forever and leave them trembling and crying in pain.” Hajime laughed and threw his arms out wide, a manic grin spread all over his face. “Hey, I might even call some
people over if I see them and ask if they want to join in! You never know what kinds lurk around in
the place I’ll take them to. And the more the merrier, right?”

Izaya was turning around now, standing in place with his head directed down at the earth, eyes
hidden from Hajime’s sight by raven black hair. A picture of submission. Good…

“You sisters are gonna entertain a whole alley of disgusting, perverted men. I bet the men will love
it. I might even get them to pay me for it and use your girls as temporary prostitutes.” Hajime
remarked, silently counting down to the moment when Izaya would start walking back over to him.
It was only a matter of time, after all.

“And once they’re all done, I’ll leave your girls bleeding and crying that that alley like the trash they
are, until poor Iza-nii finally finds them.” Hajime added, grinning as Izaya’s foot twitched.

Only a matter of time.

“I bet they’ll wonder why Iza-nii wasn’t there to protect them. They’ll be broken and scared for the
rest of their days, and they’ll never trust you again.” Hajime finished, settling back in satisfaction and
finishing his mental countdown.

3…

2…

1.

Izaya’s body began to move, slowly shuffling in Hajime’s direction without a word, his head still
facing down as he came back to where he belonged. Just like the good boy he was.

“Good boy, Iza-chan.” Hajime purred as Izaya got closer, holding out his hand with a smirk so the
raven could take it. “I knew you’d come around eventually.”

Izaya reached Hajime and lifted his hand into the air. Hajime waited for the delicate appendage to
make contact with his own hand, a feeling of victory spreading throughout his entire body. Any
second now, Izaya, and by extension his perfect ass, would be all hi-

A powerful jarring sensation struck an off-guard Hajime in the side of the face, slamming him into
the frame of his doorway with a horrendous thud, shooting pain all over his left side. What the hell?!

Izaya lowered his leg from the air, ferocity burning in his red gaze as he glared venom down at the
despicable creature in front of him. The one he’d just kicked in the face with a powerful leg, muscles
inside of it perfected by years of parkour and chases with Shizu-chan.

“How dare you threaten my baby sisters!” Izaya hissed, crouching down and curling his leg in
towards his chest, building up power for just a few seconds before spinning sharply around and
slamming his heel right into Hajime’s crotch, causing the larger, stronger, faster boy to howl loudly,
collapsing to the ground as he writhed in agony, handsome face contorted in pain.

He hoped that castrated him for life.

“No one threatens my sisters and gets away with it! AND NO ONE EVER WILL!” Izaya growled,
taking the opportunity of having Hajime on the ground, curled up in pain, to kick the sorry excuse
for a human being right in the stomach as hard as he could, knocking the wind out of him.

Hajime hacked and wheezed for breath, eyes narrowed in pure rage as he looked up at Izaya, a livid
scowl crossing his face even as it twisted in agony.

Izaya wished he could stay and beat Hajime up some more, but the larger boy would soon recover from Izaya’s attacks now that he wasn’t caught off-guard, and then Izaya would have no hope of either fighting or escaping him.

He spun quickly around on his heels, dashing off towards the train station as Hajime lay temporarily disabled on the ground like the cretin of hell he was.

As Izaya ran, he could think only of his sisters, crying and bleeding in an alley somewhere because of a vengeful beast coming to steal them in the middle of the night. If he had been protective of his babies before, he was a hundred times more so now. He was never going to let them go anywhere without his explicit permission and knowledge of their location, and he was never going to let Hajime back into his life again. Or, for that matter, any feelings into his heart that would cause a scenario like this.

Before Izaya rounded the corner, he could hear Hajime’s voice one last time. The last words he would hear from the boy for a good long while.

“If I ever see you again, Izaya, you better be terrified!” Hajime roared, rage filling his voice as he recovered from the surprise-beating he received from his ex-boyfriend. “Because I’m going to rape you! I’m going to rape you until your insides are torn and bleeding, and then I’ll snap your pretty little legs so you can’t ever walk again! And once I’m through with you, I’ll find your sisters and do exactly what I just told you about!”

Izaya kept running, trying not to let the words get to his head as he bolted for the train station, a vast range of emotions flying through him like a whirlwind.

“Do you hear me, Izaya Orihara?!” Hajime’s voice yelled. “You better be fucking terrified!”

Izaya closed his eyes as he ran, trying to block it out. Block it all out. Block Hajime out. Block the world out. Block himself out.

He was never going to open up ever again.

Chapter End Notes

.......I know.......this was horrible. There's really nothing else to say. Just...horrible. But now you know why Izaya's so scared, and why he's always acted the way he's acted. Which begs the question...what's going to happen now that he and Hajime have met again? (｀０Д０) !!!!

Well, I guess you'll have to find out on Sunday! <3

Please don't hate me.
Leaving the Wolf and Joining the Dogs

Chapter Notes

Alright! Here is your next chapter, throwing us right back into the present with Hajime, Izaya, and Shizuo! And as I've promised many of you, this one contains fluff. Yes, we have moved back into the fluff and comedy which builds this fic in most cases! But be forewarned: there's more angst and feelings coming soon after this. My apologies...

<(_ _)>

Oh! And the Valentine's Day one-shot will be posted on - who woulda guessed it - Valentine's Day! I don't know if the one-shot will be replacing my usual Wednesday update, or if I'll post both at once. We'll just have to wait and see. In any case! I hope you like the chapter! Please enjoy! <3

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Shizuo glared at the Hajime guy, wondering what kind of deal he'd made with the devil to grow balls so big.

“What the hell do you mean by “what’s yours”?” Shizuo demanded, standing up out of his seat and moving protectively in front of Izaya. “Izaya doesn’t belong to anybody.”

Hajime only smirked at him, electric blue eyes flashing in his sockets like they could zap him at any instant, crossing his arms in front of his chest. At least that movement retracted his hand from Izaya’s knee. That was one less disgusting detail in the scenario presented before him.

“Oh, but Iza-chan does belong to me.” The asshole purred, smirk still in place on his face the entire time. “And he knows it, too. Don’t you, Iza-chan?”

“No, you don’t talk to him.” Shizuo growled, planting a hand on Hajime’s chest and pushing him backwards. He stubbornly only moved back a few inches, but it was enough for Shizuo to drag the asshole’s attention back to him. “You don’t deserve to talk to him. Not after you frightened him like this.” Shizuo looked down at Izaya, who was still shivering with wide eyes in his chair, staring at the ground like he wanted to disappear. Like he wanted to vanish so that Hajime couldn’t see him at all.

“Don’t touch them.” He whispered, seemingly still staring off into space. “I won’t let you touch them.”

Shizuo didn’t know for sure who Izaya was talking about, but he had a pretty damn good idea. There was only one small collective of equally small people who Izaya would feel this amount of fear for if they were put in danger.

His golden gaze turned back to Hajime, eyes narrowed in pure hatred as he glared at the smirking boy. “I don’t know what you did in the past.” He hissed, grabbing a fistful of the guy’s shirt and pulling him forward in front of his face. “But you sure as hell ain’t gonna do anything else.”

Hajime raised a stupidly perfect eyebrow, cocky smirk still in place on his face. “Ain’t?” He repeated mockingly, smacking Shizuo’s hand away from his shirt. “What shameful grammar. You must not be the smartest guy in class, hm?”
Hajime turned his gaze on Izaya, smiling at the shaking boy. “How far you’ve fallen, my darling.” He said with fake sweetness, shaking his head sadly at Izaya. “Settling for a low-life idiot like this delinquent? You must truly miss me. Your Haji-chan.”

Shizuo felt simultaneously hurt and angered by that comment. He was hurt because he knew he wasn’t the smartest guy around, and that he was a first-rate idiot when it came to most things, and that Izaya could probably find someone much better than him. But he was angered because of the self-righteous way Hajime was talking, as though he was certain Izaya had been longing for him for a while now. And he spoke as though they’d been together previously.

Wait…

“Hey, Asshole.” Shizuo snapped, and Hajime turned to glare at him again. “Can’t you see I’m busy, protozoan?” He said coolly, a hint of annoyance quite plain in his voice. Shizuo’s eyes flashed with rage and he stepped right into Hajime’s face, barely restraining himself from punching the guy in the face right now. “Only Izaya can call me protozoan.” He hissed threateningly, a single finger jabbing harshly into Hajime’s stomach, and forcing a frown onto the asshole’s face. “And I want to know if you’re Izaya’s ex-boyfriend.”

A dry smirk replaced the frown on his face, and an evil glint even entered his electric eyes as he grinned. “How astute of you to notice.” He purred. “Why yes, I am.”

Shizuo glared right into Hajime’s face, feeling rage boil up and surge throughout his veins, flooding all of his senses with the red-hot burn of pure hatred. He didn’t even register the fact that his fist was flying through the air until it connected with the side of one too-smug, too-handsome face and sent its owner crashing into the seats behind it.

Izaya let out a small noise of shock, red eyes wide as he looked at the fallen form of his ex-boyfriend, disbelief coating every inch of his features like frosting on a cake. And…great, now Shizuo was hungry. Well it was one more reason to leave this place.

Shizuo moved to ask Izaya if he wanted to head out so they didn’t have to deal with this asshole, but something intervened before he could get the words out. Shizuo could see a dark shape flying towards him out of his peripheral.

“Shizu-chan!” Izaya yelped in fear, clutching at Shizuo’s hand faster than his mind could even comprehend the threat and yanking him forward, accidentally pulling the blonde too hard and causing him to crash down on top of Izaya in the chair. They bent the metal pole it rested on backwards, and Shizuo managed to catch himself with one hand on another chair before they snapped it entirely.

He looked down at Izaya’s flushed face, just a few inches from his, and became keenly aware of the way their bodies were pressed close together. Shizuo’s cheeks burned red and he jumped back awkwardly, scratching the back of his head and avoiding eye contact as he tried to figure out the correct way to apologize. Geez, he was an expert at creating awkward situations with Izaya, wasn’t he? At least Izaya looked cute right now with his small blush, and his nervous eyes darting all over the room, shyly avoiding contact with Shizuo. He looked so darn cute…Shizuo really wanted to go over and give him a hug…

But of course, Mr. Asshole had to ruin the moment.

“How dare you dodge my punch!” Hajime scowled, climbing over the seats and into the row they were in, electric eyes flashing at Shizuo dangerously. “Now, you’ve gone and made me angry.”
“Oh, I made you angry?” Shizuo growled, turning to face Hajime with utter fury burning throughout his body, completely ruining the moment of calm he’d felt when looking at Izaya. “That’s fantastic! Just imagine how angry I am whenever I look at the stupid face of my boyfriend’s ex!”

Hajime’s face seemed to darken at that comment, and he lunged towards Shizuo with an angry shout, spinning around and kicking Shizuo right in the chest.

Usually, a kick to the chest wouldn’t have hurt Shizuo. It wouldn’t even have winded him. But coming from this guy, the kick felt like a thousand battering rams had just slammed into him, flinging him down the row of chairs with a loud crashing sound.

His head jarred when it smacked against the ground, making his ears ring with the impact. But they weren’t ringing enough to cover the fear in Izaya’s voice when he screamed Shizuo’s name, or the sound of footsteps dashing frantically over to him.

Shizuo managed to lift his head off the ground to look at Izaya running over, and he would’ve been very happy to see how concerned Izaya was for his well-being…if it wasn’t for the way that Hajime was running after Izaya.

And the fact that he was closing in.

Who was this guy?!

Shizuo sprang to his feet, completely ignoring the stinging pains within his body in favor of closing the gap between himself and Izaya. He reached out a hand, grabbing Izaya’s arm and pulling him behind the blonde with a harsh yank. In the same motion, he swung a fist right at Hajime’s running figure, and even the graceful bastard didn’t have enough time to stop and avoid the fist flying right at him.

Shizuo got a very satisfying moment of watching electric blue eyes widen in shock before his fist planted itself right in the middle of that stupid face and sent it ricocheting back to where it belonged. Away from Izaya.

Shizuo was about to go storming after the guy and give him another beating, but he felt a tug on his arm and instantly looked down.

Izaya was peering up at him with wide red eyes, his plushie seahorse still somehow miraculously clutched to his chest, and one of his hands gripping Shizuo’s arm.

He didn’t say anything, not a single word, but to Shizuo, Izaya’s desire was as plain as day. He wanted to leave.

Shizuo bit the inside of his cheek, shooting a glare back at the filthy vermin now clutching at a bleeding nose with a look of absolute fury on his perfect face. His fists clenched at his sides and his whole body tensed with the urge to rush over and beat the guy straight back to hell. In fact, nothing would make Shizuo happier than that.

Except…except for Izaya’s happiness.

Shizuo felt himself deflate and the fight go right out of him as he looked down at Izaya, wordlessly pulling on his arm, face still pale with fright but a sort of fire in his eyes that Shizuo couldn’t help but love. Izaya was so strong. This jerk – whoever he was – clearly frightened Izaya, but the raven was still standing up for himself and making his desires known. He was still being totally independent in
the face of someone who clearly wanted to take that away.

Shizuo loved him so much.

“Do you want to go?” Shizuo asked quietly, just to make sure he was reading the situation right.

Izaya nodded once and pulled on Shizuo’s arm again, tugging him towards the exit. “Let’s just leave. He’s not worth it.” His tiny voice said, almost too soft to be heard, but with a harsh tone of distaste that could not be mistaken, even by Shizuo.

Was it wrong that knowing Izaya hated this guy so much made Shizuo feel so happy that the raven liked him?

Shizuo nodded his head and slipped his hand into Izaya’s, making their way towards the exit of the building. Izaya’s wishes came first. After everything he dealt with all the time, he deserved that.

“Don’t you dare walk away from me!” Hajime’s voice yelled, and Shizuo was honestly surprised that security hadn’t run up to stop them yet. They weren’t exactly being subtle.

“You’re making a mistake in taking him away from me!” The cretin’s voice was directed at Shizuo, grating over his ears like nails on a chalkboard. Seriously, where was security?

“He’s screwed up. A mess in every possible way.” Hajime continued, and Shizuo could feel Izaya tense up next to him, his small hand quivering a little in Shizuo’s grasp. “And it’s not just him! It’s his entire family!” Hajime was practically crowing now, throwing his words like knives right into their backs.

Shizuo was trying his very best not to turn around and murder that bastard. Izaya wanted to leave. Izaya was uncomfortable. Izaya…Izaya…Izaya…

“Tell him about your family, Izaya!” Hajime continued, letting out one of those horribly sharp laughs. “Tell him how you don’t even have a family to go home to at the end of the day because not even your own parents could stand the sight of you!”

Okay, that did it!

Shizuo spun around, facing Hajime with murder flashing in his golden eyes. “He does have a family, asshole!” Shizuo yelled, tightening his grip on Izaya’s hand. “And it’s called my family! And guess what? We love seeing him! Because we love him!”

Shizuo took a threatening step towards Hajime, the rest of his thought process blanking out as his world began to center itself on this one thing. On putting Hajime in his place. “I love him!” Shizuo yelled next, barely registering a small intake of breath from the beautiful raven next to him. “And I don’t care if he loves me back or not because I’m going to stand by him no matter what he says,” He stepped closer to Hajime. “No matter what level of asshole shows up to mess with him,” He took another step. “No matter what happens!”

Shizuo paused and looked down at Izaya, looking right into ruby eyes that were blown wider than he’d ever seen them, shock and disbelief filling them to the brim, and a small sheen slowly beginning to rise up from unshed tears.

“I’ll love him until I die,” Shizuo said in a slightly softer voice, more to Izaya than to anyone else, eyes focused completely on the angel in front of him. The silly, smart, quirky, crazy, impossible, independent, bi-polar, sexy, cute, lovable, pesky, perfect angel standing right there in front of him. Izaya Orihara. One in a million. The only one for Shizuo.
Shizuo turned to glare at Hajime, jabbing a pointed finger right at the shocked boy who was gaping at him like he couldn’t believe Shizuo had just said what he had.

“And not even a selfish prick like you will change that!” He yelled with finality, spinning around on his heel and pulling Izaya right out of the stupid auditorium. He knew this wouldn’t be the end with Hajime. It was too anticlimactic for the villain to show up, the good guys to leave, and that to be the end of the story. No, Shizuo was certain they would end up seeing Hajime again, in one way or another. But for now, he wasn’t going to worry about that. He was just going to get Izaya out of here as quickly as possible.

They didn’t need to see the dolphin show anyway. They had a TV with National Geographic and Animal Planet back home.

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Neither Shizuo nor Izaya really knew what to say when they made it back to Shizuo’s place. What did you say after a scene like that? There wasn’t exactly one of those guidebooks for dummies covering something of that ilk. “Worst Case Scenarios for Dummies: Izaya Edition” didn’t exist yet.

The only thing either of them was really certain of doing was taking in the situation back at the Heiwajima household.

The girls were still there, happily playing with Kichirou in the living room as Namiko cooked up some dinner, and Kasuka was reading a book on the couch, acting as something of a referee in case one of the girls or his father started cheating.

“Foul.” The flat-faced boy announced, pointing a finger at Kichirou. “False start.”

“What? I did no such thing!” The father yelled, glaring fiercely at his son and throwing down his cards.

“You drew extra cards from the Go Fish pile. I saw you.” Kasuka said simply, looking back down at his book.

“Cheater! Cheater! Daddy’s a cheater!” Mairu yelled, jumping up and down in place and happily clapping her hands.

“Daddy gets penalty.” Kururi added softly, delicately placing three more cards into Kichirou’s hand.

Kichirou groaned and picked up the rest of his cards, eyeing them hopefully in the slim chance that they would create a match.

“Play shall continue.” Kasuka said next, gesturing towards the twins without looking up from his novel. “The Collective shall now advance.”

“This is the most unfair game of Go Fish I have ever played.” Kichirou grumbled unhappily, glaring at his cards like they were the cause of all evil in the world. “The ref is paid off, the cards hate me, and I can’t even cheat properly anymore! What's the point?!”

“How about playing fairly?” Shizuo suggested as he and Izaya entered the living room, hand in hand.

Izaya snickered a little at the dumbstruck look on Kichirou’s face, like he couldn’t believe the words that had just come out of his son’s mouth.
“Are you crazy?!” The man cried, pointing a finger dramatically at the ceiling. “Cheating is the only way to win!”

“That’s not a very good lesson to be teaching the girls.” Shizuo reprimanded him as he led Izaya over to the couch, the two of them sitting down beside Kasuka. Izaya noticed how Shizuo subtly maneuvered himself in between his brother and the raven, and a small smile slipped onto his face as he looked down at the card game. There was a warm, fuzzy feeling in his chest right now. Izaya couldn’t remember what it was called, but he also couldn’t care less. It felt really nice.

“But Daddy isn’t winning.” Kururi pointed out, looking at Shizuo. “Yeah! So clearly, cheaters don’t win!” Mairu declared, sticking her tongue out at Kichirou.

Izaya laughed. “See? He’s teaching the girls a good lesson!” He said cheerfully, squeezing Shizuo’s hand with a happy grin.

Kichirou groaned and crossed his arms with a pout, glaring at Izaya next. “Yeah, yeah. Laugh it up!” He scowled, eyes flicking back and forth between the two boys. Then a different look made its way into his eyes as he realized the implication of Izaya and Shizuo being back, and a mischievous grin took over his face.

“Soonz…” He said slowly, wiggling his eyebrows at the two of them. “How did the date go, hm?”

“Oh! Are Shizuo and Izaya back?!” Namiko called excitedly from the kitchen. “Did they get any cute pictures?! I must see them all!”

Kichirou grinned and looked pointedly at Shizuo. “You heard the woman!” He said cheerfully, spinning to face the two of them and planting his hands eagerly on his knees. “Detailed report! Hit it!”

“She said nothing about a detailed report. Only pictures.” Izaya pointed out, but Kichirou waved a hand in the air dismissively. “That’s all in the wording! Don’t be so particular! Now: DETAILED REPORT!” He yelled mightily, pointing right at Shizuo.

“Why do I gotta give the report?” Shizuo muttered unhappily, pulling out his phone and opening up its gallery. “I’d much rather just look at the pictures and tell you nothing.” He told his father as he started scanning the pictures he’d taken so far, a fond smile slipping onto his face as he looked at them.

Izaya felt himself blush and he quickly looked down at his sisters to give himself something else to think about besides Shizuo’s fondness of him. It was sweet. Just like Shizu-chan…

“Iza-nii!” Mairu yelled happily, apparently registering his return for the first time in her little mind. She jumped once in place (why, Izaya had no idea) and ran over to him, climbing eagerly up onto his lap and throwing her arms around him in a big hug. “Iza-nii is back!”

Kururi waddled over in turn, hugging Izaya’s leg with a big smile on her face. “Date go well?!” She asked softly, looking over at Shizuo with a smile before turning her attention back on Izaya.

“Yeah! Did you and Shizu-nii have fun?!” Mairu asked excitedly, bouncing up and down on Izaya’s lap. “Did you finally make babies?!”

Izaya groaned at the by-now familiar reference to their imaginary future children, glancing over at Shizuo in embarrassment.

It seemed the blonde was having just as rough a time as him, though, or maybe even worse. Kasuka
was currently interrogating him on the level of sexual interaction they had had while watching the dolphin show all alone in the dark, and Kichirou was attempting to relieve Shizuo of his phone, cooing and squealing like a fangirl at the pictures that he was forcibly scrolling through.

Poor Shizuo…yeah, Izaya wasn’t going over and helping out. He’d just stick with his girls.

Izaya smiled back down at Mairu’s eager face, feeling a pang of fear hit his chest as he recalled that day so long ago when he’d broken up with Hajime. When Hajime had made that threat about his sisters…there was no way he would follow through with that, right? Even he wasn’t that bad.

Except…maybe he was. Izaya couldn’t honestly say that he knew what sort of person Hajime was. He’d thought he’d known back when they’d started dating, but look how accurate he’d been then. Not exactly a good track record to start making predictions on the guy’s projected behavior.

He’d just have to watch the girls even more carefully for the next few months.

“We did not make babies, Mai-chan.” Izaya told his sister, grinning a little at the look of utter disappointment in her eyes. An idea suddenly struck him and Izaya reached into his coat, the winter one Namiko had gotten him, pulling out the seahorse plushie.

Izaya stared at it for a bit, marveling at the colors and designs of the adorable thing, and smiling at the memory of how Shizuo had gotten it for him…without him even having to ask…Shizuo was wonderful.

Izaya shook himself out of his Shizuo-daze and held out the plushie to his wide-eyed sisters. “Here you go, my darlings. We did get this.” Izaya offered, smiling at the gasps of awe that came out of the two little girls.

“It’s so cute!” Mairu squealed, taking it from Izaya’s hands instantly and looking it over with a happy grin. “Ours?” Kururi asked as she pet its head, looking up at Izaya hopefully.

…How could he say no to a face like that?

“Yes. It’s yours.” Izaya told the girls, and they both gave little shouts of happiness as they ran back over to their place by the Go Fish game, playing with the soft plushie.

Izaya watched them for a few seconds, smiling in adoration at his two little girls, until he felt something gently poke his shoulder.

The raven looked over and spotted Shizuo, giving him a small, and almost shy smile. “You know…it was yours.” He said softly, golden eyes sparkling a little.

Izaya blushed and looked away, watching his girls again as they played. “Yeah, but…they’ll do more with it.” Izaya told him, but then the insensitivity of his actions struck him. “Oh my gosh, I’m so sorry!” He gasped, turning to look at Shizuo in fear. “I wasn’t giving away your gift, I swear! I really liked it! Really I did!” He leaned in, desperately clasping his hands and looking up at Shizuo with pleading eyes. He hadn’t meant to make Shizuo mad. He really hadn’t!

But Shizuo was only looking down at him in confusion, not anger, and he placed a gentle hand on top of Izaya’s pleading ones, softly pushing them down to land on the couch below them. “It’s okay, Izaya-kun.” Shizuo assured him, brushing a few strands of the raven’s hair behind his ear. “You can do what you want with it. And you gave it to your sisters just now! Lord knows, you’re the sort that baby-proofs everything before it gets to them.” Izaya felt his cheeks flush in embarrassment at that, and he ducked his head to stare at his hands. It was true. He couldn’t deny that.
He felt a hand lightly take hold of his chin, slowly tilting his head back up so he was looking, wide-eyed at Shizuo. The blonde gave Izaya a dazzling smile, his face seeming even more radiant than the sun with the sheer kindness that was glowing from it. “What more could I ask for than you thinking it’s a worthy gift for your girls?” He asked gently, eyes glittering like golden treasure with every word.

Izaya wasn’t going to cry. He wasn’t. Those weren’t tears of happiness forming in his eyes. They were...they were...the product of dust! Clearly, this house was exceptionally dusty and some had gotten in his eyes. That was all that had happened here. Obviously.

Shizuo didn’t say anything about the tears, though, merely wiping them away tenderly and kissing Izaya on the forehead. Izaya felt like he could melt from the affection that was just blazing all around him. Wonderful. Shizuo was just wonderful.

“Ooooh.” Kichirou’s voice suddenly broke into Izaya’s happy daze and the raven looked over in shock, red eyes landing on the suggestive smile of Shizuo’s father as the man eagerly looked back and forth between them, eyebrows wiggling. “Aren’t we the cutest couple of the year?” He teased, looking meaningfully at Shizuo.

Izaya ducked his head again, but there was a smile on his lips nonetheless. They were a cute couple, weren’t they? Yeah...just like Shizuo had said earlier on their date before that thing had showed up to ruin it: “Look at us! We’re adorable!”

“Now, am I getting that detailed report or not?” Kichirou whined like a child, looking at Shizuo with pouting eyes.

“You need to finish your game with The Collective.” Kasuka reminded him, and Kichirou gulped as he turned his attention over on two evilly grinning twins, who were picking up their cards like they were loaded weapons, ready to demolish him.

“Not fair. It’s not fair at all.” The man whimpered, picking up his own cards and asking dejectedly for any three’s.

He got a Go Fish.

Yeah...Izaya could see where this was going.

“Me, on the other hand,” Kasuka’s voice purred, and Izaya looked over at the pervert in shock. Kasuka’s eyes were locked right on him as he said, “I want all the juicy details and I don’t have anything to do in the meantime.”

“You’re refereeing the game!” Shizuo protested, scooting away from his brother and hugging Izaya protectively. “Focus on the juicy details of that!”

“You boys better come and talk to me, then!” Namiko’s voice shouted from the kitchen. “I am the mother and I have maternal rights to all things about your life, and I’m also the cook so I can hold your dinner hostage!”

Shizuo groaned dramatically, looking over at Izaya with a miserable look. “I tried.” He said sadly, and Izaya laughed at the kicked-puppy look on Shizuo’s face. He leaned over and pecked Shizuo on the cheek, pulling back to smile at the wide-eyed blonde. “I don’t mind talking to your mom. Let’s tell her about the date.” He said reassuringly, standing up from the couch and holding out his hand to help Shizuo up.

Shizuo took it obligingly, getting to his feet and lacing his fingers automatically through Izaya’s as
Izaya’s hand automatically tightened its grip on Shizuo’s.

Dear God…their hand-holding was second-nature now.

Izaya was almost tempted to let go just to offset the shock of that realization, but Shizuo’s hand was so warm and it just felt so right.

Plus, Shizuo was already pulling him towards the kitchen so he might as well just go along with it.

Just before they passed through the entrance to the kitchen however, Shizuo paused, looking at Izaya carefully. “Do you want to tell her about…everything?” He asked slowly, his golden eyes serious and totally focused on Izaya.

Izaya knew the implications of talking to Namiko. He knew that it was a sensitive subject, talking about the ex-boyfriend in front of the…did he dare say new boyfriend? Well, either way, he knew that it might not go over well. He also knew that it might even end up bringing his whole backstory with Hajime up for Shizuo and Namiko to hear. And who knew what kinds of fresh hell that could cause? Not to mention that story could lead into his family situation, which he’d never told anyone about, ever. He might end up spilling every single secret he’d ever had to hide to these people, and he’d never be able to take them back.

But…he was okay with that.

“We can even invite Kichirou, if you don’t mind.” Izaya added quietly, his eyes flicking over to look at his…Shizuo’s father playing Go Fish in the living room with his sisters. “Kasuka can probably fill in for him, anyway. I…I have a lot to tell you guys about.”

Chapter End Notes

So now Izaya is finally going to let down his walls and reveal the truth about his past to the Heiwajimas! How will they all react?! And what is Hajime planning in the meantime now that he’s seen Shizuo and Izaya?! 😊 ° □ _HEX

There's just no way of knowing what will happen from here on out! Until the next update that is! ♡ ✧ ( •⌄• )

Sorry for the sorta short chapter, by the way. This was the best place to stop the storyline unless I wanted to make a 12,000+ word update by combining Izaya's past with this part. XD Anyway, I'll see you all next time! Which will either be this Wednesday if I post both the one-shot and the chapter, or next Sunday if I don't. Hope you liked the chapter! <3
Chapter Notes

Hello everybody! Me and "Private Lessons" are back again with the next update! Yay! We are finally going to see Izaya telling the Heiwajimas about his past. Now, to fully understand the timeline of his past, please note that Izaya's school schedule aligns with a typical Japanese school schedule: elementary school lasts 6 years from the age of 7 to 12, junior high lasts 3 years from 13 to 15, and senior high lasts 3 years as well from 16 to 18. Izaya entered elementary a little early at the age of 6 because his birthday in May is right after the start of the April school year so you'll hear him mentioned as 6 when he talks about entering elementary school.

And now, I need to send a huge thank-you to the guest reader Crea for catching a massively horrible typo that was in this story. Apparently, Izaya's age was listed as 14 years old earlier on in the story, and Shizuo is noted to be turning 15 in the birthday one-shot. THESE NUMBERS ARE INCORRECT. Both boys are 17 and in their second year of high school, and Shizuo is turning 18. I have no idea how the numbers got badly messed up, but those are the actual ages of the characters, which I'll be going back and fixing after I post this. Again, huge thanks to Crea for catching that!

Now that all that's over, did you notice the Japanese in the chapter name? I think I'm going to start doing that now: writing the name of the chapter in Japanese after it's English translation. What do you guys think?

Anyway, onto the chapter! I'll shoot you a warning: this one contains a triggering scene at the end. Love you! <3 <3 <3

It definitely wasn’t just the date that Izaya was telling them about. And there was so much more to the story than Shizuo ever could have imagined.

Izaya was silent for a few minutes after Shizuo, Namiko, and Kichirou had all gathered around him, breathing deeply with his eyes closed like he was gathering his strength for something.

When he finally opened those red eyes, they were more serious than Shizuo had ever seen them. He had no idea why, but his gut was telling him that it couldn’t be good. And boy was his gut right.

Izaya said he would start as far back as he could, the most important piece of his past that he needed to talk about, and move up from there. Shizuo had thought this meant maybe getting a summary from the time period of ten years old and onwards, and that was certainly enough time of struggling on his own for Izaya to deserve a nice, big bear hug. When he actually started talking, it was so much worse.

“When I was two years old,” Izaya had begun, and Shizuo’s eyes nearly bugged out of their sockets. That’s how far back his problems had started?! Izaya didn’t just need a hug, he needed freaking therapy!
Izaya was staring at Shizuo with a funny look on his face, and Shizuo realized his eyes must be freakishly wide at that moment in time. Coughing in embarrassment, Shizuo looked away briefly, trying to pull himself together, and giving Izaya a single nod when he was ready again.

Izaya nodded back and closed his eyes, starting over once more. “When I was two years old,” He said again. “My parents stopped having direct contact with me. They began hiring babysitters and nannies to take care of me full-time. I suppose that wasn’t anything too new to me since I’d already had babysitters taking care of me whenever my parents were in meetings and such.” Izaya shuffled in place with a frown, his gaze distant and…lonely.

“I don’t remember it too well…I was only two, you know. But I do recall hearing from my nurses and babysitters about how my mother never nursed me. It was always…some stranger. One of the women hired to take care of me. I was never nursed by my own mother. I know that for a fact.”

Shizuo glanced over at his mother, just trying to picture a woman so uncaring that she wouldn’t nurse her own son, and he was shocked to see the look in her eyes.

The eyes of Namiko Heiwajima were known for being kind and cheerful, the sort of eyes that could warm you up in the middle of a blizzard just by looking at them, and the eyes that you wished you could see again and again. The eyes that made everything feel alright again with a simple glance. But right now, her eyes were nothing of the sort.

They were dark and full of quiet fury, as though a storm was churning just behind those brown irises, waiting to be unleashed upon whichever poor soul she was looking at. Those eyes could incinerate someone with just a look if they tried, and Shizuo suddenly realized that he’d never seen his mother when she was truly angry. Not once in his life. Nor did he care to have that anger directed at him.

Shizuo gulped and looked back over at Izaya, who hadn’t noticed the glare on Namiko’s face and was continuing his story.

“I had several different babysitters and nannies, some which stayed longer than others and some which left almost immediately, all trying to take care of me.” The boy said, staring at the ground like he was reminiscing on those times of his youth.

Not much of a childhood, if you asked Shizuo.

“Many of them figured out that the best way to get me to behave was by letting me read, so I started reading all kinds of books at a very young age.” Izaya began gently tapping the counter beneath his fingertips, the soft sound being the only thing besides dinner sizzling nearby that was making any noise alongside Izaya in the normally so lively kitchen.

“That turned out to be something which saved my life eventually.” Izaya remarked off-handedly, smiling almost ruefully at the fact. “Because when I turned six, my parents stopped hiring babysitters. I had no nannies. I had no one taking care of me at all. Thanks to my ability to read, I was able to read up on proper nutrition, naptimes, the importance of education, cooking, patching up clothes, and really anything I needed to know to survive on my own.”

Shizuo could hear a crunching sound from off to his left, and he easily spotted the bag of ice in his father’s hand that was slowly having the life crushed out of it. Shizuo’s eyes widened, and he took a small step away from his father.

Sometimes, when his dad got really angry, he would grab a pack of ice from the freezer and hold it in his hands to “cool off”. Sometimes, he would hold it until his fingers were turning blue at the tips and numb beyond all chance of feeling anything for the next few hours. Other times, he would try to
crush it and get some of his anger out. The last time Shizuo had seen his father crushing the ice bag…it was after some guy had punched Shizuo’s mother.

His father was pissed.

“I became self-sufficient at the age of six.” Izaya continued, oblivious to the hatred beginning to fill the room as he stared at his feet, lost in his memories of the past. “I took myself to school, made myself all my food, set nap times for myself at home and alarms to wake myself up, learned to mend my own clothes since I was growing and needed to reuse what I had, and read up on anything I couldn’t understand in the meantime. I read a ton of parenting books so I could see the proper way to raise myself.” He shrugged and bit his lip, red eyes disconnected and distant from the world around him. “I skipped all the parts on family and social interaction. Never had much use for it.”

He sighed, switching his gaze to stare at the ceiling in place of the floor. “In hindsight, I should’ve read those, too.” He muttered, but quickly moved on to the next part of his tale.

Shizuo was impressed with himself. He was able to keep it together even though he really wanted to track down those sorry excuses for “parents” and bury them in a bottomless pit that would drop them all the way to the earth’s core and incinerate them. He was keeping it together real well right now.

And of course, that was when things had to get worse.

“I went through all of my childhood taking care of myself, getting payments every month from my parents that were enough to get by with and have some money to spare…until I turned twelve years old.” The raven glanced into the living room, where they could clearly hear the twins laughing at Kasuka as he attempted to win Go Fish.

“The door opened and my mother was standing right there, with two bundles in her arms.” Izaya said softly, and a bit of a smile slipped onto the raven’s lips as he held out his arms as if to demonstrate what she had looked like. “She said, “These are your sisters” and dropped the bundles in my arms. Then the door closed and I didn’t see either of my parents for another six months.”

Izaya closed his eyes, dropping his arms to his sides and letting the fond smile overtake his face. “That was the nicest gift they’ve ever given me.” He said softly, a bit of a tear forming in his eyes. “I got my two darlings that day. And…and…and I wasn’t alone anymore. For the first time ever, I wasn’t alone.”

Izaya opened his eyes, smiling right at Shizuo with a happy look shining through the tears. “I made friends with Shinra when I began junior high a year later and started balancing my first friendship with taking care of myself and my girls. He never pried so it was hardly a struggle.”

Shizuo thought about that for a bit. It would explain so much…if Izaya had had a childhood like this, then he might literally have never had enough time for friends who actually cared about him and wanted to spend time with him. Not to mention he wouldn’t want anyone to know about the blatant neglect going on in his household lest someone take his girls away from him. Izaya was doing everything completely alone because it was easiest for him, and because he could always trust himself. Because he’d never been able to trust anyone else before, or rely on anyone else at all.

Shizuo ducked his head, clenching his fists and trying his best not to look up and show Izaya the absolute fury and hatred that was boiling in his gaze. These parents had made Izaya’s life a living hell. Literally, the only good thing they’d ever done for him was find the time between meetings to bang it out and have some kids, then dump those kids on Izaya. Why were these people even having children?! They clearly didn’t care about them at all! Shizuo was angry beyond belief…but he was also very sad.
Izaya had been dealing with all of this completely on his own since he was six years old. Six. That was the age you entered elementary school in Japan. That was the age when you had barely passed the limit to hold up a full hand of fingers and say it was how old you were. That was the age when most children started learning how to read, not how to survive on your own.

And somehow, Shizuo hadn’t noticed a single thing out of place when he first met the raven.

“Well, I made it through junior high easily enough.” Izaya said casually, dragging Shizuo’s attention back to him. “My parents stopped sending payments every month, though. It became more of an every other month thing, and it wasn’t enough to support myself and two babies.”

He frowned, and Shizuo knew he was about to slip into something that was darker than what he’d been talking about before.

There was silence for a few seconds, and then the soft words finally came out: “Do you guys know how valuable information can be?”

Shizuo blinked, looking at Izaya carefully. That almost seemed like an abrupt change in topic, but… Shizuo was sure it was somehow relevant to the situation. Just what was Izaya getting at?

“Izaya,” Kichirou said next, the ice bag completely decimated in his hand now and his focus set completely on the raven in front of them. “Is something wrong?”

Izaya laughed bitterly at that, his red eyes harsh as he looked at the ground. “What isn’t wrong?” He responded dryly, and Shizuo had to agree with that statement. Izaya’s life was one big bundle of wrong.

The raven sighed, brushing some hair behind his ears as he readied himself to talk.

“Information is something that everyone needs.” He began. “It can be traded, sold, bought, or stolen, just like any other commodity. Except it’s much harder to do those things with information than it is with other valuables. To do that to information, you need a very special set of skills. You need a very keen lack of morals. You need a very sharp sense of judgment, a healthy dose of paranoia, and at least some kind of physical ability would be preferable.” He looked at his hands, a dry smile on his face.

“Well, I have all those skills. And a freakishly smart brain to go along with them. So why not use them?” He looked up at Shizuo, gaze unreadable. “I started off gathering information for people around my street. Truthful reviews about products they wanted to buy. The names and locations of family members who visited town. Knowledge about upcoming social events. Simple things like that.”

Shizuo could tell that those simple things, Izaya’s “amateur sleuthing” endeavors, were about to get much darker.

“But I moved into harder tasks.” The boy kept going, never looking away from Shizuo. “Finding vandals who’d tagged a house. Tracking down gangsters who’d jumped someone in the street. Finding someone’s lost daughter who’d been kidnapped by traffickers. I started getting into the underground side of things.”

Izaya shot all three of the silent Heiwajimas a very dry, very broken smile. “Turns out that the underground pays better!” He said with fake cheer, and the very sound almost broke Shizuo’s heart.
A voice full of pain thinly masked by false happiness. Obvious torment that no one had ever looked for or cared about. It killed Shizuo inside to hear Izaya trying to cover up his struggle with cheer, as though that was somehow sweeping the reality of his horrible situation away. He was trying to run away and trying to hide it from them, even as he told them all about it, because he was so used to living in the darkness and hiding from the light. That hurt Shizuo like a bullet to the heart. And it seemed like he wasn’t the only one who wasn’t equipped with a bulletproof vest today.

“My baby.” Shizuo’s mom whispered from Shizuo’s right, her eyes closing as her hands covered her mouth, body trembling slightly. “My poor baby…”

“Damn it.” His dad growled softly, glaring at the floor as though it had caused all of Izaya’s troubles. “Just…just damn it!”

Izaya was lost in his own thoughts, oblivious to the sorrow and anger raging all around him.

“Yeah…gangs pay more than elderly neighbors…” Izaya said softly, staring at the ground. “So…after I tracked down one gang of traffickers, the ones who had the girl, I bargained with them for her life. Traded them some information on the police closing in on their ring. They were so grateful that they gave me the girl and a huge amount of cash. That…that was when I started looking into gangs for employers. Minor groups, of course. No need to jump in all at once. I can’t help my girls if I’m dead because I had no experience when I tangled with the yakuza.”

Izaya closed his eyes. “I found small gangs of junior or senior high schoolers and the like, and began selling them information for cash. I actually worked with several rings at once, interspersing the information I gave, and sometimes set them up with each other so they’d pay me more for information on each other. I did whatever I could to get more money. And…I just dove deeper and deeper.”

He folded his arms, a frown on his beautiful face. “And beyond that, I just kept going to school and figuring my life out there. Made it through all of junior high and started senior high at the ripened age of 16. And then I met you, Shizuo.” He looked up and smiled at the blonde, stopping his heart right in his chest. “That was something fun and exciting that I never thought I’d experience. You were always the most thrilling portion of my days. I enjoyed seeing you…even if you probably didn’t enjoy seeing me.”

Shizuo felt his mouth go dry at that, and his cheeks flushed a little red. It was true…he used to hate seeing the fleabag every single day. Every single day, the annoying raven would pop into his life, ruin it, and pop out again like some freakish ghost to haunt him. A freakish ghost whose sole purpose for existing was to ruin the lives of everyone around him.

Except…he’d never really hurt anyone so far, had he? And he’d only truly pissed off Shizuo to the massive extent that he did. He only grabbed Shizuo’s attention, as the only person who was ever willing to drop whatever he was doing and chase Izaya to the ends of the universe. He’d always been willing to do that for Izaya…even now, although in a much different context than before.

Izaya had known that, hadn’t he? He’d known that Shizuo was the one person who would always stop what he was doing and chase after Izaya, and give him some form of attention. Some form of entertainment. Some form of life. He was…the only one.

And damn if Shizuo wasn’t now realizing that all those times Izaya had gone after him, had pulled him into those destructive chases, had made him hate the flea’s guts with an unavoidable passion, all those times…they’d been a cry for help. A cry to be noticed. A cry to have someone, anyone, pay attention to him. Even if it was only through hatred. At least he had someone who gave a shit about what he was doing.
Shizuo clenched his fists tightly by his sides, trying not to let the tears that were starting to sting in his eyes fall down his cheeks. Why hadn’t he realized it sooner? Why hadn’t he seen the utter loneliness of the boy in front of him, and his desperation or struggles? He knew Izaya better than anyone else. Why hadn’t he seen it?! Why hadn’t he been there?!

“The very April I met you, in that first month of senior high school,” Izaya was saying to Shizuo, his voice dropping into a lower tone, and his gaze being cast downwards yet again. “I…I met someone else.”

Hajime.

Shizuo knew instantly that Izaya was about to talk about Hajime. The selfish prick that they’d just seen. Mr. Asshole. The guy who had somehow threatened Izaya and his sisters, and left the poor raven utterly traumatized.

Shit. Shizuo was going to need about thirty ice packs.

Izaya blew out a breath, clearly struggling to let this portion of his past come out into the open.

“While I was leading you in a chase maybe two weeks into school, Shizu-chan, a boy stopped our fight. He was stronger than you, so he was able to restrain you…and he even made it look easy. Then he turned on me and chased me down. He was faster than me and caught me just as easily as he had handled you.” Izaya shuffled in place, and a memory began to surge up in Shizuo’s mind.

Some upperclassman who’d gotten in between him and Izaya. A guy with electric blue eyes who’d jumped in front of him and stopped him in his tracks using the sheer force within his body. Shizuo had been amazed by the fact that someone could actually fight him. Someone out there had the capability to battle him and live through said battle. He’d come to respect that person almost instantly.

Now Shizuo knew why Hajime had looked so familiar. It was the same guy.

“Shishizaki Hajime.” Izaya said aloud, and all three Heiwajimas stared at him. “That’s his name.” The raven sighed, staring at his feet. “He…he looked at me so kindly when we first met. He smiled and asked if I was alright. He treated me so gently and caringly. I really thought that I’d met someone…someone who cared.”

“Someone who can give him attention that doesn’t revolve around hatred.” Shizuo thought guiltily, clenching his fists even tighter.

He felt something cold touch his hand and glanced down to see his father pressing an ice pack surreptitiously into his palm. He took it gratefully, without a word, his golden eyes still trained on Izaya. Maybe they were all going to need ice packs here soon.

Izaya squeezed his eyes shut, and his body began to tremble. “I…I don’t want to go over all the details.” He said softly, his voice shaking a little as he did so. “Because it hurts me too much to think about. I’ll tell you everything important, though.”

Shizuo’s mother apparently couldn’t handle watching Izaya tremble so much, and the kind woman instantly headed over to the raven, wrapped a soothing arm around his shoulders and gently pressing his head to lay on her chest.

“It’s okay.” She whispered comfortingly, combing her fingers through his raven hair. “Iza-chan… baby, it’s gonna be okay.”
Izaya bit his lip, eyes shutting even tighter, and he turned his head somewhat to hide half his face, clearly trying his best not to cry.

After knowing just what kind of parental neglect Izaya had faced all his life, Shizuo wasn’t surprised. More than likely, this simple act of comfort was something the raven never thought he’d be experiencing.

Shizuo’s dad walked over to Izaya, too, placing a hand on his tiny back and rubbing smooth circles onto it. “Take your time, Izaya.” He said gently, pressing a small kiss to the top of the small boy’s head. “We’ll wait all day if we have to. Don’t push yourself because you think we’ll leave you if you don’t. We’re here for you.”

Izaya’s red eyes snapped open at that, and he looked at Shizuo’s dad in shock, the starting droplets of water beginning to fill his ruby gaze.

Now Shizuo couldn’t stand being away any longer, and he hid the ice pack behind his back as he came over, joining the almost-group hug that they had going on and wrapping one arm around Izaya’s waist to hold the boy steadily against his chest.

“We’ll never leave.” His deep voice promised, and he felt such an urge to kiss Izaya that it was almost impossible for him not to. But Izaya was entering a rough phase of his life that involved romance. Shizuo didn’t want to do anything that may trigger something horrible for the raven when he was trying so hard on their account to get everything out.

So Shizuo held back from kissing the raven on the lips like he wanted to, and just pressed a gentle kiss to his forehead instead, closing his eyes and praying that all the love, protectiveness, determination, and support that he was feeling towards Izaya was getting channeled through that simple contact.

Izaya was frozen in the middle of the Heiwajimas, unable to move, body shaking slightly as they surrounded him with care.

“I…I…” He tried to speak, but his voice kept trailing off, overcome with emotions that the poor thing just couldn’t understand or register. That he’d been hiding from for so long.
All the Heiwajimas just stood there, waiting for him to be ready, holding on to him so he knew they’d never let him go.

Eventually, Izaya ducked his head to face the floor, and began speaking again.

“Hajime and I dated for eleven months, from that April to February of the next year.” Izaya croaked hoarsely, and the knowledge that that creep had been using the love of his life for so long had Shizuo all but calling for the guy’s murder. Death by assassin, lynch mob, crazy rollercoaster gone off course, Chainsaw-Face, anything at all. The guy just needed to die.

And that wasn’t even the worst of it. No. It wasn’t even close.

After that lovely fact, Izaya began to recount for them the circumstances of his break-up with Hajime.

The entire time he spoke, not one person in the kitchen moved. They all stayed around Izaya, listening to his story, trying not to leave in the rampages that each of them wanted to lead. At some point, their arms all shifted so they were gripping each other tightly as well as Izaya, so that when one of them started to pull off and tried to leave in anger, the other two were there to hold that one in place.
They needed that system. They needed it and so much more. Hell, fucking Hajime was going to need an entire army to stop the Heiwajimas from coming after his sorry ass once Izaya was done with this tale.

He told them about how the date at the zoo had gone, from the time the couple had arrived in order to see the new snake exhibit, to the time they left without seeing it at all because Hajime wanted to punish Izaya for spouting off a fact about turtles. He talked about how Hajime made Izaya sleep over at his house and leave the twins alone for a night, made him, forced him to do that and not take a single thing over in preparation. He described the pajamas he’d had to wear that night, tiny and revealing silk clothes that Shizuo could picture in his mind, and that he wished he could burn right out of existence. But as if all that smug ownership, that abusive and controlling relationship wasn’t enough, what Hajime did next in Izaya’s tale was even worse.

Izaya told them how partway through the night, after Hajime had made Izaya feel horrible for wanting blankets, the bastard had tried to rape him.

This was how that situation had gone:

Izaya said, “And while I was starting to fall asleep, Hajime began to touch me…one thing led to another…and I realized he was trying to rape me.”

Before the raven could get another word out, Shizuo’s dad ripped himself away from their circle and stormed over to the fridge. He yanked it open harshly and shoved his head inside of it, screaming loudly like someone might scream into a pillow. Then his hand darted inside the fridge and yanked out a box of pizza, a pissed-off look on his face as he turned sharply to march back over to their huddle.

He flipped the lid on the pizza up harshly once he made it back to the huddle, grabbing a slice and biting into it viciously.

“Stress eating.” He growled, pressing a quick kiss to Izaya’s head as if to reassure the raven despite the will-for-murder emanating from his entire being. ”Keep going while I think about all the ways I can possibly torture this guy.”

Izaya blinked at him, looked down at the pizza in his hands, and then back up at Shizuo’s dad in confusion.

“Keep going, sweetie.” Shizuo’s mom said gently, stroking the top of Izaya’s head and smiling encouragingly at him. But the smile was strained, and her knuckles were white as they moved to clutch Izaya’s shoulder.

When Izaya looked at Shizuo, Shizuo managed to force a smile as well, and a single nod, although the ice pack behind his back was steadily being crushed closer and closer to smithereens.

Izaya watched him for a bit, and then nodded slowly, glancing at the pizza as he continued to speak again.

“Hajime tried to slip my clothes off my body, and…and…and he grabbed me in different places on my body. He bit me and tore off chunks of my neck. He twisted my…my nipples.” Izaya closed his eyes like he was torn between trying not to remember and forcing himself to talk about it. “He dug his nails into my butt. Everything he did to me hurt. And then he tried to…actually insert part A into part B. If you catch my drift.”

“Oh we catch it.” Shizuo’s dad growled, biting into his pizza again. “Just like when an old person
catches influenza. Unpleasantly, suddenly, and disgustingly.”

“And ending in death.” Shizuo’s mom grumbled, hugging Izaya tightly with her eyes flashing venemously.

“Death to the weakest link.” Shizuo added with a snarl, officially smashing the ice packet and throwing it on the floor, wrapping both arms tightly around Izaya and holding him close.

Izaya seemed stunned, like he couldn’t understand why so many people actually cared about him. “You all…you’re as kind as her.” The raven sobbed, pressing his face into Shizuo’s chest.

Now this bit confused Shizuo instantly. As far as he could tell, there had been no kind influences whatsoever in Izaya’s life. Not a single one. The only positive influence he had had was the twins. And they were always spoken of in the plural format, not to mention the fact that it was Izaya who was kind to them.

So who was this woman?

He and his father looked at each other, eyebrows raised on their faces in mirror images of each other’s confusion, but when Shizuo turned to look at his mother, the woman was frozen in place. She was staring off into space, her eyes widening slowly, the hand that was stroking Izaya’s hair now stuck in the raven locks, and the other hand that was holding his shoulder squeezing tightly. It looked like she was having an epiphany, or like she was remembering something.

Why did Shizuo feel like that was going to be important?

“Who is this “’her”?’” His dad asked gently, looking down at Izaya with a look that was as close to comfort as he could get while shoving pizza into his face like it was his bitter enemy.

Izaya looked up at Shizuo’s dad, briefly observed his eating habits like some kind of lecture on the negative effects of stress eating had popped into his head, and then looked down at his feet again to begin talking.

“She’s a woman I met on the train. Um…Hajime couldn’t pull his pants down one-handed and he was trying to hold me down at the same time, so he let go of me in order to get his pants off. I took the opportunity to yank on all my clothes and run out of the house.”

Shizuo could feel a tight knot release inside of his chest, as relief filled his entire body. Hajime hadn’t actually managed to rape Izaya. The raven had escaped. He’d escaped in the nick of time. Thank God…

Shizuo closed his eyes and almost felt a smile make its way onto his face just because of how relieved he was to hear that at least one kind of trauma in Izaya’s life had been negated. The raven had gotten at least one break in his sorry excuse for a life before Shizuo had come along.

Unfortunately, there was still more to the story. But it seemed like the next part was actually going to be positive.

“I ran as fast as I could away from Hajime’s house.” Izaya was saying, fiddling with his fingers nervously. “I made it all the way to the train station, and I jumped onto the train. Didn’t buy a ticket. I just wanted to get away. I shoved myself all the way into the back of the train, found a spare spot on a bench, and curled up on it to hide from everything.”

“Your clothes had ridden up slightly so all your bruises and scrapes were showing.” Shizuo’s mother suddenly broke in, her voice soft and her eyes distant. Every single person looked up at the woman in shock, gaping at her unabashedly.
“N-Namiko?” Shizuo’s dad asked slowly, staring at his wife in disbelief. “How do you…know that?”

An excellent question. Shizuo wanted to know the answer to it as well.

But his mother didn’t answer the excellent question. She just took over the narration of the story, her hands still resting frozen on Izaya’s body and holding him firmly in place.

Izaya looked at Shizuo’s mother with a strange expression on his face. Shizuo couldn’t tell what that expression was. It wasn’t quite shock or disbelief, like Shizuo and his dad were so clearly displaying. It wasn’t expectation either, or a look that seemed to say his suspicions were confirmed. His eyes were wide as they looked at Shizuo’s mom, his body beginning to tremble slightly. He was subtly turning to face the woman, gaze locked only on her, and his hands left Shizuo’s chest to fist themselves gently in Namiko’s shirt. Izaya was completely enraptured by Shizuo’s mother. It was like his whole being was beginning to gravitate around her.

He was hanging on to every word that came out of her mouth, waiting for something.

“You were curled up tightly so no one could see your injuries, but I was right next to you on the bench, and because of that I could see the blood decorating your skin, not to mention the way your body was shaking.” Shizuo’s mom said, her eyes moving slowly down to lock with Izaya’s. “I placed my hand on your shoulder, and asked if you needed help. You flinched and shook your head, keeping it tucked into your curled up body.”

“I thought maybe you were going to push me too hard, or get up and leave.” Izaya added, his knuckles whitening as his fists tightened in Namiko’s shirt.

“I didn’t want to do either of those things, though.” Shizuo’s mom responded, her own grip on the small boy tightening as well. “So I began to tell you about my eldest son. The one who gets into fights all the time.”

Shizuo paused, his heart beginning to pound in his chest. Well…that had to be him. His mother was talking about him. And Izaya looked as if this was the conversation he was remembering as well. Had these two met long before Shizuo introduced them?

“You told me about him and about the medicine that works best on his injuries without hurting.” Izaya whispered, his voice shaking. “Then…you gave me that medicine. Without asking about anything else. You just gave it to me…helped me…and left.”

Namiko’s eyes filled with tears and a loud sob left her lips as she pulled Izaya fully against her body, holding him tightly to her as tears streak down her cheeks. “My poor baby.” She whispered with pain in her voice, kissing Izaya’s head and holding him tightly. “I can’t believe that was you. That poor, hurting boy was you. My little Iza-chan.”

Izaya closed his eyes and buried his face in her chest, shoulders shaking as sobs began to rack his own body.

“Mom.” He croaked, holding the woman tightly. “Mom, I…I…”

Shizuo’s mother squeezed Izaya even tighter, shutting her eyes in an attempt to block the tears streaming out of them.

Shizuo’s dad set the pizza down and went over to his wife and Izaya, wrapping his arms around the smaller boy from behind, nearly crushing him in between their two bodies.
But Izaya didn’t seem to mind. His shoulders kept shaking as tears ran out of his eyes, and he turned his watery red gaze to Shizuo’s father. “D-Dad.” He sobbed, one shaky hand going to grab Kichirou’s shirt as well.

“It’s okay, Izaya.” Shizuo’s dad said softly, hugging the raven as tightly as he possibly could without hurting him. “Mom and Dad are here, okay? Your Mom and Dad are finally here.”

Izaya sniffed and turned around to press into Shizuo’s dad next, crying onto the tall man this time.

Shizuo’s mother looked up at him, heart-wrenching pain and guilt filling her eyes, and she gestured him over. “Shizuo. You come here, too.” She got out, swallowing a lump in her throat as she kissed the top of Izaya’s head.

Shizuo stumbled over to the tight hug, slipping his own arms around Izaya and just offering silent support. He wasn’t Izaya’s dad, and he certainly wasn’t his mom, but…but he could offer a different support system that Izaya had never had before.

A boyfriend who actually loved him.

Izaya cried in the middle of their circle, overcome by everything crashing down onto him at once. All the care, all the memories, all the good, and all the bad, everything was too much for the small boy. He clutched onto Namiko and Kichirou, he looked gratefully up at Shizuo, he finally let all the grief that had been eating at him since he was a child take over his body.

Shizuo wasn’t sure how long they all stood like that in the kitchen, holding tightly to the raven boy who’d been tied into their lives longer than any of them had ever thought possible.

It had to be at least a few minutes, maybe ten or fifteen, before the raven managed to pull himself out of their circle, taking shaky breaths and composing himself, wiping harshly at his eyes in an attempt to get rid of his weakness.

“Izaya…” Namiko said softly, taking a step towards him. “You don’t have to do that.”

“We’re your family Izaya.” Kichirou added, smiling at him. “You can cry in front of us.”

“We love you.” Shizuo finished, and Izaya’s head snapped to look up at them all in shock. He opened his mouth, closed it again, opened it, and shut his eyes tightly.

“I-I went back to his house the next day.” Izaya forced the words out of his mouth, the syllables nearly stumbling over each other on the way out, like they were rushing to be heard before their host couldn’t talk anymore.

“I went back to try and make up with him and see if it was a misunderstanding. But when I got there…th-the door was open and the house was silent. It was like no one was there. I thought maybe Hajime might be asleep. S-So I went to his bedroom to check on him.”

Izaya pressed his lips tightly together, breathing deeply for a few seconds before shoving the next words out of his mouth. “He was screwing some random girl. He couldn’t get me, so he picked up some random girl in the middle of the night to screw instead.”

…

Shizuo.

Was.
Pissed.

He couldn’t even put his anger into official words. He wanted to rip out the lungs of the asshole who’d done this to Izaya. Who tried to rape him one night and then cheated on him an hour later. Was there no end to his depravity?! This guy needed to be wiped off the face of the earth!

Shizuo snarled like a beast and took a step towards the exit of the kitchen. Murder was the only thing on his mind. He needed to murder the son of Satan who had done this to Izaya. There was no excuse for something like this, and Shizuo highly doubted that anything about this situation could get any worse.

Oddly enough, it wasn’t his mother or his father who grabbed Shizuo to stop him from leaving (because they were too busy grabbing each other so they didn’t leave to commit homicide), but Izaya who wrapped his hands around Shizuo’s arm and yanked him to a stop.

Shizuo looked down at the raven in disbelief, opening his mouth to argue about why he couldn’t go and murder Hajime right then and there.

But Izaya cut him off, with that same desperate and rushed voice as before.

“She left as quickly as she could, and I didn’t want to have anything to do with Hajime anymore after that.” The raven spouted, his eyes wide as he looked up at Shizuo, silently pleading with him to stay and listen to the rest.

It was this silent plea, this sense that the worst part of the situation for Izaya was coming up and that he wanted Shizuo to hear it, that loosened the tension in Shizuo’s muscles. That allowed him to turn back around to face Izaya and give a single nod, steeling himself to stay in place as best as he could.

Izaya’s hands still tightened around Shizuo as he continued, just in case the blonde started to march off again.

“He came after me and began threatening me as I left. He made so many horrible comments and I don’t remember them all, but he saved the worst ones for when I was about to turn the corner and leave him forever.”

Izaya choked on air then, and stared down at his feet. Clearly, this memory was so horrible that he couldn’t even force the words out with this rushed desperation that was spurring him onwards. What could be even worse to talk about than rape for Izaya? What could it…

“That…that asshole!” Shizuo’s mother growled from her place in the kitchen.

Everyone turned around in shock to stare at the kind woman, who was now boiling over with fury.

“He threatened my babies?! He threatened toddlers?! What did he say? Did he threaten to rape them, too?!” She snarled, glaring right at Izaya.

The shocked look on the raven’s face was answer enough for all of them.

“Oh hell no!” Namiko yelled, snapping her fingers angrily in the air, her eyes flashing with venom.
“There isn’t any way disgusting vermin like that will be allowed to survive! No one messes with mama bear’s cubs and lives to tell the tale!”

“Where the hell is this Hajime guy?” Kichirou demanded next, eagerly supporting his wife and completely chucking the (now empty) pizza box into the trash can. With his last modicum of calm gone, Kichirou was ready to march alongside his wife and beat the shit out of the no-good ex-boyfriend of Izaya’s.

“And while you’re at it, tell us where your parents are.” Namiko growled, her eyes shooting death itself as her hands began to wring the air in front of her. It looked like she was preparing to wring some necks. The Heiwajima parents were on the warpath.

And Shizuo was all too eager to join them.

Except he knew Izaya was in shock right now. The way his wide red eyes were looking between all of them, in utter disbelief, his brain might very well be shutting down right now. Shizuo had heard of that before. Brains shutting down temporarily due to enormous shocks that they didn’t know how to handle. From the look on Izaya’s face, Shizuo could safely judge that the raven’s brain was giving up on him right now. He doubted Izaya could even tell them his last name right now, let alone the addresses and locations of the worst people who’d ever set foot in his life.

He needed some time to recover. Some time to realize that he had people supporting him now. Time to realize that his entire world had just been flipped upside down.

“Izaya,” Shizuo said as softly as he could with all the hatred seething in his veins. The boy numbly looked over at him, facial muscles frozen in that look of shock.

“Do you want to go home?” The blonde asked next, trying to keep his words as simple as possible so Izaya could comprehend them.

The raven stared at him for a few seconds, almost like he was looking right through him, but eventually nodded. A single, slow nod that seemed to take way too much effort for what the small boy could normally do.

“What about Hajime and his parents?” Kichirou growled, cracking his knuckles and glaring murderously at Shizuo. “They need to die, immediately.”

“I agree.” Shizuo said, his golden eyes still looking down at the shocked boy by his side. “But Izaya needs some time to think. He needs some time to himself in order to get all these new thoughts straightened out. We have to think of what Izaya needs, not what those assholes need.”

Shizuo’s parents both stared at him for a while, and Shizuo was overcome with a sense of oddness on how he was the logical one right now. He was the one calming everyone else down and getting them to think clearly while they boiled over with rage. It was incredible how much Izaya had changed him. It was incredible how much Shizuo could and would do for Izaya.

“Home.” The raven said numbly at his side, eyes still wide with shock as he stared at the floor.

“Yes. I’m taking you home.” Shizuo promised, glancing quickly at his parents as he laced his hand through Izaya’s, hoping they got the message.

Let Izaya rest now. Kill all the evil things later.

His father was the first to catch on to the plan. The tall man sighed and nodded weakly, placing a single hand on his fuming wife’s shoulder to stop her from running after the two teenage boys and
bending over to begin explaining something in her ear. It would be very hard to convince mama bear not to try and protect her cubs, let alone let them out of her sight for several hours, but if anyone could do it, then it was papa bear.

Shizuo decided to leave him to it, and he gently led Izaya out of the kitchen.

“Girls!” He called to Mairu and Kururi, noticing how the two of them were on their fifth game of Go Fish with Kasuka (he could see the tally-mark scoreboard set up next to their cards), and smiling at the little toddlers when their heads snapped up to look at him curiously.

“Shizu-nii! Shizu-nii is back from the kitchen!” Mairu cried in delight, jumping to her feet and running over to Shizuo’s leg. She latched onto it viciously and nuzzled her face into it, purring in delight at Shizuo’s appearance.

“Shizu-nii play Go Fish?” Kururi asked softly, padding over to Shizuo and smiling at him as she hugged his other leg.

Shizuo could feel his heart melt for these two little girls as they smiled at him so openly. How could anyone ever threaten these little angels?

Now he knew why Izaya was completely under their control.

“No. Shizu-nii is taking you home.” Shizuo told them, feeling a little guilty when he saw the crestfallen looks that crashed over their faces.

“Date day is over so we have to leave?” Mairu asked miserably, pouting up at Shizuo.

Shizuo paused at that. That was right, wasn’t it? Izaya and Shizuo had been on their date just that morning. It already felt like so much had happened since then…

And come to think of it, they still hadn’t even told Shizuo’s parents about how they’d just seen Hajime on their date, and how he was the reason that the entire thing was ruined. Shizuo should probably relay those details to his parents after he dropped the Oriharas off, once they’d had some time to cool down. It was crazy to think that there was already a new chapter of trauma in Izaya’s life that needed to be told, just nine months after the last major event had occurred.

He wondered if that sort of thing, hardship after hardship with rare breaks in between, was normal for Izaya.

He also wondered how Izaya must be feeling now, still clutching numbly to his hand without speaking a word, after receiving a very unexpected instance of goodness in his life.

“Unfortunately, yes. You have to go home now.” Shizuo said as gently as he could, dragging himself back into the present and bending over to offer his back to the little girls who were watching him. “It’s getting late, anyway. We want you all to be in bed on time.”

Mairu’s nose wrinkled in distaste even as she crawled onto Shizuo’s back, latching her arms around his neck with almost alarming strength. “Bedtimes for babies!” She declared mightily, huffing at the thought that she might have to have one. “We don’t need bedtimes! Right, Kuru-nee?”

Kururi nodded her agreement with her sister, but dutifully held her arms up in the air and waited for Shizuo to pick her up.

Shizuo did so, scooping one Orihara up in his right arm, hoisting another onto his back, and holding the hand of the final one, all of them ready to leave.
“Gotta come back to finish our game with Kasu-nii!” Mairu told Shizuo, waving wildly at Kasuka as he cleaned up the cards spread all over the floor. “Come back for Kasu-nii.” Kururi agreed, also giving a slight wave to their idol.

Kasuka paused in his clean-up of the living room to wave back, his flat face just as serious as ever as he watched Shizuo leave with all the Oriharas. No doubt, he’d be headed to the kitchen to get the run-down of what he’d just missed once they were all gone.

And then Shizuo could only pray that Kasuka’s calm nature would be enough to contain the rage of both Heiwajima parents as they recounted the horrible story of Izaya’s life. Shizuo didn’t want to see his parents on the news tomorrow being arrested for rampaging in the streets.

He just wanted to get Izaya home, let the raven sleep, and begin fixing the broken boy piece by piece until he was whole again. He just wanted to make Izaya happy, and give him the good life that he so desperately deserved.

And as the twins chattered for the entire walk back to Izaya’s house (since Shizuo really hated trains), Shizuo realized that he wanted to make the girls happy, too. He wanted to keep them safe and let them grow up in a good household with a nice family. He wanted them to grow up with his family. He wanted Izaya in his family.

He wanted the Oriharas in his life.

And he was pretty dang sure that his family agreed.

Shizuo had no idea what he could do in order to fix all the problems that he wanted to fix, and to incorporate the Oriharas officially into his family life, but he knew that he wasn’t going to rest until he came up with something. Until he got revenge on Hajime, told off Izaya’s “parents”, and made the Orihara siblings a part of the Heiwajima family, Shizuo wasn’t going to quit. That’s just what you did when you loved somebody.

You never gave up on them.

***

“I think I made a huge mistake in trusting you, Hajime.” The nervous male padded back and forth, shaking his head as he thought about the rumors he’d heard earlier that day.

“What are you talking about?” Hajime rolled his eyes with a sigh, clearly unimpressed by the other male’s frantic behavior. “Everything is going fine. I have it all under control.”

“I hired you to get Izaya to tell me about his family! Not bust up his date and get into a fight at the aquarium!” Suzuki yelled, glaring harshly at the bored boy sitting in front of him despite the anxiety racing throughout his body.

“And who told you there was a fight?” Hajime asked smoothly, giving Suzuki a self-righteous smirk. “One of my co-workers was there with her husband watching the dolphin show. She said she saw you approach the two of them, scare the crap out of Izaya, and then get into a fight with Shizuo! Now how in the world do you think that even remotely relates to getting Izaya to open up to me?”

Hajime rolled his eyes again, letting out another sigh. “You really don’t think long-term, Suzuki-san.” He said with fake sympathy in his voice. “That’s only my opening scene. In order to get what
“Do you even have a plan?” Suzuki demanded, wondering if he should cut ties with this undeniably shady boy right here and now. He’d never liked Hajime much when Izaya and him had been dating. In fact, he’d told Izaya to break up with him once before when he’d witnessed Hajime punishing Izaya for talking back to him. It wasn’t a healthy relationship. But Izaya had insisted that the two of them were in love. He’d said everything was fine. And Suzuki had stupidly believed him. Just like he had stupidly believed Hajime for this assignment.

“Of course I have a plan.” The boy insisted smoothly, smirking at Suzuki. “I just need a little information from you before I can enact it.”

“I refuse.” Suzuki said immediately. “I won’t tell you anything about Izaya. In fact, I wish I’d never brought you into his life again.”

“I should’ve just trusted that Shizuo guy.” Suzuki thought guiltily in his head, turning away from Hajime to keep locking up his office at the daycare. “I should’ve trusted him!”

Suzuki was so caught up in his thoughts as he closed and locked file cabinets, making sure his office was secure before he left for the night, that he didn’t notice a dark shadow falling over his body.

“Are you always the last one to leave the daycare, Suzuki-san?” Hajime’s cold voice asked, and Suzuki finally pushed in the last cabinet, twisted the lock on it with a sharp click before responding. “Yes. Why?”

The male nurse didn’t even have time to register the fist that crashed into the side of his head, slamming him into the wall and knocking him out cold.

Hajime calmly took the keys from Suzuki’s limp hand, reopening one of the file cabinets and sorting neatly through it.

“I just needed to make sure no one would see you spending the night here at your office.” The boy said casually to the unconscious nurse, answering his question as his fingers flicked through the files. He found what he was looking for and grabbed it with a smirk, taking out his phone to snap a quick picture of the information on it.

He glanced briefly at Suzuki before slipping the file back into place and closing the cabinet, locking it up again and throwing the keys on the nurse’s unconscious body.

“Thank you for all your cooperation. It was lovely seeing you again, Suzuki-san.” Hajime purred as he slipped out of the office, left the daycare, and headed off into the night.

Now he had something else to take care of. A threat that he needed to fulfill.

Chapter End Notes

Don’t you all just love Hajime? He's such a great guy...attempting to rape his boyfriend...hitting people over the head...stealing information from daycares...

So what evil plan is he trying to enact this time?! And what threat is he referring to?! ♡
Who knows? You’ll find out later, though!! See you on Wednesday!! <3
Strange Things (奇妙なことたち)

Chapter Notes

Alright, alright, alright! Here is the much anticipated next chapter! I hope it'll end up being to your liking (for the most part) and just like last time, there is a trigger warning within this chapter. But there's also a lot of fluff to (almost) make up for it! Anyway, now that I've told you that, my conscience is clear, but I have one more important thing to tell you guys that I know you'll all hate me for...so I'm gonna tell you in the end notes after you finish reading the chapter.

Right! Hope you enjoy! <3

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“Alright. We’re finally here!” Shizuo announced grandly, sweeping open the door to the Orihara household and smiling as the twins jumped eagerly off his back and dashed inside.

“Home! Home! Home! Home!” Mairu chanted over and over, running in a frantic circle like a chicken with her head cut off.

“Finally.” Kururi added, chasing after her sister with a small laugh.

“Yes. We’re all finally home.” Izaya said, smiling at his girls as he took his shoes off and slid his coat onto the rack by the door. He glanced over at Shizuo, his red eyes unusually careful as he looked the tall blonde up and down.

“Um…thank you very much, Shizu-chan.” Izaya said softly, feeling his cheeks blush red as he looked at the ground.

Izaya was embarrassed by the way he’d shut down like that in front of the Heiwajima family. There had been all those emotions flying around, all those crazy things they were saying, and all that…that…that love that he could feel being directed towards him. Everything had just been too much for him. He’d never experienced any sort of care like that, from anyone at all, and he’d never even imagined that care could be directed at him after someone found out about every tragic event from his life. After finding out about all the hardships and darkness in his life, Izaya figured anyone with an ounce of sense would have cut him out of their lives immediately. But the Heiwajimas…they only seemed even more determined to stay in it.

And those facts had just shut Izaya down, right then and there. He had very hazy memories of swaying in place in the kitchen as the Heiwajimas babbled around him, their language completely incoherent to him despite his fluency in 3 languages. He remembered Shizuo directing a very simple and concise question at him, and the words just floated around in the air like lazy bubbles, Shizuo’s face fuzzed out at the edges in Izaya’s shocked memory, until the words finally arranged themselves into something coherent. Then Izaya had tried to remember how to get his body to respond. He couldn’t figure out how his tongue worked, so he settled for a slow, focused nod.

The following events had become a blur. He recalled everything in the house being hazy and unfocused as they moved through it, a few more babbling voices joining Shizuo’s once they officially left the house, walking…home. Yes, they were walking to Izaya’s house.
Maybe halfway to his house, Izaya’s mind had begun to settle itself back into the state it belonged in. His vision started to clear up, the babbling words all around him laced themselves into an order that made sense, and the world stopped seeming like it was separated from him through distorted glass. Izaya said a few soft words to himself just to make sure everything really was working again, and then he just walked quietly alongside Shizu-chan, listening to the blonde chat with his sisters, and subtly tightening his grip on the boy’s hand.

He knew Shizu-chan had recognized that he was back in full order when the blonde squeezed back gently and turned to Izaya with a smile, pressing a small kiss to his cheek. Shizuo hadn’t tried any direct contact with him throughout the entire walk, probably too worried that he’d do something which would spiral Izaya even deeper into shock, but the blonde knew, he somehow knew, the very moment that Izaya was back to being himself. And he’d instantly shown a gesture of romance and devotion.

Izaya felt like he could’ve been thrown into shock right then and there if he hadn’t been…been so used to those sorts of gestures from Shizu-chan. He was used to loving and supporting gestures from the blonde. He was actually used to getting care from somebody.

Somehow, knowing that made Izaya feel even more grateful that it was the Heiwajima family whom he had decided to trust with his darkest secrets.

“You don’t have to worry about it, Izaya-kun.” Shizuo’s deep voice dragged Izaya back into the present, and the raven looked over to see the blonde smiling at him again. “I was happy to help you and your sisters get home.”

Izaya smiled back at him, happiness blossoming in his chest at the truth that he could hear in the blonde’s words just then. There was no doubt in Izaya’s mind – Shizuo was actually telling the truth. He didn’t have any suspicions about the blonde, not a single one, and that in itself was a massive step-up from Hajime.

The mere thought of Hajime’s name was usually enough to bring down any good mood Izaya was in, but seeing Shizuo smiling so kindly in front of him somehow negated that effect. It was like Shizuo was chasing all of the bad out of Izaya’s life with just his presence. Izaya knew nothing could be as simple as that. He couldn’t just start hanging out with the tall boy and suddenly expect all his problems to be solved.

But…it certainly felt wonderful to imagine that.

“I don’t think you’ve had dinner just yet, right Shizu-chan?” Izaya asked, glancing over at the blonde as he started to walk into the kitchen. “Do you want me to make you something quick before you go?”

Shizuo smiled at him and nodded, slipping off his shoes and coat by the door. “That would be great, Izaya. Thank you.”

Hajime had never thanked Izaya before. He’d simply taken whatever Izaya offered with that same “I’m-not-surprised-by-anything-you-do-and-so-nothing-is-good-enough” attitude that he always had. Shizuo was so different. He was like Hajime’s polar opposite.

“\textit{Maybe a polar opposite is just what you need to swing back around.}” The small voice suggested in Izaya’s mind as the raven started to rummage through his cabinets, looking for something to make a quick dinner with.
The voice could be right. If one force dragged him one way, into total negativity, then an exact opposite force could drag him the exact opposite direction: back into positivity. It made sense.

Izaya felt a buzzing in his pocket and realized that he hadn’t checked his phone in a while. Lord, what if something had gone wrong with the operation with Keiji?! Maybe the gangster had decided to cancel on him since Izaya hadn’t responded to his messages yet.

Izaya yanked his phone out and unlocked it hurriedly, red eyes flicking over his missed messages and searching for Keiji’s name.

He let out a sigh of relief when he saw nothing. His last text from Keiji was the one saying he would deliver the “video games” to Izaya the next time they met up upon Izaya’s direct instructions.

Izaya quickly shot the boy a text just so he could stop worrying about that transaction, telling Keiji to meet him at the sushi stand on Sunshine 60 in one week. There he would accept the “video games” and finally begin setting up the Purple Dragons to be taken down by the police. Soon, his business with the Cybers would be completed and he’d receive a nice chunk of money to go towards the girls’ birthday in about a month and a half.

Still…with some of the house bills coming up and no signs of parental support coming in, that money might end up going to the house instead of its occupants.

“Hey, do you want me to put the twins to bed?” Shizuo’s voice called from the living room, followed by the giggling sounds of two little toddlers running around in delight.

Izaya smiled despite himself at the image of Shizuo attempting to wrangle the two demons into their bedroom. He knew personally that it was much harder than it would seem to get two little toddler twins into bed when they had no desire to do so. In fact, even when they were tired, Mairu and Kururi could put up quite a fight trying to get out of bedtime.

Izaya had developed a few personal strategies to get the girls to bed, varying from pretending to be a demon and chasing them up to their bedroom to challenging them to a race and making their beds the finish line. He wondered if Shizuo had any special strategies from his time being a big brother to Kasuka. It would be interesting to find out.

“Please do!” Izaya called back, biting back the grin that was spreading all over his face. “I’ll start on dinner in the meantime.”

He knew the girls had already eaten back at the Heiwajimas. Namiko had promised to feed the girls dinner while Izaya and Shizuo were out, and Izaya had every faith within the kind woman to follow through with that promise. It was just him and Shizuo who needed to eat at this point in the day. And that actually helped Izaya a lot considering he only needed to feed two people instead of four.

A simple curry pot pie would probably be easy enough to make with what he had left over in the cupboards, and he’d been meaning to use that curry sauce mix for a while now. There was just enough in there for two pies. They’d be a little small, but that was okay. He could make a quick side-dish out of rice to help fill out the meal.

Izaya began to pull the desired ingredients from his cupboards, listening to the twins giggling like maniacs in the living room as Shizuo chased them around, growling playfully and making little threats about catching them and eating them alive.

Ah, so he was going with the bedtime monster route.

Izaya bit his lip to stop his smile from spreading any further than it already had, a warm feeling
buzzing pleasantly in his chest as he listened to the happy sounds.

“I’m gonna get you!” Shizuo called, and Mairu let out a little screech – no doubt the result of her sides being pinched playfully – and the twins began to beat their hasty retreat upstairs.

“Never!” Mairu called dramatically back down, her voice echoing down the stairs. “We shall make it to our fortress first!”

“Oh, that’s just what I want you to think!” Shizuo responded, and Izaya could hear abnormally loud footsteps booming up the stairs after the giggling twins. Shizuo was probably imitating Godzilla right now, marching slowly up the stairs with his arms outstretched and that dorky grin on his face.

Izaya could see that so clearly in his mind’s eye. Shizuo was just the best.

Izaya laughed to himself as he started rolling out some dough, his mind lost in images of Shizu-chan, playing with the girls upstairs as they got ready for bed.

The raven had no doubt the girls would want to play a few games in their bedroom before they actually agreed to go to sleep, and Shizuo was such a big softie that he’d most likely agree. They might play some checkers, or Shizuo would read them a bedtime story as they slowly began to drift off, happy and warm in the presence of Shizu-nii. Shizuo might hang around for a bit after they had finally drifted off, tucking them comfortably into their beds and kissing them on their foreheads. He’d give a little smile as he watched the two of them, sleeping so peacefully in their beds, and he’d have that loving look in his eyes that Izaya doubted he could ever find in anyone who wasn’t a Heiwajima. Then Shizuo would turn around and plod his way downstairs, heading over to the kitchen to see how Izaya was doing on dinner.

In his perfect little fantasy, Izaya would have already finished dinner by then, and the two of them could sit down to eat a nice, calming meal after all the decidedly not-calm events of the day. Shizuo might hold Izaya’s hand while they ate, and they could eat in either comfortable silence or in between casual chatter. They would just finish up a nice, quiet, home-cooked meal, and Shizuo would help Izaya clean up the kitchen. Actually, he might try to clean up everything by himself since Izaya had made the food. Ah…and he might accidentally break something so Izaya would end up helping anyway.

Izaya smiled, lost in his fantasy as he pictured the domestic scene, all the way up to the point where Shizuo would kiss him goodnight and make his way home. Yep. That was perfect.

Goodness, was he really fantasizing about Shizuo now?! That was so embarrassing!

Izaya could feel his cheeks blush red as he began to chop up some vegetables to put in the pot pies, struggling to get himself back under control. Really, just going and fantasizing about someone who wasn’t even technically his boyfriend. He doubted Shizu-chan ever fantasized about him. What was the matter with him?

“Get your head in the game, Izaya.” Izaya muttered to himself, examining the vegetables before grabbing a pot from the cabinets and setting it on top of his stove. “You need to focus! Start simmering the beef, add in all your spices and oils, and get working on this curry mix! There’s another good fifteen minutes of prep left before you even really get cooking, and you can’t afford to mess any of it up!”

To help spur himself along, he added, “There’s no way Shizu-chan will like you as much if you mess up his dinner.”
Right after these words left his mouth, though, Izaya knew they weren’t true. Shizuo would like him no matter if the curry came out fit for an emperor or if he burnt all the beef into lumps of charcoal. Dinner hardly mattered to the blonde compared to the person making it for him. He…he loved Izaya.

... All the more reason to make dinner as perfect as he possibly could for the one who loved him!

Using this far more positive fact of Shizuo’s love rather than the negative possibility of Shizuo’s disapproval, Izaya found his determination to make the perfect meal increase, and he was able to lose himself entirely in the act of making the curry for the pot pies. And he was even smiling while doing it, rather than frowning in utter concentration.

He was so wrapped up in his work that he didn’t notice the figure which entered the kitchen from behind him, the one which just stood there and watched him as he prepared dinner, completely silent.

Izaya hummed as he finished the curry and set it aside, eagerly beginning on the pie crust by rolling out the dough with expert, swift strokes of the rolling pin. Still, the figure watched him, completely content just to observe him setting up the pies.

It took a few more minutes for Izaya to notice anyone was even in the kitchen with him. Those minutes included preheating the oven and cutting out all the dough, pulling out two small bowls and laying the dough all along the inside of it, pouring the curry mixture into the bowls, and laying a final slice of dough over the top to seal in the curry with just a tiny slit in each dough slice for steam to escape through. In general…Izaya had no clue that someone was there until he finished everything involved in making the pies, had shut the door to the oven, and turned around to spot Shizuo, lounging against the counter with a soft smile on his lips as he watched the raven.

“Sh-Shizu-chan!” Izaya choked in shock, jumping back and gaping at the normally so loud blonde who’d just snuck up on him. “H-How long have you been standing there?”

Shizuo gave a soft laugh and walked over to Izaya, kissing him on top of the forehead tenderly. “Long enough to know that you hum Disney songs while cooking.” The blonde chuckled, his golden eyes sparkling as he smiled down at Izaya.

Izaya felt his cheeks blush red and he quickly turned to look at the oven so Shizuo couldn’t see them. “I hum Disney songs?” Izaya asked in embarrassment, twirling a strand of hair nervously in between his fingers. “I didn’t know that…goodness, I must seem so weird to you.”

“I love weird, if it comes from you.” Shizuo said easily, not even missing a beat as he wrapped his arms around Izaya from behind, hugging him tightly. “Because I love you.”

“I love weird, if it comes from you.” Shizuo said easily, not even missing a beat as he wrapped his arms around Izaya from behind, hugging him tightly. “Because I love you.”

Izaya let those words wash over him like warm water, closing his eyes and allowing the pleasant feeling to resurge in his chest. He was loved. Shizuo loved him.

“Thank you.” The raven whispered, reaching a hand up above his head to cup Shizuo’s cheek lightly. “I…I…thank you, Shizu-chan.” He still couldn’t quite bring himself to say those words back. The last time he had said those words, everything had gone wrong. The instant he’d said them, his bubble of happiness burst and his world crashed down around his feet. He was terrified of that happening with Shizuo, even if he knew that there was next to no chance of it. He wanted to say those words to the blonde…but he was too scared to do that right then and there.

Shizuo kissed the top of Izaya’s head, still holding him to his chest. “You’re welcome.” The deep voice said easily, not the slightest bit upset that the words hadn’t come out of Izaya’s mouth. Shizuo
was willing to wait for him. He was willing to let Izaya progress at his own pace.

God, he was perfect.

“I’m making curry pot pie.” Izaya announced, trying to drag himself into the present before he slipped into another domestic fantasy about Shizuo. Oh god. Fantasizing about the blonde while he was standing right there? How horrible would that be?

“Sounds good. Can I help with anything?” Shizuo asked kindly, running his fingers through Izaya’s hair next, a contented rumble coming from his chest.

Izaya leaned back against Shizuo, relaxing into the soothing motions of Shizuo’s hands in his hair as he responded, “You can help me make the rice, if you want. I bet even a beast can do that, right?”

Shizuo bit Izaya gently on the tip of the ear in retaliation for the snarky comment. “Oh, shut up.” The blonde chuckled, releasing Izaya and wandering over to the rice cooker laid out on the counter, humming as he observed it to make sure he knew how it worked.

Izaya compared Shizuo’s bites to Hajime’s. Hajime’s were meant to bring him pain. Shizuo’s were meant playfully and teasingly. So incredibly different. As usual.

“Alright. I think I can handle this thing.” Shizuo announced, straightening up from his intense examination of the rice cooker and glancing over at Izaya. “Where’s your edible rice supply?”

Izaya smiled at the odd wording and pointed to the cupboard right next to Shizuo’s head. “In there. I always keep it close to the rice cooker.” He said simply, spinning around to watch the pies as they baked in the oven, waiting for the crusts to turn golden brown. In about 45 minutes, they should be done, but Izaya liked to monitor his food on the off-chance that it finished early. The oven was a touchy thing and sometimes it would cook on weirdly high heat, while other times it barely cooked at all. It really couldn’t be trusted to cook anything in the time allotted on recipe sheets. Izaya had learned that the hard way.

So far though, everything seemed to be progressing at a decent pace. He could smell the pies baking, but they didn’t seem too far done for the few minutes they’d been in there. Still had to check up on them every now and then, but overall it looked promising.

Izaya heard some grunting and a slight ripping sound and he looked over his shoulder to see Shizuo fumbling with the rice bag, trying to figure out how to open it. It was a new bag, so that would naturally be a problem, but it seemed that Shizuo hadn’t seen the little lines which showed people where to rip the bags. He’d just torn his own hole in it and was using the rice scoop to grab big portions of rice, plopping them into the rice cooker with abandon.

Izaya bit his lip to stop a giggle from coming out (seriously, what a clumsy guy – he really was bad in the kitchen) and turned to examine the pies again, letting the blonde figure out everything with the rice cooker.

It took a few minutes, but Shizuo got everything set and proclaimed he was finished with a proud humph as he started to put the rice away. The big brute simply twisted the bag a few times to prevent any rice from coming out before plopping it back in the cupboard, and Izaya began to wonder if he’d ever opened a bag correctly in his life.

Nevertheless, the two boys struck up a small conversation while all the food was cooking, chatting about a few different topics here and there with Izaya continuously checking on the pies all the while. Mostly, they talked about school and about how they would act once the school year started.
up again the next week.

It was a complicated thing to think about: should they keep pretending to be enemies in front of everybody, or should they finally act like the friends they were? Izaya still wanted to do chases, but Shizuo didn’t want to cause any more damage to school property if he didn’t have to. Izaya was pretty sure Shinra was onto the fact that he was Shizuo’s tutor, and he was nervous about the doctor and Dotachin finding out about them, but Shizuo actually wanted to confirm Shinra’s suspicions and tell his friends everything. Well, not everything, but most of it. Izaya was still grappling fiercely with his new emotions towards the blonde, trying to fully understand them, but Shizuo seemed ready to pronounce his love for Izaya to anyone he came across. They had very different opinions on what they should do once school was back in session. It was a complicated conversation that didn’t stop even after all the food was finally ready to be eaten.

As Izaya pulled out the two pies and set them on the dining table, steaming and hot and smelling every bit as delicious as he’d hoped, and Shizuo scooped out two quick bowls of white rice and some soy sauce, they kept at the conversation with vigor.

“But what would everybody say if we just stopped fighting out of nowhere? How much attention would that bring to us?” Izaya pointed out, grabbing two sets of chopsticks and handing one to Shizuo before plopping down across from him.

“What could they possibly say that would be bad? I think even if we got a lot of attention, it would all be positive.” The blonde argued, thrusting his chopsticks into the pie and using them to cut it open, letting steam curl in the air in front of him as it was released from its baked prison. “In fact, I would prefer that attention to what I get right now from fighting you.”

“But fighting is so much fun!” Izaya whined, grabbing a bite of beef from inside the pie and popping it into his mouth. “We get to run around the entire school and practice parkour and jump over all kinds of barricades and fences and no one can stop us! Plus, I get to come up with new hiding spots all the time! It’s like a playground!”

Shizuo sighed, tearing off some crust and chewing on it briefly before responding. “Maybe, but I always hurl things everywhere and break nearly every inch of your little “playground”. Then I get in trouble, which causes my parents unnecessary trouble. I don’t want to be a burden to them if I don’t have to, you know?”

Izaya frowned, looking down at his curry pie as it steamed in front of him. That was true. Izaya had never thought about how much trouble Shizuo’s parents must go through with all his behavioral issues. Now that Izaya knew them so well, he didn’t want to cause Namiko and Kichirou any more trouble at all.

“Maybe we could have chases without you hurling things?” Izaya suggested lightly, still not willing to let go of such a thrilling portion of his day.

Shizuo hummed doubtfully but nodded, shoveling some curry into his mouth. “We could try it for a bit.” He agreed, and Izaya bounced happily in his seat as he continued on his own pie.

“But that doesn’t solve the problem of us not fighting anymore.” Shizuo pointed out. “I refuse to pretend that I still hate you, Izaya-kun. I don’t think I can do it anymore, even if I tried. I love you too much, and I know you’ve been through too much to deal with it. I don’t want you to doubt even for a moment that I love you more than anything else. If there’s even an instant where you worry about me possibly still hating you because I still sound like I do at school, I will eradicate it.”

Izaya stared at Shizuo in shock, locking eyes with the determined blonde as those intense golden
orbs met with his surprised ruby ones, conveying all their owner’s emotions with just that one look. Shizuo was telling the truth. He wouldn’t pretend to hate Izaya anymore because he wouldn’t risk Izaya thinking that he wasn’t loved.

Perfect, perfect, perfect! Why was Shizuo so stupidly perfect?!

Izaya ducked his head, breaking eye contact and pointedly shoveling some more of the pie into his mouth. “Okay.” He mumbled trying not to let the blush appear on his cheeks. “So we won’t act like we hate each other anymore. But what reason do we give for stopping all of a sudden?”

Izaya knew their image of mutual hatred was the strongest point within either of their school personas. Take that well-established appearance away, even for just a bit, and the whole school would be confused beyond belief. What excuse could they possibly give?

“Do we just say that we randomly became friends over the break?” Izaya wondered aloud, staring at his curry as he tried to come up with a solution. “Like, you saved me from a gang or something and then we realized that we don’t hate each other as much as we thought?”

“That sounds like the start of a cheap romance novel.” Shizuo snorted. “How about we just…tell the truth?”

“But that would mean everyone knowing that I tutor you and Shinra and Dotachin might do something!” Izaya blurted nervously, biting his lip as his leg bounced nervously in place. “Plus, just because I tutor you doesn’t mean we stopped hating each other. Some people might not buy our total change of character.”

“Then…” Shizuo took a deep breath, like he was gathering his strength for a great trial, and reached a hand slowly across the table to rest on Izaya’s.

Izaya looked up to meet his eyes, confused by the look he saw there. It was nervous and scared, like his next words would ruin whatever peace they’d found together if he said them wrong. But it was also a look of determination, like Shizuo would never let himself back down from saying these words even if it did so.

“Maybe we could tell them…” The blonde said slowly, still looking straight into Izaya’s eyes. “That we started dating.”

Izaya froze in shock, his red eyes starting to widen at the insinuation behind Shizuo’s words.

“W-What?” He croaked out, heart pounding in his ears as he tried to make sure he knew what Shizuo was saying. He desperately wanted the blonde’s words to mean what he thought they meant, but he needed to make sure before he said anything else.

Shizuo gulped and looked deep into Izaya’s eyes as he said, “Izaya-kun, I want to be your boyfriend. Your official one. I want everyone to hear about it. I want everyone to know that we’re dating, that you’ve met my family, that I’ve met your sisters, and that we’re closer than we ever have been in the past. I want everyone to know that you are mine and I am yours. I…I want to start dating for real, instead of just one quick weekend date. I want you, and I want you to want me.”

Shizuo took a deep breath. “Please? Please be my boyfriend?” He asked softly, hand tightening gently around Izaya’s.

Izaya stared numbly at Shizuo, not sure of what he should say. He already knew his answer, of course…but how did he word his feelings?
“I…I already considered us unofficially official, Shizu-chan.” The raven whispered softly, intertwining his fingers with Shizuo’s on the table. “I’d love to make it officially official as well. I… I…lo…lo…” He still couldn’t just get the words out, but he was pretty sure from the overjoyed look on Shizuo’s face, and the excited way that the blonde immediately jumped out of his seat to run over and kiss Izaya full-on the lips, that he knew what Izaya meant.

***

Strange things happen in the night.

Sometimes they’re good, like two mortal enemies officially deciding to display their true feelings and be lovers. Or like a curry pot pie going cold because said lovers were too busy kissing each other for half an hour to realize that their food was losing its heat. Or like one lover tenderly wrapping up all the leftover food and giving it to his new boyfriend with a kiss so the other could eat it on his way home. Or that homebound lover creating new fantasies in his mind about his boyfriend as he ate said leftovers in the wintery air, realizing that the fantasies now revolved around everybody knowing about his new relationship, and around said relationship turning into a marriage. Or even the lover who was already in his house going upstairs to check on his sisters, and realizing with a massive jolt of overwhelming joy that left him crying as he kissed their foreheads the fact that they had a family now to help provide for them. Maybe one of the best things that can happen in the night is when two parents who had just found three neglected children which they loved with all their hearts started looking up solutions to those children’s problems and began learning about something called “adoption”.

But for all of those wonderful strange things which happen in the night, equally horrible strange things happen as well.

Like a lone figure who’d just stolen information from a daycare making his way towards an unsuspecting house at the end of a street. Or that figure silently picking the lock on the door to the house and slipping inside. Maybe that figure will even wander around the house for a bit, deciding to write a quick note and dropping it on the dining room table where a lovely dinner had occurred just hours before. Then that figure might head upstairs and find a certain bedroom occupied by two tiny children, sound asleep, happy and content in their beds. Something bad like that figure leaving the house with two bundles under his arms could happen in the night. Or something like no one even waking up to realize that two children had just been kidnapped could happen as well.

Yes, strange things happen in the night. Some are amazing and pure, and others are despicable and profane. But they do happen. And people find out about them when the morning comes the very next day.

***

The very next day after Shizuo and Izaya officially became boyfriends (Shizuo still couldn’t believe it!), Shizuo had gone downstairs to find his parents poring over some paperwork that they’d just printed out. It was a Sunday, the last day of winter break before school would start up again, and Shizuo was needless to say shocked to see his parents were already awake and working.

“Mom? Dad?” The blonde asked as he rubbed his eyes, frowning at them in confusion. “What are you two doing?”

“Oh nothing!” His dad said hurriedly, placing some blank sheets of paper on top of the files they were going over. “Just some bills and things that involve the future of our family from now on and forevermore.”
He got a sharp elbow in the side from his wife and a vicious glare to boot. “Subtle.” Shizuo’s mom hissed, rolling her eyes at her idiotic husband. Shizuo’s dad kissed her loudly on the cheek, wiggling his eyebrows at her. “But you love me anyway!” He purred, and Shizuo’s mom laughed as she kissed him back.

Despite his confusion and slight suspicion, Shizuo still smiled at the sight of his parents. Relationship goals right there.

“Did you and Izaya have a good time last night?” Shizuo’s mom suddenly asked, cutting off Shizuo’s train of thought. He looked up to see both his parents grinning rather wickedly at him. “You stayed out quite late after all…” His dad sang suggestively, making certain motions with his hands that Shizuo did not care to repeat.

“We didn’t do anything like that.” Shizuo retorted, his face red as he walked over to his parents and sat next to them on the couch. “We…we’re officially dating now. We decided last night to become boyfriends.”

His mother gasped, delight filling her warm eyes as she grabbed her son in a hug. “Oh my goodness, really?! That’s wonderful, baby! Truly wonderful!” She laughed, kissing him happily on the cheek as she celebrated her son’s first real relationship.

His father looked confused. “I thought you two were already official.” He muttered, scratching the top of his head.

“Oh hush, Kichi. You don’t know what you’re talking about.” Shizuo’s mom scolded, looking happily back at Shizuo. “I’m so thrilled for the two of you! Are you going to make it official at school, when you go back tomorrow?”

Shizuo nodded, trying to conceal a small blush that was beginning to appear on his cheeks. “That’s the plan.” He said shyly, coughing a little and looking away from the overjoyed look in his mother’s eyes.

“Good for you! You get it, boy!” His father cheered, reaching over to slap Shizuo supportively on the shoulder. “We are with you all the way! Even to the point where you finally listen to your darling little sisters and start trying to make babies!”

Shizuo choked on air and nearly fell off the couch. “W-W-W-We are not to the point of making babies!” He got out, face redder than a tomato as his arms flailed about wildly. “And that’s not even genetically possible! And…” He suddenly paused, thinking about the wording his father had just used. “Did you say little sisters? They aren’t my little sisters. They’re Izaya’s.” He said in confusion, and his father coughed and looked the other way, avoiding his confused gaze and the pointed glare of his mother.

Shizuo could feel his heart begin to pound in his chest. “Is…there something you two are planning?” Shizuo asked slowly, his eyes flicking to the “bills” currently being covered by stacks of blank paper.

“Ahhhh…” His father said, looking at his mother.

“Ummm…” His mother responded, looking helplessly back.

Before Shizuo could push any further on the matter, the phone began to ring.

“Saved by the bell!” His father declared, pointing towards the phone and grinning at Shizuo. “Please get that, my dear boy.”
Shizuo scowled but dutifully got up and walked over to the phone. Just before he answered the ringing device, he made sure to shoot his parents a glare that let them know he would be continuing this interrogation after the call.

He yanked the phone out of its receiver and put it to his ear with a huff. “Hello?” He asked grumpily, and then, “Heiwajima residence.” As an afterthought.

“Shizu-chan!” A panicked voice cried on the other end, the sound itself strangled with tears and gasping for air with each syllable.

Shizuo could feel every muscle in his body freeze, terror cascading down on him like ice water. There was only one person who called him that…and he’d never heard him sound this scared.

“Izaya? What’s wrong?” Shizuo asked, fear gripping his heart as his hand clutched the table the phone was resting on. “Are you okay? What’s going on?”

“I-I-I-It’s the girls.” Izaya sobbed on the other end, gasping for breath in between words, barely managing to say anything at all. He sounded like he was in the middle of a panic attack, breathing hard and crying and freaking out on every level. The words he was managing to get out were shaky and weak, and lined with a high note of mania that Shizuo couldn’t miss even through the phone. His boyfriend was breaking down. And when he mentioned his girls, Shizuo could feel the same panic strike his own heart.

“What about them?” He asked harshly, already fearing the words that would come from the other side of the phone. Considering what he’d heard yesterday, considering the one person who had ever scared Izaya, considering that Shizuo now knew the reason why he scared Izaya so much, Shizuo had an awful feeling that he knew exactly which words were going to come out of his boyfriend’s mouth next.

Unfortunately, he was right.

“He has them!” Izaya wailed, no longer even trying to keep in his tears as he cried on the other end, hysteria overtaking the small boy to the point where his next sentence was almost lost in a torrent of sobs. “Hajime has Mairu and Kururi! He took them in the middle of the night!”

The only sound in the Heiwajima living room was of the table breaking in Shizuo’s grip.

Chapter End Notes

Oh. My. God.

Hajime is not only an attempted rapist, a source of domestic abuse, a cheating boyfriend, a prideful maniac, a perpetrator of assault and battery, and a thief, but he’s a kidnapper too?! What a great villain resume for this guy to be building up, right?

……man, I hate him so much.

And now onto the thing that I know you'll all hate ME for. Sooooo...you know how I had regional competitions not too long ago, and my team qualified for state? Well...state competition is this weekend so I won't be updating on Sunday!

……yeah.....
Have fun with this cliffhanger until next Wednesday! Loveyoubyepleasedon'tkillme! <3
Chapter Notes

I'm baaaaaack! Hello to all of you! I'm so happy that no one seems to hate me (even if some people are pretty mad) that I left you all on that unpleasant cliffhanger. The following chapter will be moving us towards the final showdown with Hajime, Izaya, and Shizuo, so that fight is coming up! Sadly though, it is not here just yet. Now...I seem to be having to put a lot of these but...trigger warning at the end! Another reason to hate Hajime being placed ever so nicely right at the end. Like we needed one.

And speaking of hating Hajime, I am going to post a one-shot right after I finish posting this chapter as an apology for not updating on Sunday, and that one-shot is going to be all about Hajime hate mail! I'm taking a lot of the comments (I think around 15 or so) that some of you guys have sent in about how much you loathe Hajime and I'm having the characters of "Private Lessons" react to them! It's sort of like a game show (which is a format idea I got from Kanra_chan's Durarara!! Bachelor fic) and it'll be going up shortly after this! You might want to read it after this chapter to cool you down by knowing that many other people hate Hajime, too.

And now that my spiel is over, here's the next chapter! <3

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

“Have you tried calling the police?” Namiko asked, her voice incredibly calm despite the fury that was overflowing in her normally so warm eyes. “They might be able to help.”

Izaya shook his head frantically, panic and mania still riding throughout his system as his hands flittered nervously on his lap. He couldn’t calm down, no matter how hard he tried. The boy who’d tried to rape him when they were dating, who’d controlled him to the point where he thought he was nothing without someone to tell him what to do, who’d beaten him down to his lowest and threatened to do far worse to the people he loved more than anything else in the world…now had those very same people within his grasp.

Izaya still remembered that note on the kitchen table, seemingly so innocuous at a first glance, but utterly horrible on the inside.

“My darling Izaya,” It began. “It’s been a lovely eleven months without me, hasn’t it? Well, at least it has been for me. I’ve made several new…friends…and I see that you’ve made one as well. He’s quite an interesting fellow, your Heiwajima Shizuo. Dating a monster. You really have sunk low, my love. But no need to fear! I shall bring you to the top once again, and by very simple means! All you have to do is know what a horrible person you are for leaving me. See? Easy! Now here’s what’s going to happen: I’m going to hurt your precious little sisters, with you aware of the fact that it’s all your fault. After one week where I do anything I can imagine to your bratty little girls, you’ll get them back. If you return to me as my boyfriend. Of course, you’ll have my word that I’ll never touch them again. If you don’t become my boyfriend after that week, however, then I’ll just keep the girls until you decide otherwise. Either way, they’ll be with me for one week and there’s nothing you can do about that. Oh. And break up with that Heiwajima boy. He isn’t worth your time, and you belong to me. Come back to me, my darling. We’ll be on top once again. I love you. <3”.
It hadn’t been signed, and it wasn’t written in his usual handwriting, but Izaya didn’t need any of that to know who it was from. Hajime had his girls. His precious little angels. He couldn’t stop those panicked thoughts from flying through his head, over and over, as his chest heaved with hyperventilating breaths. He couldn’t help it. He was breaking down.

“I-I-I-I can’t call the c-c-cops.” Izaya hiccupped, still barely able to talk past the tightness in his throat and the sobs he was suppressing in his chest. “Th-th-th-they’ll take m-m-my girls once they figure out…”

“Your family situation.” Namiko finished for him, her fists clenching in anger as her jaw tightened at the same time. She didn’t like this situation one bit.

“Izaya,” Kichirou said softly, sitting down next to his wife on the couch and looking at Izaya with barely concealed rage of his own. His voice was carefully measured as he spoke, like he was thinking about each word and its tone before he said it so that he didn’t blow up like he truly wanted to. “This is a hostage situation. A hostage situation. It’s something for the cops to deal with.”

Izaya knew the logic behind the proposal, but he still shook his head vigorously no. “I-I can’t!” He insisted, drawing his knees up to his chest and hugging them tightly, feeling tears well up in his eyes again as his heart pounded in his chest. Just the mere thought of his girls being taken away from him was too much. He couldn’t handle it. He…he…he had no idea what he would do if they were all put into the care system.

“We have to tell some kind of law enforcement.” Kichirou insisted, frowning at Izaya as a vein of anger pulsed in his forehead. “This is flat-out illegal. Your ex can go to jail for this, like the vermin he is. Just show them the note. Show them how your girls are gone. This is something for them to handle.”

“Do you even know where Hajime might be keeping your girls?” Namiko asked next, raising a valid point as her eyes locked with Izaya’s. “How could you possibly find out?”

“I’m an information broker.” Izaya said stiffly, his body tightening even further. “I can figure it out myself.”

“You’ll get hurt if you try to use any of your “informant” contacts.” Shizuo said, finally cutting into the conversation as he walked into the room, bearing a tray of tea and a very deep frown of barely suppressed fury. He set the tray down on the table in between them all and sat beside the curled form of Izaya, wrapping a gentle arm around his shoulders and pulling him over to his chest. Izaya let himself be pulled against the strong body of his boyfriend, still curled tightly into a ball as panic shot through his veins like lightning blasts. He couldn’t even be comforted by Shizuo right now. Nothing could calm him down at all.

“I won’t get hurt.” He insisted with a voice as brittle as ice, staring straight at the teacups on the table. “I c-c-can do it myself.”

“Not in your current state.” Shizuo deadpanned, rubbing his hand up and down Izaya’s arm slowly. “Look at yourself. You can’t move. You can barely speak. Who’s to say how capable you’d be of handling gangs? Izaya, maybe when you’re yourself you could do it, but right now you can’t.” Shizuo’s voice was soft, yet brutally honest, cutting through all of Izaya’s defenses as effectively as a blade through rice paper. Izaya could feel his hopes being dashed with every horribly true word that Shizuo spoke, almost worse than they’d been when he first read the note.

Izaya felt his very spirit break as his only option to help his girls, his only way out, was crushed in
front of him.

He slumped against Shizuo, body going completely limp with defeat as he stared dejectedly into space.

“Then…maybe if I just go back to him, he’ll let them go.” He said weakly, unable to think of anything else.

“No.” Shizuo said harshly, his hand squeezing Izaya’s arm tightly as if to accentuate his point. “That’s exactly what this bastard wants.”

“What else can I do, Shizuo?!” Izaya cried, shoving Shizuo away from him and sliding over to the other end of the coach as fast as he could. He glared through teary eyes at his boyfriend, hugging his legs tightly to his chest again as though it could somehow protect him. “I have no other options! I can’t help them in any other way!” He screamed, trying his best to hold in his sobs as they threatened to spill out once again.

“Yes, you can.” Shizuo insisted, standing up and walking around the back of the couch. He slowly moved over to the place just behind Izaya, his movements as careful as if he was approaching an injured animal.

Izaya’s red eyes followed him warily, entire body tense as his boyfriend came up behind him, gently placing his hands on Izaya’s slim shoulders.

“We can find another way.” Shizuo promised softly, leaning over to kiss the top of Izaya’s head. “I wish you’d let us call the police, but if you really don’t want to, then I know there’s another option besides giving in to Hajime’s demands.”

Izaya sobbed, burying his face in his hands as panic, mania, and grief crashed over him like a tidal wave, slamming his delicate body into oblivion once again. He felt so helpless. So ridiculously, stupidly helpless!

Shizuo’s hands began to move gently on Izaya’s shoulders, squeezing and rubbing the knots of tension out of them. Izaya just continued to cry, the sobs gradually growing softer as Shizuo continued to massage his shoulders. He was so gentle, and his hands felt so nice…Izaya really had had no idea that Shizuo could do something like this. Yet again, the blonde was surprising him.

But as relaxing and calming as the massage was, and as pleasant as the surprise of who it came from was, the panic and grief raging in Izaya’s system did not go away completely. He could only straighten up and take a few shallow breaths, getting rid of his tears, as his mind tried to calm down. His heart wouldn’t stop racing with fear, but at least his mind was a little clearer.

“Thank…thank you, Shizu-chan.” Izaya said softly, and he felt Shizuo press another kiss to the top of his head before the blonde walked around the couch again to sit down beside Izaya. He didn’t say anything, and Izaya was glad for that. It was sort of like Shizuo offering silent support, as well as the option to avoid talking about that support if it made Izaya uncomfortable. Shizuo respected boundaries and he knew his limits.

If only Izaya could figure out his own limits and abilities for himself.

“I don’t know what else there is to do.” The raven admitted again, looking up at Namiko and Kichirou sitting across from him. “Beyond illegal activities, I have no idea how I can help without giving Hajime what he wants.”

Both parents looked at Izaya with a curious mixture of fury and concern in their eyes. They were
furious at Hajime, but concerned for Izaya’s well-being at the same time. No doubt, they’d be able to offer opinions or ideas that satisfied both of those feelings if they just thought hard enough.

“Are you sure you won’t call the police?” Namiko tried one more time, locking eyes with Izaya.

He nodded firmly, too terrified with the consequences of that decision to consider it. The police would only make things complicated. Hell, they might even call Izaya’s parents back home and lord knows he didn’t need to deal with the other devils in his life right now. He couldn’t create any more problems than what he already had and the police would just turn into another problem.

Namiko sighed and looked at her husband, the two of them seeming to exchange a silent conversation before their heads moved back to face Izaya.

“Then we’ll do something ourselves.” Kichirou declared, glaring fiercely as he grabbed some tea off the tray, looking into the dark liquid as though it was the source of all evil in the world. “We’ll find this Hajime guy and where he’s keeping the girls, beat up Evil Bastard of the Year and rescue those sweet angels, and then we’ll call the police to arrest said Evil Bastard for kidnapping.”

“We could get charged with breaking and entering if we talk to the police after busting the girls out.” Shizuo pointed out, inciting a deadly glare from his father. Shizuo held up his hands in surrender, gold eyes flicking over to look at Izaya. “I’m right though, aren’t I?” He asked, looking at Izaya with a frown.

Izaya bit his lip and nodded, wishing with all his heart that the situation were different. Hajime was smart enough to twist the law like that: get them in jail for breaking into his home even as he was arrested for something far worse.

“We just need to get the girls and keep him away from them.” Izaya said aloud, staring at the tea that was left on the tray. “Chances are, Hajime won’t come after them if he knows we can prove that he kidnapped them, and he won’t press charges for breaking and entering. He won’t press any charges unless it’s to negate charges going up against him.”

“So what I’m hearing is that we can’t send this bastard’s ass to jail where it belongs?” Kichirou scowled, eyes burning with hatred. “I’m hating the guy more and more!”

“And what do his parents think of all this shit?” Namiko added angrily, startling them all with her rough language. She looked fiercely at them all, her eyes daring them to say something about it. “What? A mother can’t cuss when she knows there are some parents who are seriously screwing up their job of parenting?” She demanded, glaring hard.

“That’s not it, honey!” Kichirou assured her instantly, waving his hands back and forth hastily and pressing a small kiss to her cheek. “We’re all just happy that you hate him as much as we do. Right, boys?” He looked pointedly at Izaya and Shizuo and both teenagers nodded their heads frantically, not willing to incite the wrath of the dangerous woman in front of them.

Namiko seemed to be at least slightly appeased by this and she settled back into her seat with a grunt, looking directly at Izaya. “Setting aside this boy’s horrible parents for now,” She started again, a frown coating her face already with the thought of what she was about to say. “We need to find our girls before he does anything to them. Do you have any ideas of where he might have taken them, without going to your gangs for more information?”

Izaya shook his head miserably. “I already tried to think of places on my own.” He said with sadness filling every inch of his voice. “I thought about his house, I thought about our old hang-out spots, I even thought about the areas he told me he always went to when he wanted to be alone. Nothing
would work to hide two small children and do…and do…who knows what to them.”

Shizuo held his hand, and squeezed it gently, silently supporting him like before.

“Maybe we could still check his house.” The blonde suggested, looking at Izaya carefully. “You might not have seen every inch of it, or know each and every hiding place that he could have in that huge mansion. Out of all the areas you mentioned, the house sounds like the most promising.”

Izaya’s red eyes flickered up to meet Shizuo’s, a tiny flame of hope beginning to rekindle itself in his chest. “Do you really think so?” He asked softly, looking almost desperately into his boyfriend’s eyes for reassurance. For confidence. For determined belief that this idea could be correct.

He wasn’t disappointed when he saw the blazing furnace that lit up those golden orbs like metal lanterns of the sun.

“I’m positive.” Shizuo said flatly, holding Izaya’s hands tightly in his own. “And even if we’re wrong, then I’m even more damn positive that we’re gonna find your girls no matter what. None of us will rest until we do.”

Izaya’s eyes widened at that comment and he slowly looked around the room to observe the Heiwajimas gathered around him. Their eyes all burned with the same light, the same protective determination that he never thought possible, and they were all looking at him as though his problems were their sole responsibility in life. As though the girls’ disappearance was more important than anything else on the planet could ever hope to be.

They cared just as much as he did.

Izaya ducked his head and squeezed his eyes shut, trying to swallow back the knot that had formed in his throat. The knot was a strange being of convoluted emotions, all thrown into one massive presence constricting the air in his body. It was a knot of fear and terror for the fate of his darling girls. It was a knot of anger and hatred for the horrible boy who was threatening them. It was a knot of sadness and pain for the absence of his loved ones. But it was also a knot of gratitude and disbelief for the love of the Heiwajima family. It was a knot of love itself for these crazy people who were willing to do so much for him and his sisters. It was a knot of love for Shizuo, Namiko, Kichirou, and heck, even Kasuka. It was a knot of love for Mairu and Kururi too, as his perfect little angels. It was a knot of love for his family. Because right now, in this moment, looking at all those faces watching him with such fiery determination and simultaneous care, Izaya truly believed that he had found his family.

“A-Alright.” Izaya sniffed, swallowing hard past the knot and meeting Shizuo’s eyes at last. “Let’s go to Hajime’s house.”

“Better make it just you and Shizuo.” A flat voice said from over towards the kitchen.

Every head in the living room turned in shock to look at Kasuka, leaning against the entrance to the kitchen with that same emotionless expression on his face, directed at Izaya as usual, but without any sort of desire burning in those eyes. No…instead, in those eyes, Izaya saw the same fire as he could see in all of the Heiwajimas. He could see the fire of his family.

“You’ll want Mom and Dad to be here to give you an alibi in case you need one.” Kasuka continued flatly, his burning eyes locked with Izaya’s ruby orbs. “And I’ll stay behind to make sure they don’t break and call the cops. Sound good?”

Izaya looked over at Shizuo, at his incredible boyfriend, just staring into the molten gold that filled
him with warmth and hope. “We find the girls, make Hajime pay for what he did, get them to safety, and have a nice alibi waiting for us just in case.” Izaya summarized, still looking at Shizuo. “I think it’s a great plan.”

“I think it’s perfect.” Shizuo agreed, his words ending in a slight growl as he started to stand up from the couch, fists clenching by his sides. “Especially if the “making Hajime pay” part includes me punching a meteor-sized hole in his stupid face.”

Izaya had no objections to that addition of the plan. Not a single one at all.

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"Your precious brother might be coming soon.” Hajime purred, trailing his finger absently along the wall as his electric blue eyes gazed greedily out at the sidewalk view through the window. “Won’t that be great, girls? You get to see him again.”

There were a few sniffles and sobs from behind him, but no response other than that. Hajime’s expression grew dark as he turned around to glare at the two toddlers, tied up on the floor with one strong rope attached to a metal ring keeping them in place where they were.

“When I talk to you, I expect to be answered.” Hajime growled, his blue eyes flashing at the girls and causing them to flinch away from him in fear. They ought to be frightened of him by now. They hadn’t even been with him that long and their faces were already blossoming with purple and blue bruises, creating ugly patterns on their childish skin, and one of their heads was bleeding from where Hajime had cracked it open on the hard ground.

The brat deserved it. She’d tried to bite him. And it looked like they weren’t being any more cooperative now, flinching away from him in fear without a single syllable escaping their lips.

When he got no response other than more whimpering and a few tears, Hajime stalked over to the girls, grabbing the one with braids by her hair and yanking her up onto her feet.

The small child cried out in pain, her hair being painfully yanked out as a crushing grip grabbed her arm, holding her firmly in place and forming even more bruises where it rested. But even though she was standing now, Hajime didn’t relinquish his grip on her hair, simply tugging on it even more with harsher strength as tears came to the little girl’s eyes and sobs escaped her throat. Finally, with a harsh ripping sound, Hajime tore his hand away from her head and a small clump of the girl’s hair with it.

The girl shrieked in pain and began to cry some more, whimpering as she looked at her hair, cast aside on the rough stone floor like a piece of trash.

Her twin crouched on the ground tried to bite at Hajime’s ankle, but he simply kicked that one in the mouth, sending her crashing into the wall with a swiftly swelling lip oozing crimson blood.

Then Hajime turned his attention back on the little girl in his hands. “If you’re the chatty one,” He began coldly, shoving his face right in hers as the girl flinched away. Hajime frowned at the interruption to his demand and slapped her across the face, drawing yet another cry from the girl before he yanked her chin harshly in his direction so she would look at him.

Look at him with those terrified eyes that made him feel so powerful.

“Speak up and respond to my questions!” He yelled, making the small girl’s entire being begin to tremble with panic.
“I-I-I-Iza-n-n-nii.” She managed to stutter out, tears streaming down her beaten face as she shied away from the terrifying boy in front of her. “W-W-W-Want Iza-nii.”

“Iza-nii.” The one on the ground agreed weakly, pushing herself up from the wall with a quiet sob.

Hajime grinned nastily at having gotten his way and dumped the small girl on the ground, kicking her harshly over to her sister.

The child cried out in pain, clutching her stomach tightly as a deeply purple color began to blossom under her shirt.

Hajime looked at it in disinterest, barely noting the utter pain on the girl’s face and the horror on her twin’s as she ran over to help.

“Blunt trauma. The kind of trauma that occurs when a body part collides with something else, usually at high speed.” Hajime muttered, one of Izaya’s stupid lectures from back when they were dating coming into his mind. “Blood vessels inside the body are torn or crushed either by sheer force or a blunt object. Examples are car accidents, physical assaults, and falls.” He glanced at the purple area on the child’s stomach, and the way she was starting to cough like she was having trouble breathing. “One symptom of internal bleeding is a deep purple area in the location of injury.”

A smug smirk found its way onto Hajime’s face as he observed his handiwork, watching the second girl cry over her tortured twin, hugging her head without a clue as to what to do.

“A-any signs of internal bleeding after a trauma should be treated as a medical emergency. The injured person needs to be evaluated in a hospital emergency room, seeing as it can be life-threatening.” He finished gleefully, walking back over to the window as the girls cried behind him. “Better get here fast, Izaya. Your girls might not even last that week I promised you.”

“Evil.” A soft voice said from behind him. “Blue-eyed man hurt Mairu. Blue-eyed man evil!”

Hajime didn’t even turn around to look at the grief-stricken toddler behind, simply waving a dismissive hand in her direction. “I don’t really care about you girls. All I want is your brother.” He said flatly. “You can both die for all I care.”

This comment incited yet another sob, and the girl decided to turn her attention to comforting her twin, whispering small hushed words that Hajime couldn’t hear and didn’t really care about.

All he could think about was Izaya’s beautiful, flawless body, and his need to add flaws and markings of his own to that work of art. Purple blossoming all over the pale stomach, lines of bloody red trailing down the delicate arms, crimson gashes torn out of the swan-like neck and graceful legs, and beautiful splashes of blue, yellow, purple, and brown bruises to decorate all the space left over. Add streaming tears to the mix, and he had a vision of ecstasy.

“Orihara Izaya.” Hajime breathed out, closing his eyes and letting the fantasy overtake his mind. “I’ll bring you back to me, forever.”

The evil boy had already guessed that Izaya was on his way back to him, but he had no idea whatsoever that Izaya wasn’t alone. And that the person the raven was bringing with him was even angrier and more determined than he’d been when they’d fought briefly before.

There was a massive fight coming.

But who was going to win?
I think a better question to ask would be how many of us officially think Hajime is the spawn of Satan and how many of us already thought that before? This guy makes me so mad, and he's beating up these girls and it's just horrible!!!! ( ̄_̄)ノ

Well, if you're all hating Hajime as much as I do right now, then you should definitely read "Private Lessons Confessions" next so we can all have a nice hate chat about this son of Satan. Like I said, that'll be going up right after this chapter. Not important to the storyline at all, but really good for therapy after a scene like this.

Anyway, that's all for now! The big fight should be on Sunday!! It's coming!!! I'll see you guys then! <3
And here is the long-awaited showdown chapter! IT'S FIGHT NIGHT, PEOPLE! Who will win: the unbeatable madman of strength and speed, solo fighter extraordinaire, or the furious duo of the monster of the school and a protective brother out for vengeance? The anticipation is killing me! So we should just get a move on, huh?

Without further ado, here's the start of Fight Night! <3

“It’s just around this corner.” Izaya said quietly, nodding at the street which he hadn’t been down in so long. He could almost feel his body begin to quiver as he approached the location of one of his worst memories. But it wasn’t quivering in fear this time, like it had so many times before. This time it was quivering in rage. In anticipation. In the sheer need to find Hajime and beat his ass for daring to lay a finger on Izaya’s girls.

It was strange. Just a few minutes before, Izaya had been terrified to the point of immobility at the thought of his girls being in the hands of Hajime. He hadn’t been able to move, he’d barely been able to speak, and he definitely hadn’t been able to think. He had just been frozen by fear. But now, after seeing the Heiwajimas acting like the family that he’d never had, Izaya’s fear had changed into something else. He realized now why he’d been so afraid. It was because, despite all the support he’d seen from the Heiwajimas up to that point, he’d still thought of himself as alone. He still thought, deep down, that he was alone. That he had to deal with all these problems on his own, just like he always had. But now he knew…that wasn’t the case at all.

He’d seen the way that the Heiwajimas had gathered around him and helped him form a plan to get his sisters back. He’d seen the determination in their eyes while they talked about making Hajime pay for what he’d done. He’d seen the truth behind the way they treated him and the twins, and now he knew that he wasn’t alone. For the first time in his life, Orihara Izaya was truly not alone.

And since he knew that he wasn’t going to face Hajime on his own, and that he had other people to support him, he wasn’t afraid anymore.

No. He was pissed off.

As Izaya and Shizuo rounded the corner and Hajime’s house finally came into sight, Izaya could feel his jaw clench tightly as his red eyes narrowed to slits. There it was. There was the home of the source of his greatest misery right now.

“Which one is it?” Shizuo growled from beside him, his guttural voice ringing with the intonations of anger as he struggled to keep his cool.

Izaya almost felt like he was releasing a beast as he slowly raised his trembling arm into the air, forming his fingers into a pointing gesture and aiming it right at the unfortunate house. For about two seconds, Izaya nearly called, “Release the Kraken!” at the top of his lungs, but thankfully he stopped himself from doing so. Instead, he only replied, “It’s that one.”
Far less dramatic, but no less effective.

Shizuo instantly broke into a run for the house he was directed to, his bright blonde hair making him look like a blur of sunshine racing down the street with the intention of murder.

Izaya himself only stood in place about a second longer than Shizuo before bolting right after him, an inky streak of night chasing its burning companion of day.

How poetic. Izaya might want to keep that in mind for the day he said his wedding vows…wait, WEDDING?! Stop thinking ahead! Stop thinking right NOW!

Izaya shook his head roughly to clear it, just as he and Shizuo reached the front door of Hajime’s house. They had been standing there for barely two seconds before Shizuo raised his foot and kicked in the door to the house, making it fly back and slam against the wall, revealing…an empty house on the inside.

Well, they couldn’t tell it was empty just by this quick glance into the house, but it was certainly quiet. And all of the lights were off, leaving just the dim glow leaking in from windows to illuminate the winding hallways, silent rooms, and generally the entire, abandoned building.

Shizuo entered before Izaya, his golden eyes narrowed like a predator’s in the dark, practically glowing as they raked over the dark house, one arm stretched protectively in front of the raven as he crept inside. Izaya moved in after him, wondering what exactly was going on. Did Hajime know they were coming? Was he hiding somewhere? And where were his parents?

Izaya was unpleasantly reminded of the way Hajime’s parents had also been absent during their last “interaction” here in this house, but a quick glance at Shizuo’s scowling face and furious eyes calmed Izaya instantly.

He wasn’t alone this time. He had Shizuo.

Almost unintentionally, Izaya’s hand slipped into Shizuo’s, their fingers lacing together automatically just like before. Shizuo glanced over at him with a brief look of surprise, but understanding quickly crossed his face as their eyes met, and he smiled once before tightening his fingers gently around Izaya’s.

Perfect.

Izaya soon turned his mind away from its Shizuo daze and back to the problem at hand. He looked helplessly around the empty house, wondering where on earth his girls might be.

“Do you have any clue of where to start looking?” Shizuo grumbled, his voice low and powerful as it echoed through the empty halls.

Izaya shook his head, red eyes darting all around them. “No.” He admitted. “This is a large house and he could be hiding them in a ton of places that I’ve never been.”

“It shouldn’t be too hard to find him.” Shizuo promised, his hands tightening comfortably once more around Izaya’s, even as he scanned the area around them with a scowl. “We just need to follow the scent of evil bastard, after all.”

Izaya smiled and was about to ask Shizuo what exactly that smelled like, but an idea sparked in his brain instead. He stared out into open space for a few seconds, his heart beginning to pound as he wondered whether or not it would work.
“Shizu-chan,” He said sharply, drawing his boyfriend’s attention back over to him. “Yeah?” Shizuo asked, his brow scrunched slightly in confusion. “What is it?”

Izaya looked right into Shizuo’s eyes, a very serious look on his face. “You always say that you can smell me, right?” He asked, and Shizuo’s look of confusion only increased. “Uh…yeah. Why?” He asked, scratching the back of his head with a frown.

Izaya looked away from Shizuo, staring hard into the empty house. “Because…well, my sisters might smell like me. They’re around me all the time. They might smell like me, even just a little bit.” He looked over determinedly at Shizuo, but the blonde looked a little doubtful.

“I dunno, Izaya-kun.” He said slowly, scratching the back of his head again and frowning at the raven. “You always smell different than anyone else. I can’t really smell anyone else at all, in fact. You’re special.”

Izaya pushed down the fuzzy feelings that spread in his chest at those words, firmly grabbing Shizuo’s hands and looking into his eyes. “Please, Shizu-chan!” He squeezed the large hands tightly, red eyes locked on gold. “Even if they only smell the tiniest bit like me, at least it’s something better than wandering aimlessly through the house.”

“What’s so bad about wandering through the house?” Shizuo asked, his eyes flickering away. “We can find them that way, too.”

“But Hajime might notice that we’re here and move them somewhere else if we take too long searching.” Izaya argued, pulling on Shizuo’s hands so the blonde would look back down at him. “All I’m asking is that you try. Just…try.” Izaya’s voice had gone soft at the end, and he could tell his desperation must be shining through in his behavior because Shizuo’s eyes softened as well, and he nodded.

“Alright.” The tall boy agreed gruffly. “I’ll try.”

Izaya beamed with happiness, hugging his boyfriend tightly. “Thank you.” He whispered, and then he stepped back so Shizuo could…sniff the air…or whatever it was he was about to do.

Shizuo scratched the back of his head again (probably some kind of habit – now that he thought about it, Izaya had noticed him doing that a lot) and closed his eyes. The blonde frowned, breathing in deeply like he was taking in Izaya’s scent first, and then his head slowly began to turn as he inhaled the scent of the rest of the house.

Izaya watched him with bated breath, feeling his heart pound in his ribcage as he wondered if this strategy would even work. “Try.” He whispered again, his fingers clasping together as though he was praying. What was he praying to? He didn’t believe in God. What could possibly have earned so much belief in Izaya that he felt the need to pray to it for success?

Shizuo, the raven decided. He believed in Shizuo. He would pray to Shizuo.

Izaya watched Shizuo sniff the air without breathing, his red eyes wide as he took in every twitch on the blonde’s face, every change in his attitude as he sniffed the air.

Finally, Shizuo’s head stopped moving frozen in one direction, and his eyes fluttered open. “I can sorta smell you coming from over there.” He grumbled lowly, pointing towards the kitchen. “But it’s really faint.” Shizuo looked over at Izaya apologetically. “Look, I don’t know if this is going to yield any results.” He said gently, but Izaya pushed past him anyway, marching towards the kitchen.

“The least we can do is try.” Izaya said stiffly, his eyes locked on the dark room ahead of him. “I
believe in you, Shizu-chan.”

Shizuo was silent for a bit, but Izaya heard his footsteps coming after him just a few seconds later. The raven led them both into the kitchen, his red eyes scanning the shiny appliances littering the walls, the glowing numbers on the microwave and oven, the tiny bit of light coming in from a window just above the sink. Everything looked like it wasn’t being used currently, but the oven had a timer going on it. It was counting down.

Izaya didn’t know why but that gave him a very bad feeling.

He watched those green numbers tick down for a few seconds, counting down from 8 minutes and 23 seconds, feeling the dread pooling in his stomach increase with each passing second. They had to hurry.

“Shizu-chan can you smell them better now?” He asked sharply, spinning around to look at the blonde.

Shizuo’s face had grown hard, almost like his features were carved out of granite, and his head was facing towards a pantry door on the other side of the kitchen. “I can smell something coming from over there.” He said slowly, glancing over at Izaya briefly before heading over to the pantry door. He threw it open, revealing…a regular pantry.

It was just a bunch of shelves covered with cans and boxes and bags of different kinds of food or spices. Nothing special at all.

Shizuo growled in frustration and stepped back from the pantry but Izaya pushed him aside gently, walking inside of the small storage space.

“Izaya,” Shizuo sighed, a slightly guilty tone in his voice. “I’m sorry I got your hopes up. I don’t think there’s anything in there.”

“Just…let me try.” Izaya whispered, his fingers trailing over the various shelves all around him, eyes flicking over the walls and the floor, looking for anything that could be a sign of where the girls were. A strange ridge on the wall. The outline of a hidden door. Something.

“Izaya.” Shizuo said again, a little more forcefully this time.

Izaya stopped where he was, his gaze being directed at his feet. He didn’t want to turn around and face Shizuo. He didn’t want to admit that he was getting his hopes up. He wanted a way of knowing where the twins were. Not just guessing randomly while Hajime got the chance to escape. He wanted to find them as soon as possible.

“Let’s look through the rest of the house.” Shizuo said softly.

Izaya didn’t say anything. He still didn’t look up or move from his spot. He didn’t want to.

Shizuo sighed and stepped into the pantry from behind him.

There was a loud creaking sound where he stepped that definitely didn’t sound like the rest of the floor.

Izaya’s head snapped around to stare at the floor where Shizuo was standing. The blonde was looking in shock at his feet where a part of the floor was now lower than the rest. It seemed like Izaya had been too light to move it down, but…it had definitely moved under Shizuo. Both boys’ eyes flicked up and locked together for the barest of seconds before Shizuo moved quickly off the
section of the floor he was standing on and Izaya dropped to his knees beside it, digging his fingers into the cracks outlining it.

Izaya could feel his breath coming short to him as his fingers scurried in the cracks to find some kind of purchase, something for him to grab onto. The whole time Shizuo watched him, completely silent, but his own breathing just as tight as Izaya’s.

Finally, he found what felt like two small handles in the floor tile and tightened his grip, yanking the tile right out of the floor.

He and Shizuo both looked down into the cavern that was revealed by the missing tile. It looked like a staircase heading down into the floor, but it didn’t lead too far down. It might just be a passageway into another part of the house.

Izaya looked up at Shizuo, who was focusing intently on the staircase leading down, his brow scrunching in concentration.

“I…I can smell something.” The blonde said gruffly, immediately beginning to head down the staircase into the floor.

Izaya followed him without a word, his heart beginning to pound in his chest as they headed down the passageway under the kitchen.

Shizuo marched forward like some kind of silent soldier, his nose pointed slightly in the air as he concentrated on whatever whisps of Izaya he was getting. Izaya glanced around them in the passageway, taking note of the way it turned ever so slightly as they walked, the concrete walls all around them and the lights embedded in the ceiling above them affirming Izaya’s theory that this passageway had been some kind of planned project. Hajime’s family probably paid to add it to the house. Why would they need a professional passageway dug beneath the house? Did they have some kind of secret room that they didn’t want anybody to get to?

Izaya paid close attention to how the passageway moved, mapping out Hajime’s house above them in his head simultaneously. If he was right, they should have passed the living room and the parent’s room and they were heading towards…towards Hajime’s room.

Hajime’s room was the room on the farthest side of the house. If Izaya was correct about where this passageway was going, then either this tunnel was about to lead up into Hajime’s room, or they were just flat-out not in Hajime’s house anymore.

Izaya wasn’t even sure which option he feared worse.

Shizuo walked steadily along, his pace never decreasing even the slightest bit as he followed his nose down the tunnel.

Izaya began to count the steps they took, wondering if they’d already taken enough to pass Hajime’s room, or if his fear-ridden mind was just panicking and they weren’t even heading in that direction. Izaya had no clue where they were going. He just hoped it was where his girls were.

“Scuffle.” Shizuo muttered, and Izaya blinked at the unexpected sound of words, looking over at his boyfriend in confusion. “What?” He asked, red eyes locked on Shizuo’s back.
Shizuo gestured at the walls around them. “There’s blood from cuts and wounds in some places on the walls here.” He muttered. “There was some kind of scuffle.”

Izaya froze at that, his heart pounding as he looked at the walls around them. Shizuo was right. There were small blood stains in certain places on the walls, some older than others…but some of them that
definitely looked fresh.

Was that... Mairu and Kururi’s blood?

Izaya felt his rage increase.

“Hurry up, Shizuo.” He growled, tears of anger beginning to cloud his eyes as the same emotion clouded his judgment, the raven pushing past his boyfriend in the concrete hallway and rushing down it.

Izaya expected Shizuo to tell him to calm down, to wait and think this through before he went busting in on someone much stronger than him, even to tell him that they needed a plan first. He didn’t expect Shizuo just to grab Izaya’s hand and pull him into a run, speeding their pace up even more.

Izaya was shocked by how willing Shizuo was to help him, but when he saw the equal rage flowing over the blonde’s face, he remembered one very crucial fact. Shizuo wasn’t just there for Izaya. He was there for Mairu and Kururi as well.

The blood upset him just as much as it had upset Izaya.

Izaya tightened his grip around Shizuo’s hand and increased the speed of his run, dashing down the hall as fast as he could in another blur like before, the two of them following the tunnel and Shizuo’s nose to what was hopefully the location of the twins.

They ran for what felt like hours and was probably closer to minutes, eventually coming across more stairs that led up to somewhere else.

“Up.” Shizuo growled, and Izaya followed him without hesitation, the two of them bounding up the stairs to reach a trapdoor that was filtering soft light into the tunnel around its edges.

A light was on up there. Someone... was up there.

Izaya reached up a hand, barely even thinking about the action as he grabbed a handle on the edge of the trapdoor and pushed it upwards, flinging the trapdoor wide open and climbing out into a small room.

When Izaya’s frantic red eyes tore over the interior of the room in pure fury, they noticed three important things.

The first was that two little girls were huddled in the corner, thick ropes attaching them to a loop on the floor as they sobbed quietly in place. Both of them were bleeding in multiple places.

The second was that the room he was now in had no doors and only one window, looking out onto a street that Izaya wasn’t familiar with. The only way out was the trapdoor he’d just come through.

And the third thing Izaya noticed upon entering the room was the person standing right behind him who gently grabbed his shoulder. Izaya spun around to face the person, knocking the hand off his shoulder, and the electric blue eyes that he saw filled him with a hatred like nothing else.

Shishizaki Hajime.

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Shizuo was furious when he saw the blood. There was no doubt in his mind. That had been blood
from Mairu and Kururi. That had been the blood of *toddlers*. Innocent little children who hadn’t done anything wrong ever in their lives except for maybe a few little bouts of mischief that annoyed their big brother. And Hajime had spilt it.

Well he needed some of his own blood spilt to make up for it.

Shizuo had grabbed Izaya’s hand immediately once he knew the raven was on the same page as him, the two of them running together for the end of the long tunnel.

When they saw the next staircase, Shizuo could smell that weird almost-Izaya scent that he knew by now was the twins’, and he knew they had to go up. But when they reached the trapdoor, something made him hesitate. A voice yelled at him to stop.

He wasn’t afraid. That much Shizuo knew. He *knew* that he was more than ready to charge up into that room and then beat Hajime’s ass. But something wanted him to wait. Some other force inside his body was taking over, and it made him hang back as Izaya flung open the trapdoor, racing into the room above them.

Yet still the voice in Shizuo’s head made him stay in place, hidden in the tunnel, waiting for something.

Shizuo was simultaneously confused and infuriated with himself. What was he *doing*?! Why was he waiting like this?! He should be out there, helping Izaya save the twins!

So what-

“Ah, my darling Izaya.” A voice purred, each intonation it made oozing with self-satisfaction that just made Shizuo want to retch. “You came back to me, after all. And so soon! I knew that you would…”

Shizuo paused, and his golden eyes widened as understanding miraculously began to click in his brain past the rage overwhelming his heart.

That was why he was waiting. Somehow, deep down inside of him, Shizuo had known that Hajime would be waiting for Izaya. He had known it would be too easy just to find the twins, conveniently on their own, and grab them before anyone saw. He had known Hajime would be expecting Izaya to come take them back…and *only* Izaya.

Hajime expected Izaya to be doing this on his own, because he knew Izaya always did everything on his own. He didn’t know that Izaya actually had help this time.

They had the element of surprise.

Sometimes, Shizuo was smarter than he thought.

“I just need to wait here until the right moment presents itself. Then we can take him down much easier.” Shizuo whispered to himself, understanding fully clicking into place inside his mind as Shizuo turned his head up and stared out through the now-open trapdoor to the ceiling of the room above them, his ears tuning back in to the conversation of the exes.

“Give them back.” Izaya was saying. “Give my girls back to me.”

Hajime tutted at Izaya, and Shizuo could hear his footsteps moving slowly around the trapdoor and towards a different portion of the room. “Izaya, didn’t you read my note? I said I get them for 1 week, no matter what.” His patronizing tone was so sickly sweet that Shizuo hissed softly in the
tunnel below, every muscle in his body aching with the desire to jump out there and fight.

“Not yet.” His mind was whispering. “Not yet.”

“I showed up for you.” Izaya said coldly, his normally-so-cute voice as sharp as glass. “I only did that in order to get my girls. Now you let them go or I’ll—”

“Or you’ll what?” Hajime cut in smoothly, and Shizuo could already picture a stupid smirk on that stupid face of his. “You’ll beat me up? Please, Izaya. We both know that you can’t do that now that I’m waiting for you to try something like that. You may be fast and agile, but I’m more so and I’m also much stronger. You could never beat me in a fight.”

Shizuo heard Izaya’s small intake of breath, followed by a chuckle from Hajime who probably thought that inhale meant he was scaring the raven. But, as strange as it sounded, Shizuo could tell that was wrong, just from the sound of Izaya’s breath. That sharp intake wasn’t the quick, shaky inhales that Izaya made when he was scared. It was short and strong, just a quick zip of air that you’d easily miss if you weren’t paying attention. That was the kind of breath that Izaya took when he was angry.

Izaya wasn’t scared: he was furious.

“I can…tell apart the different kinds of his breathing now.” Shizuo said softly aloud, realizing just how freakish that was. He could smell Izaya, read his emotions, find him in a massive crowd with ease, and now he could identify his different breaths. “I really do have a sixth sense about Izaya, don’t I?”

“If you keep those girls just one second longer,” The raven was saying from above him, snapping Shizuo’s attention back up. “Then I will attack you.”

Hajime laughed haughtily, from somewhere off to Shizuo’s left, and Shizuo’s body began to tense up even further, coiling like a spring.

“Go on and try it. One little you can’t do anything.” The boy taunted.

For a single heartbeat, Shizuo waited for the command from his mind.

“Now.” It whispered.

The spring snapped open and Shizuo threw himself out of the trapdoor looking over to his left with a growl where he saw Hajime, with his back turned to Shizuo, arms out to the sides and leaving himself wide open in a taunt to Izaya. This was definitely the right moment.

“One little Izaya and one big me could do a hell of a lot, though.” The blonde snarled, watching as Hajime started to turn around in pure shock, his blue eyes widening just as Shizuo’s fist rammed right into his face.

And yes, that felt really good.

Izaya stepped nimbly out of the way as Hajime crashed into the wall behind him, the raven glancing briefly over at Shizuo before turning his attention to the boy hissing in pain as he pushed himself away from the wall, his blue eyes flashing with deadly anger at Shizuo.

Shizuo was quite satisfied to see the blood streaming from Hajime’s nose, undermining the fury in his eyes as he scowled and turned to face Shizuo. “So you showed up, too?” He asked in disbelief, glancing between Shizuo and Izaya. “I can’t understand this. I can’t even believe this!”
“Iza-nii!” A voice sobbed happily from the corner, and Shizuo’s head snapped over to look at two little girls, tied to a loop on the ground, one of them raising her head to the fight with tears in her eyes. That was the one who had spoken. The other was lying motionless on the ground. “Shizu-nii!” The same one as before added, clutching the body of the other in her arms.

Shizuo could feel his blood run cold. The one who wasn’t talking was Mairu. He was sure of it. Mairu was the one with the cute little braids and the big goofy grin. She was the one who always did the talking first, before her twin. But now, one of her braids was missing, and portions of her hair seemed to be gone, leaving small bald spots on the tiny head. One of those bald spots revealed a deep bloody gash, which was already sickening enough to see, but the huge purple area coating the little girl’s stomach was even worse. She was pale. And she wasn’t talking. She was the one who wasn’t even moving around.

“Help us!” Her twin, Kururi, called, and Shizuo’s attention moved instantly to the other small girl, noticing the massive bruises littering her face as well as the swollen black eye and lip that made her face almost unrecognizable. There were tears streaming down her cheeks, and she clung to her sister’s motionless body desperately. “Please!” She wailed, voice unnaturally loud and racked with pain.

How.
Dare.
He.

Shizuo turned with a vicious snarl to face Hajime, but a flash of black zoomed up to the blue-eyed boy before he could do anything, a small fist flying right at Hajime’s throat with lightning speed.

Hajime gasped in pain, wheezing as a bruise blossomed on his throat from Izaya’s furious punch, and the raven snapped his leg around his body without waiting a second to smash it into the boy’s face, which was much closer to the ground now that he was doubled over in pain.

The kick, while it also left a nice bruise and smashed Hajime back into the wall, ended up being a bad idea.

Hajime grabbed Izaya’s ankle with one hand, rage in his blue eyes and yanked the raven towards him, driving a fist into the smaller boy’s gut as he pulled him closer, causing him to scream out in pain.

Shizuo charged at Hajime without a second thought, bringing a fist crashing down on the apex of Hajime’s elbow, knocking his arm away from Izaya’s gut as he sent a different fist into Hajime’s other wrist, punching his hand off Izaya’s ankle.

The raven fell sideways onto the ground, coughing a little, as Hajime hissed again in pain then turned his attention on Shizuo.

“You are a very annoying protozoan.” The blue-eyed boy snapped, kicking a foot right into Shizuo’s stomach and sending him flying.

Shizuo felt like his very insides were being smashed with a battering ram and he wondered briefly if this was what normal people felt like when he punched them as he crashed into the wall on the other side of the tiny room.

His back rang with piercing pain from the harsh contact with the concrete walls, making the blonde grit his teeth as he tried to steel himself against it.
He looked up and saw that Hajime was lunging at Izaya as the raven rolled over onto his back, red eyes widening at the sight of his attacker. Panic shot throughout Shizuo’s veins, but he quickly realized that there was no need to panic at all. Izaya, from his position on the ground, used Hajime’s momentum to his advantage and planted his feet firmly on the tall boy’s chest, bending his legs to build up some strength and then rocking back as he snapped his legs out straight in the air, sending Hajime flying over his head.

The blue-eyed boy managed to tuck into a roll as he hit the ground and popped up after one revolution, scowling as he turned around to face Izaya.

Izaya was scrambling to his feet, red eyes narrowed as he swayed a little on his feet, a little jarred from his impact with the concrete ground. But he was still ready to fight.

Shizuo refused to let himself be cowed by pain as Hajime ran for Izaya yet again, ripping himself free of the concrete wall and crashing into Hajime with a roar.

They both slammed against the ground, rolling quickly across it as Hajime drove a fist into Shizuo’s jaw and Shizuo in turn viciously kneed the evil boy right in his stomach. They both snarled and continued to fight even after they crashed into the concrete wall, Hajime pushing himself up and grabbing Shizuo by the front of his shirt, slamming him into the wall next to him. Shizuo grabbed Hajime’s shirt with a growl and copied his maneuver, yanking Hajime away from his position on the wall on one side of Shizuo and slamming him viciously into the other.

Hajime reared back a fist to punch Shizuo, but a small hand darted into their little sphere of destruction and jabbed harshly at some point in Hajime’s armpit, then in another spot right at the apex of his shoulder and his arm.

Hajime howled as his arm dropped numbly to his side, immobilized for the time being, and the tall boy swung a leg viciously in the direction of his attacker, hoping to get him while he was still close.

But Izaya backflipped gracefully away like some freaky acrobat, just out of Hajime’s reach, over and over until he stopped in a crouch a few feet away. His red eyes narrowed as he raised his hands in front of his face, both of them held in flat spade-like shapes that looked almost like the knives he was so fond of carrying.

Who knew Izaya could hit pressure points?

Shizuo didn’t wonder about this new information too long though because he took the chance of Hajime’s attention being away from him to drive his head right into Hajime’s chest with a roar, hearing the satisfying sound of some definite crunches as the boy was flung backwards, crashing against the ground.

Izaya jumped into the air and landed right on top of Hajime, driving a sharp knee into his gut before flipping away as Hajime tried to punch him again. Hajime’s fist caught the edge of Izaya’s heel and the blow spun the raven off-course, sending him crashing onto the hard cement ground instead of landing gracefully like he’d been doing before.

But Hajime didn’t get long to revel in his brief hit because Shizuo slammed a kick into the stupid bastard’s face, driving his head back to slam into the ground.

Hajime’s hands wrapped around Shizuo’s ankle, though, and twisted sharply as the boy used sheer upper body strength to pull Shizuo off-balance and fling him across the room, sending him face-first into another wall.
He heard Hajime growl and lunge for Izaya again, the raven flipping deftly out of the way and probably giving Hajime a sharp kick while he did so judging from the howl of pain Hajime let out.

But a high-pitched scream right afterwards told Shizuo that Hajime was getting a hit in on Izaya, and he shoved himself off the wall, stumbling around and fixing his eyes on the way Hajime had grabbed hold of Izaya’s head with his one good arm and was driving it into the cement ground over and over.

Shizuo felt his veins boil over in fury and he tackled Hajime yet again, sending them both crashing to the ground and forcing Hajime to release his death-grip on Izaya’s head.

Hajime head-butted Shizuo right in the face as they tumbled to the ground, and Shizuo felt pain reverberate throughout his entire skull at the massive force being slammed against it.

Hajime reared back his head to do it again but two small hands flashed into Shizuo’s line of vision, letting him watch as they jabbed two places on Hajime’s neck, and the boy’s head fell backwards with a thud.

Shizuo tore himself out of Hajime’s one-armed grip and slammed a good punch into Hajime’s elbow, grinning manically at the crunch he felt followed by a shout of pain from Hajime.

Izaya’s tiny hands darted in again, slamming various points across Hajime’s arm, and the blue-eyed boy couldn’t even push himself up before his arm collapsed underneath him, useless.

Shizuo almost felt like they were safe, but Izaya pushed him roughly over to the right as Hajime’s leg swung up to try and smash him in the head, the foot barely whooshing past Shizuo’s hair thanks to Izaya’s shove. Then those tiny hands jabbed at a point behind Hajime’s knee and his leg collapsed as well, falling right over his body and effectively pinning him to the ground.

Shizuo could feel his hands still reaching out for Hajime, blood pounding in his ears as adrenaline rushed throughout his system, his body not wanting the fight to be over yet. Not over until Hajime was dead on the ground. Immobile wasn’t good enough. He needed to be dead.

Shizuo’s fists latched around Hajime’s leg, beginning to bend the bottom half in a direction it wasn’t supposed to go, and a blood-curdling scream that was released seemed to drive him on.

The screams, the rage, the pain all over his body, the blood pounding in his ears, his red vision, everything was hot and violent and moving him to break Hajime into a million pieces. He couldn’t stop himself: he was a manifestation of violence as he tried to keep hurting this defenseless boy.

Out of nowhere, gentle hands wrapped around Shizuo’s chest, pressing firmly into his body without fear.

It was a splash of cool amidst red hot rage, freezing Shizuo in his tracks as the gentle hands held him in place, something else pressing against his back simultaneously. It was soft, like a body, and cool breath was suddenly cascading over Shizuo’s ear as a voice whispered into it.

“Shizuo. Stop.”

It was a soft voice, one that shouldn’t have been able to get Shizuo to do anything in the furious state that he was in, but there was something about it that made Shizuo pause.

It wasn’t the gentleness of the voice. His mother’s voice was gentle and she’d tried to get Shizuo to stop when he was on rampages several times. It wasn’t the firmness either. Both his father and his brother had very firm voices when they spoke to him, and neither have them could have stopped him either. There was something different within this voice that Shizuo had never heard before. It was…it
It was the lack of fear. It was the casual ring within it. It was the accepting tone that didn’t judge him for what he was doing. It was a feeling in the voice that wasn’t asking him to stop even as its very words were saying just that. Because the voice wasn’t saying “stop your actions”. It was saying “stop being angry”. It was saying “you can do whatever you want to do but…do it as yourself. Not a beast.”

It was ignoring the actions of a raging monster and looking for the behavior of a human.

Shizuo’s rage evaporated instantly, his vision clearing and cool being restored over his mind as his hands lowered to his sides.

He looked over to see where the voice had come from, where the only thing that had ever stopped him while he was on a rampage was coming from, and he saw Izaya.

He saw a raven with a slowly swelling lip, and black hair that was matted with blood. He saw a black eye beginning to form from a ruby orb, and a deep bruise coloring his abdomen that was visible where his ripped shirt had ridden up. He saw bruises all over that pale body, in fact, that were turning him into a purple and yellow spotted doll. The signs of abuse and physical trauma were horrible and revolting.

The boy wearing them was more beautiful than anything Shizuo had ever seen in his life.

“Izaya.” Shizuo managed to croak out, his voice hoarse, as he looked at the way one little girl was now clutching Izaya’s leg and the other was tucked safely against his body, wrapped in his arm.

Izaya smiled gently, lifting his free hand to Shizuo’s face and trailing his thumb gently over it. “Let’s go.” He said softly, pressing a kiss to Shizuo’s lips. And despite the swelling of both of their faces, the dull ache that came from pressing bruises into each other, and the blood that mixed in their mouths, it was the best kiss Izaya had ever given him.

“I love you.” Shizuo said instantly when Izaya pulled away, unable to stop the words from tumbling out.

Izaya’s red eyes (or the one that wasn’t swollen into a black eye at that moment) widened, and he stared at Shizuo for what felt like an eternity before that gentle smile came back onto his face and a tear leaked out of eyes.

“I love you too.” The raven whispered, kissing Shizuo yet again.

Shizuo took back what he’d just thought. This was the best kiss that Izaya had ever given him. Hands down.

Chapter End Notes

Izaya finally said he loved Shizuo! (ω‿ω) And Hajime is also finally realizing that he won't always get his way. Even HE can be beaten as well. I wonder how he's going to take this? And what will happen to Izaya and Shizuo next? They still have problems to get through: Izaya’s parents, the gangs, Suzuki, school, and the twins’ recovery.

But now the twins are safe from Hajime, and that's all that matters! I can't wait to show
you guys what happens next. After all, they're going to school now. We're gonna see Shinra and Kadota after quite a long time! I wonder how that's going to go with Izaya and Shizuo's new relationship? Not to mention their lovely "battle scars"...

Well! I'll see you all on Wednesday! Bye! <3
Hello everyone! Finally, after all the hardship of the Hajime arc, I can proudly present a chapter of fluff to you! It took long enough, but we finally pushed through to an area of fluff! Go us!

Sorry about the late update. I had to take my bow to the archery shop in town and get measured for new arrows since competition is coming up. It took a lot longer than I though (about 2 hours longer...) but I did finally manage to get it all done and get home! Right! And without further ado, here is our first fluff chapter in what feels like so long! Hope you enjoy! <3

“There is absolutely no way in this universe that you are going to daycare!” Izaya snapped for the millionth time, taking his jacket off the back of the chair and slipping it on with a glare directed at his little sisters. “You can’t! You need time to heal.”

“But Iza-nii!” Mairu whined, pulling on her sister’s arm and giving Izaya an expectant look. “Kuru-nee was looking forward to it!”

Kururi nodded eagerly, clasping her hands in a pleading motion as she looked up at Izaya from her position lying next to her sister on the hospital bed.

Despite his annoyance stemming from the topic at hand, Izaya was grateful beyond relief to hear Mairu talking again and Kururi reverting back to her quiet self.

Shizuo and Izaya had taken the twins directly to a hospital after the fight with Hajime, and the doctors and nurses there had immediately begun operations on both girls, sending Izaya and Shizuo to a separate room for different treatment. They’d checked both boys for broken bones and internal damage, paying close attention to the injuries on Izaya’s head which were the result of Hajime bashing it into the ground.

Izaya had turned his head once Hajime had gotten ahold of it during the fight, making it to where the only part of his skull that had made contact with the ground was the frontal bone right in his forehead. It was one of the strongest portions of the skull, but it was still fragile enough to be fractured under the intense pressure placed on it. Izaya’s mind had been jarred and dazed once his head was slammed into the ground, and so he didn’t know much about what had happened, but according to the nurses, it looked like Hajime had only managed to slam his head into the ground once before Shizuo had gotten Hajime off him. This was a lucky break for the raven, seeing as just that one blow had created a fracture in his skull. It was a simple linear fracture, meaning that no skin had been broken and no tissue damaged, but there was a break in the bone in the form of a straight line.

Izaya was relieved to hear that he wouldn’t be needing surgery for it seeing as it was such a clean, easy fracture, and that the best thing to do was actually just leave it to heal by itself. The pain would go away in 5 to 10 days, and the fracture itself should heal in a few months. It seemed that the
bruises and scrapes he’d received from the fight weren’t major either, and the worst injury he had sustained, in fact, was the kick to the stomach he’d gotten from Hajime right at the beginning of the fight.

While not as bad as what had occurred to Mairu, Izaya had still gotten some internal damage from the kick which the doctors placed under observation. The internal bleeding was slow and they were fairly certain that it would stop on its own in a few hours, but they still performed several scans to be sure that no major organs had been severely injured. Hajime’s kick had affected a few of the organs but once again, Shizuo’s quick intervention had prevented any surgical necessities.

The same could not be said for Izaya’s sweet Mairu.

She had suffered heavy damage to her abdominal area that resulted in excessive internal bleeding and she was placed in immediate surgical care. Without proper treatment, her blood vessels had been leaking blood right into her system and were actually compressing the organs in her abdomen, swamping them and causing them to malfunction. The blood also wasn’t getting transported to the areas it needed to go, and it was starting to shut down other parts of her body as well. It was a very serious emergency, particularly because she had been bleeding for at least an hour with no help, and she had been taken into the back for quite a long time.

But eventually, Shizuo and Izaya had both been informed that she was stable, that her blood vessels had been sealed during the surgery, and that the excess blood swamping her organs had been removed.

Kururi’s injuries were mostly bruises and swelling from being smacked or punched, and those had been treated the same as Shizuo’s and Izaya’s were. However, Kururi had also received a fracture along her spinal column when she was kicked into the wall, and it wasn’t a simple fracture like Izaya’s. Hers was a compression fracture resulting from broken vertebrae and had required immediate surgery. Thankfully, the surgery had gone well, just like Mairu’s, and she was proclaimed to be stable not too long after Mairu.

The doctors kept both girls overnight for observation, but they said that the twins could be discharged the day after with mandatory bed rest for about a week.

After all the immediate treatment and bustle was over, there came the problem of the doctors asking to call parents. Izaya had instantly froze, terrified at the prospect of attempting to call his own parents. He knew they wouldn’t pick up. They probably wouldn’t even care. This could definitely be something that blew their neglected status out of the water and right into the open. He could practically hear Child Services driving down their street already.

But Shizuo had stepped up and given the doctors his own parents’ numbers. Kichirou and Namiko had picked up on the very first ring, and they were at the hospital in less than 15 minutes.

At first, the doctors had been a little skeptical of the parents who didn’t look much like Izaya or the twins, but the sheer panic and worry both parents displayed upon seeing the children quickly alleviated all concern. They didn’t even ask to see paperwork proving their relation.

In any case, Izaya was convinced they could match up Shizuo with Namiko and Kichirou and the doctors would just assume they were all Heiwajimas. It probably wouldn’t end up as much of an issue considering it wasn’t even a typical process to check for blood relation…but he was still grateful that he didn’t have to worry.

He was even more grateful and touched when the Heiwajima parents refused to leave his girls’ sides, insisting on staying the night with them and sleeping in the same room. His own parents would never
do something like that. They’d have a far more important meeting to attend the next day or something like that. But Kichirou and Namiko were different. They were actual parents.

Even Kasuka showed up at some point in the night, bearing stuffed animals and small games for the twins to play in their beds as they went to sleep. It was one big family all crammed together in one room, with Kasuka and Shizuo smashed next to each other on the floor, Kichirou cooped up in one of the small chairs, Namiko on a tiny cot they had brought in, and Izaya in an actual bed by his sisters…but Izaya had never been more comfortable in his life. This was his family. No matter how many times he said it to himself and still had trouble believing it, he definitely had a family.

It was the next morning, a lovely Monday and the first day of school after winter break, and Izaya had insisted on going to school, even if he wouldn’t let his girls go anywhere. Kichirou and Namiko had eventually relented, but they weren’t going to let him take a crowded train or a dirty bus to school. And who knew what germs could be crawling around in a sketchy taxi or rental car? Namiko absolutely could not allow her delicate, healing baby to be surrounded by such filth. She and Kichirou had left earlier to get their rarely-used car from home and bring it back to the hospital. They took Kasuka and Shizuo with them in order to get those two ready for the day, leaving Izaya to tell the twins upon waking that they were not going to daycare.

Which brought them to the present and Izaya’s current struggle against toddler-kind about daycare. It figures that the one day they actually wanted to go was the one day they couldn’t go.

“You are going to rest at home and that is that!” Izaya snapped, glaring at his two girls without mercy.

“Wanna go to daycare!” Mairu whined, crossing her arms with a huff. “Iza-nii going to leave us alone!”

“Alone.” Kururi added quietly, her eyes looking down at her lap as her fists squeezed the blankets tightly.

Izaya felt guilt well up inside him at the sight. Yes, their physical injuries were healing well, but their mental trauma was far worse. He knew for a fact that neither of them wanted to leave his side at all, and he’d been physically unable to go anywhere where they couldn’t see him the night before. The girls couldn’t even fall asleep unless Izaya was right in the bed beside them, and whenever he left to go the bathroom, he had to take them with him. They were terrified of being on their own.

He’d heard them whimpering in their sleep, and whispering to each other in fright when they were awake. They were seeing Hajime around every corner, in each shadow, behind every door or window. He was everywhere, waiting for them to be alone so he could snatch them up again. They were absolutely petrified by the thought of being alone. They either wanted Izaya with them, or someone else.

Izaya highly suspected that that was the reason they wanted to go to daycare so badly. There, they would be surrounded by people and protected by the nurses around them. At home alone…what was to stop Hajime from coming back?

But Izaya refused to do anything that could further damage his baby girls, and sending them to a rambunctious daycare was the exact opposite of bed rest. They just couldn’t go.

“Girls,” Izaya began again, trying to figure out how to explain the situation to them.

Before he could say anything else, the door to the hospital room opened and Shizuo stepped through, smiling brightly at the Orihara siblings.
Just the sight of that warming smile relaxed Izaya, dragging a smile of his own out onto his lips and turning his attention on his boyfriend.

“Shizu-chan.” He said in relief, his ruby eyes locked on the blonde. “You’re back.”

Shizuo nodded, walking over and kissing Izaya on the forehead before smiling at the twins and heading over to their bedside. “Yep, I’m back. Me, Kasuka, Mommy and Daddy are all back now.” He told the twins, stroking their hair tenderly.

“Shizu-nii!” Mairu cried happily, throwing her arms around the tall boy. “Shizu-nii. Back.” Kururi added with a smile of her own, simply touching Shizuo’s face with a tiny hand so she could have some contact, too.

Mairu’s face went from overjoyed to sour very quickly though, and she pulled back to glare at Shizuo fiercely. “Iza-nii is being horrible!” She complained, pointing accusingly at the raven. “He’s gonna leave us alone.”

“Alone.” Kururi emphasized, clutching her sister’s hand and biting her lip fearfully. Despite the anger within Mairu’s brown eyes, Izaya could also plainly see the fear that was underlying her every word and action, and it broke his heart. He didn’t want to leave them alone. He didn’t! But he had to at least go to the first day of school and explain to his teachers why he might be skipping more class than usual for the next few weeks. He needed to leave them in order to be with them.

It was infuriating!

“Mairu…Kururi…” Izaya tried to say something, but he couldn’t think of what to say. He sighed and ducked his head in shame, frowning at the ground. “I can’t let you go to daycare-”

“Because you’re going to be staying with Mommy and Daddy.” Shizuo cut in, causing Izaya’s head to snap up in shock.

He stared at Shizuo who was smiling brightly at the twins, his blonde hair catching the sunlight from the windows and making it look almost gold. He almost looked like an angel. And to the gaping twins, he might as well be one.

“Really?!” Mairu asked in shock, sitting up a bit in her bed with wide eyes. “Really really?!”

Shizuo nodded and tapped the tiny girl playfully on her nose. “Really really.” He responded. “Iza-nii kept it a secret from you two as a surprise, but you’re going to be staying at Mommy and Daddy’s house for the next few weeks while you get better.”

His golden eyes flickered back to lock with Izaya’s. “Sorry for ruining your surprise.” He said simply, but his eyes conveyed a much deeper meaning than his words. He was going to take care of them without even being asked. He was going to help Izaya without a single cue to do so.

Izaya could feel a lump forming in his throat, and he beamed at Shizuo, unable to believe that someone so wonderful really loved someone like him.

“It’s okay.” He managed to get out, wiping at his eyes before tears could form. “They were going to find out soon enough anyway.”

“Iza-nii should had said something!” Mairu scolded, but her brown eyes were happy enough to undermine the anger she was trying to convey. “Worry us.” Kururi agreed, smiling brightly at Shizuo.
“I won’t do it again.” Izaya promised, his heart overflowing with joy.

It was perfect.

“Well, let’s get going then!” Shizuo said, gently lifting Mairu and Kururi off the hospital bed and setting them down on the floor. “Me and Iza-nii have to get to school and you two have to spend all day beating Daddy at Go Fish!”

Both girls cheered wildly, clutching Shizuo’s hands with bright grins as they walked towards the exit of the hospital room.

Izaya grabbed the stuffed animals and games from last night, using it more as an excuse to turn his back and hide his tears than out of an actual desire to grab the things. Thank goodness he had the Heiwajimas. They were a gift from above.

If they were the ones watching his girls, Izaya had no doubt that nothing could go wrong ever again.

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Right as they got to school, things started to go wrong.

Shizuo knew it was going to be a rough transition for the rest of the school to take in: just before winter break started, he and Izaya were the bitterest of enemies, and now? Now they were holding hands as they walked through the front gate of the school, Izaya pressed close against Shizuo and Shizuo constantly bending over to kiss the top of Izaya’s head. There wasn’t a hint of malice in their whole attitude, and not a speck of animosity between them could be found even with a microscope.

And if this new lovey-dovey attitude wasn’t enough to garner attention, then the massive bruises, scrapes, and injuries coating their faces and bodies certainly were.

School gossip was something that Shizuo always hated. He hated it because it tended to be about him and whichever newest rampages he had been on that day. There were other bits that got mixed in here and there, of course.

This person broke up with that one.

That girl moved away.

Someone got in a fight.

These two people were dating.

Some of the gossip was actually positive, but whenever it was about him, it was negative and Shizuo hated to hear it. He knew Izaya didn’t like being the center of attention too much, either. He was the kind who preferred to listen to everyone else’s news rather than spreading around his own. The fact that they had taken barely two steps into the school courtyard and rumors were already flying all around about them was problematic to say the least. Even if Shizuo didn’t regret showing up to school holding hands like the couple they were.

He did kind of regret showing up to school with a bunch of injuries on his face, though. It was just something else that added to his rough image, and with Izaya…who even knew what people were thinking when they saw him? Not to mention seeing him covered in injuries and walking next to the only person in the world who wanted to cause them on a daily basis.

Major injuries and a romantic relationship.
Shizuo wondered absently which one was drawing more attention.

“They probably think we had a massive fight over winter break, gave each other brain damage, and now think we’re in love with each other.” Izaya muttered by Shizuo’s side, his small hand tightly squeezing Shizuo’s much larger one. “They’re all staring at us like we’re aliens!”

Shizuo smiled as he looked down at his boyfriend, the raven’s complaints being a little undermined by his cute blush and pout as they walked along. He looked undeniably embarrassed and annoyed by all the attention they were getting, but there was a spark of determination in those ruby eyes, as though no matter how much attention was on him, he was going to walk with Shizuo as his boyfriend.

Nothing could have made Shizuo happier.

“Maybe they think we are aliens.” Shizuo suggested, bending over to kiss Izaya’s head again. “It would certainly make more sense than a secret relationship blooming out into the open.”

“Tell that to the fujoshis.” Izaya muttered, glancing over at a crowd of giggling girls right by the entrance to the cafeteria. They were all pointed eagerly at Shizuo and Izaya, squealing and chattering excitedly as they typed frantically on their phones to call more of their cohort over. It was like the prime minister was walking into their school or something. You’d think Izaya and Shizuo were celebrities. Geez.

“Do you think anybody here is going to treat us normally?” Shizuo asked aloud, looking around and spotting more gaping mouths and wide eyes directed right at them. “I mean, it’s not as weird as some other things.”

“IZAYA!!!! SHIZUO!!!!” A voice screeched loudly from across the school, and both boys’ heads instantly snapped over to spot one very excited, glasses-wearing, headless-women-obsessed boy running right at them.

“You’re right. He’s weirder.” Izaya said simply as Shinra dashed up to them, screeching to a halt in front of the new boyfriends and waving his arms excitedly in the air.

“You’ll never believe what happened over winter break!” He babbled cheerfully, apparently not even noticing the fact that Izaya was practically clinging to Shizuo and Shizuo wasn’t repulsed by Izaya’s very existence. “I asked Celty if she wanted to go somewhere, AND SHE SAID YES!” He grinned expectantly at them, like they were supposed to be awed or amazed by that update which neither of them had asked for.

“Shinra, just because she said she wanted to go somewhere doesn’t mean she wants to go somewhere with you.” Izaya said flatly, going from simply holding hands with Shizuo to looping his arms around Shizuo’s arm, hugging it tightly. “She might just be thinking about a nice trip out of the house to take on her own.”

“I said on her own.” Izaya enunciated with a frown, rolling his eyes when Shinra completely ignored him and continued to spew off random sayings about true love and all the signs that pointed to him and Celty having it.

Shizuo chuckled and bent down to press a kiss to Izaya’s cheek, smiling gently at his boyfriend. “He won’t listen to you, you know.” He said, loving the cute pout that took over Izaya’s face at his
“I know.” The raven grumbled in complaint, hugging Shizuo’s arm with a sigh. “But sometimes, I just wish I could smack his head and make him listen. You know?”

Shizuo glanced over at Shinra, who was still babbling about Celty and true love with absolutely no clue of the display of true love going on right in front of him.

“Yeah. I know.” Shizuo said instantly, smiling down at Izaya. “But if I were to give in and smack him, I’d probably give him brain damage.”

Izaya giggled a little at the joke (only he would giggle at a joke about giving people brain damage when it was a very real possibility) and it was the carefree giggle that finally drew Shinra’s attention to them.

“Izaya, you sound happy!” The future doctor said in surprise, his head tipping down so his gaze was directed right at the raven. “That’s a shock! Why…are you…so…” His words began to trail off as his eyes landed on the connection between Izaya and Shizuo’s arms. They took in the way Izaya was all but cuddling Shizuo, the way Shizuo’s posture was casual and relaxed for once, the contented looks on both of their faces, and finally they moved to look at the people all around them who were still whispering and pointing excitedly in their direction.

Shinra’s jaw dropped and he stared at Izaya and Shizuo in utter shock. “Wait…are you two…?” He looked at Izaya for confirmation, just to affirm if this unbelievable sight was actually true.

Shizuo reached his free hand across his body to place it gently over one of Izaya’s hands, tenderly stroking the back of the raven’s hand with his thumb, and waiting for Izaya to make the announcement.

This was the big moment. This was where Izaya decided whether or not he actually wanted to make this thing official to the world. If he affirmed the suspicions flying around right here and now, then there was no going back. He was committing. And if not…then he just wasn’t ready for a public commitment after all, and Shizuo was perfectly willing to wait.

But it was all riding on this moment for now.

Shizuo waited with bated breath, gently brushing his thumb over soft, perfect skin, ears straining to hear the voice that belonged to the person who had become the center of his entire world.

“Me and Shizu-chan…” Izaya began slowly, taking a small breath after those words as if gathering the vestiges of his courage. It was actually kinda funny. The raven would charge straight into a battle against a boy of superhuman speed and strength who’d caused him mental trauma for months without a second thought, but declaring himself to be in a public relationship took serious willpower and determination.

That was his Izaya. Never a single thing about him that aligned with society.

Izaya took another breath, this one deeper than the last, and spoke again. “Me and Shizu-chan,” He began, looking Shinra right in the eyes as he hugged Shizuo’s arm tightly. “Are dating now.”

Was there a word for when you felt happier than when you received free cake or pudding without doing anything at all? Because that’s what Shizuo was right now.

Shinra’s jaw dropped and his eyes practically popped out of their sockets as he gaped at his two friends. The two friends he’d been hoping would get along with each other for years now but had always fought instead. The two friends who he had wanted to like each other but had become mortal
enemies right away. The two friends who were polar opposites in every way imaginable and could never agree on anything.

“You two are... dating now?” Shinra repeated in shock, pushing up his glasses to where they had fallen down his nose and glancing back and forth between the boys in astonishment. “That’s... that’s... that’s...” The future doctor couldn’t seem to figure out what to say, and Shizuo couldn’t tell if that was a good thing or a bad thing.

But when a massive grin split the dorky face, and his brown eyes began to glitter with excitement, Shizuo knew that it was probably both.

“THAT’S FANTASTIC!” Shinra boomed, throwing his arms out to his sides and laughing with glee, spinning madly in place just like he’d done before. “Oh my goodness! I knew you had it in you! I just knew it!” He spun on his heel a few more times then launched himself at Izaya, wrapping his arms around the raven in a big hug.

“Hurray for you, my freaky genius friend!” He said cheerfully, squeezing the red-eyed boy so tightly that Shizuo was sure Izaya’s eyes were in danger of popping. Then the doctor released him and grabbed Shizuo in a hug instead, squeezing just as hard as he had before. “And hurray for you too, my lonely lab monster friend!” Shinra laughed, completely undeterred by the growl that escaped Shizuo’s throat at the word “monster”.

But somehow, with Izaya still hugging his arm, Shizuo felt a little bit better about the label. Even if he actually was a monster, there was still somebody who didn’t fear him. Somebody who loved him.

“So... how did it happen?” Shinra asked next, pulling away from Shizuo abruptly and bouncing eagerly in place as he looked from one boy to the other. “Was it while Shizuo was getting private lessons from his, ah, tutor?” The way he said “tutor” and winked suggestively at Izaya, Shizuo could tell that Shinra knew exactly who Shizuo’s tutor was.

“You knew all along, didn’t you?” Izaya asked from beside Shizuo, glaring at Shinra. “I knew you were trying to expose me! You’re pure evil, you know that?”

Shinra waved a hand dismissively in the air, massive grin still coating his face. “We can ignore all that for now! Let’s focus on the important bits! How did you two end up getting romantic?” He practically purred out the word “romantic”, elbowed Shizuo in the side with the exact same suggestive wink he’d been giving Izaya not two seconds before.

Shizuo could feel his cheeks turn red as he scratched his head and looked away, not knowing what to say to his crazy friend. Should they tell the truth? That they (or at least Shizuo) had been having romantic thoughts about each other since day one of tutoring? Were they really going to go that far back? And were they going to talk about the official boyfriend bonding and their date and their declarations of love? How much were they going to say? How many details did Shinra need to know?

“You don’t need to know anything about that.” Izaya said coolly, answering Shizuo’s question aloud. “All you need to know is that we’re dating now. End of story.”

“What?!” Shinra shrieked, jaw dropping open once more. “I can’t live with just that! I need details! All the juicy tidbits!” He grabbed Izaya’s shoulders, shaking him desperately. “You can’t just end a two year rivalry over winter break, turn into boyfriends, and not tell me how it happened! That’s so unfair!”

Izaya shrugged, brushing off Shinra’s clinging hands without a care. “Too bad.” He said breezily,
leaning over to peck Shizuo on the cheek. “You’ll never know.”

Wow. Izaya really was evil.

“Oh, come on!” Shinra whined, trailing pathetically after them as Izaya began to lead them towards the school. “Tell me something!”

Shizuo smiled as Izaya continued refusing to answer Shinra’s questions and Shinra continued to ask them, the snappy banter being traded back and forth faster than the blonde could comprehend. He didn’t need to comprehend it, though. He had Izaya right there, by his side, and nothing could make the world more perfect.

He saw Kadota standing at the entrance to the building they were approaching and he raised his free hand to give a short wave.

Kadota saw him and waved back with a smile, but the smile froze on his face when he saw Izaya clutching Shizuo’s arm, the two of them walking together, with no external forces that appeared to be making them do it.

Kadota looked up at the sky suspiciously like he was waiting for it to start falling or some other sign of the apocalypse to occur. Shizuo didn’t blame him. It was a pretty surreal sight.

But no matter how surreal it was, Kadota still managed to put on his usual calm face by the time they got over to him, and he nodded a brief greeting to their small group as they all stopped.

“What’s up, guys?” He said easily, dark eyes flicking between Izaya and Shizuo slowly. “You two look like shit.”

Shizuo suddenly remembered the injuries that were coating his and Izaya’s entire bodies and faces. With the way Shinra had been so excited about their relationship, he’d completely forgotten that the injuries were even there.

“What the hell, Shinra?” Shizuo demanded, turning to glare at his small friend. “You were seriously more concerned with our new relationship than with the bruises and scrapes and clear signs of a fight covering our faces? Aren’t you supposed to be a doctor or something?”

Shinra laughed jovially, slinging an arm around Izaya’s shoulders with a grin. “Just because I’m supposed to be a doctor doesn’t mean I have to put my patients’ health before my interest in their personal lives!” He chirped like it was completely obvious.

“Yeah, it does!” Shizuo argued, wishing he could punch the glasses-wearing nerd right in his face.

“Shizu-chan, don’t worry about it.” Izaya sighed, leaning his head onto Shizuo’s chest and rubbing one of his hands up and down Shizuo’s arm comfortingly. “Shinra is, and always will be, a terrible doctor and an idiot.”

“Hey!” Shinra protested, but the indignance in his protest was dulled somewhat by the look of awe on his face as he watched Izaya calm Shizuo down. Kadota’s face was like that too, his eyes wide in shock as he watched Shizuo’s muscles relax and the tension of anger drain out of his body.

“What…happened?” The usually-so-calm boy asked, his eyes locking with Shizuo’s in astonishment.

Shizuo glanced down at Izaya and Izaya glanced up at him. The two of them looked at each other for several seconds, a silent exchange passing between the two that no one else could ever hope to
understand. It was unique to the two of them. It was a bond shared between enemies turned lovers. It was only for Heiwajima Shizuo and Orihara Izaya.

“I taught Shizu-chan a few things.” Izaya said simply, his red eyes staring deep into Shizuo’s without breaking away. “And he taught me a few more.”

Shizuo smiled as he turned to face his perfect boyfriend, unable to believe that this little demonic angel was really in love with a monster like him. He really couldn’t believe it. And he couldn’t believe that he hadn’t realized how utterly in love he was with this raven sooner.

“That’s exactly what happened.” Shizuo said aloud, bending over to plant his forehead softly against Izaya’s. “We gave each other some private lessons.”

The school bell rang and kids began to file back into their classrooms for another semester of hard studying and schooling, chattering eagerly about all the newest gossip that was already flying around.

This person broke up with this one.

That girl moved away.

Someone got in a fight.

Izaya and Shizuo were dating.

And Shizuo had to admit that as he and Izaya kissed briefly in the hallway before separating to head to their respective classrooms, he didn’t mind the gossip about him this time at all.

Chapter End Notes

Wouldn't that just be a great place to end this story? That would be such a fantastic stopping point if I wanted to cut it off right here.

Good thing I'm not going to. Still have a lot of loose ends to tie up, after all! o(*^▽^*)o

See? Wasn't that so much nicer than all the Hajime-arc stuff we've been dealing with so far? I, for one, am quite glad that I can get back to writing fluff and comedy! At least for a little while. (¬‿¬)

Also, I'm no medical professional so don't quote me on all those medical facts from the chapter: I got them from medical websites and stuff like that when I did some research. In any case, I hope it all sounds pretty good!

And again, sorry for the super late update! I promise I didn't forget about you guys! Hope you liked this chapter! Things are going to start happening again real soon so be on the lookout for that in the coming updates! Thanks for reading, as usual! Bye! <3
HELLO, MY PEOPLE! It's so good to see you again! I've gotten a lot of comments about how happy you guys are that we're back in the fluffy portion of the story. I totally agree: I missed the fluff and comedy from before Hajime showed up! And actually, one of the comments gave me an idea for the next one-shot that I end up doing. But I do need your help to plan out some of it.

It'll be like an awards ceremony sort of thing, with prizes going to different characters in the story. I'll have about 7 awards that you can vote for in the comments below. They'll be listed in the lower notes so please vote for those awards for the next one-shot!

Aaaaaand without anything else from me, here is the next chapter! Hope you enjoy! <3

“Why won’t you tell me something?” Shinra whined, poking Izaya in his side with a massive pout on his face. “I’m your very best friend! You’re supposed to tell me everything.”

“Oh come on!” Shinra complained, yanking on Izaya’s arm now. “You can’t just start dating Shizuo and not say a single thing about how it happened!”

“I don’t just blab that out, you idiot!” Izaya hissed, glaring fiercely at his friend with angry red eyes. “I don’t need to be the talk of the school, thank you very much.”

Shinra laughed at that, his brown eyes sparkling behind his glasses. “You two were already the talk of the school! Izaya and Shizuo. You’ve always been the couple at the center of attention!”

Izaya paused to think about that statement. It…was sort of true, wasn’t it? Everyone had always talked about the two of them before. You couldn’t mention one without mentioning the other. It was Orihara Izaya and Heiwajima Shizuo, together til the end.

Except now they weren’t trying to cause each other’s ends. Now…they had given each other beginnings.

“Even so,” Izaya said aloud, dragging himself back into the present before he could slip into some kind of fantasy about Shizuo. He’d been having more of those lately. It was practically becoming a habit, taking over his mind whenever he wasn’t thinking of anything else in particular. Shizuo was his default daydream.

“I don’t like having positive things said about you rather than negative things?” Shinra asked in confusion, his brow wrinkling.
“It has nothing to do with the nature of the conversation being positive or negative.” Izaya said smoothly, gripping his pencil tightly. “It’s the thought or opinion behind what is said.”

Shinra stared at his friend quizzically, wondering what the raven was talking about. “Do you mind elaborating on that for me?” He asked, mentally bracing himself for one of Izaya’s philosophical/existential rants.

“How often do you believe a human actually speaks the full truth in each of their words?” Izaya posed a question instead, still watching the teacher like before, but with distant eyes that weren’t really paying attention to the world around him. “It’s rare that one ever would. When offering an opinion, words are easily padded. A human will unconsciously craft their words depending on who they’re talking to. It’s an instinctive reaction to please which most people have.”

Izaya tapped his desk with his pencil, a frown in place on his face. “The instinct only shows up with age, though. You learn to tell the truth as a child, you learn that you should always be honest and never lie, but truth is only acceptable in those days. The truth is considered rude when it is told outright, and only a child can get away with rudeness. Society as a rule says that your words should not insult; they should please. And so, once you get older, the truth is unacceptable. At least in its fullest format. From the point when you stop being a small child, that’s when you stop telling the full truth.”

Izaya looked over at Shinra, the frown still on his face. “Any word that comes out of a human’s mouth is padded by society, from the positive to the negative. No matter what rumor swirls around, a different hidden truth lies underneath it.” He said definitively. “Now, I’ve grown to understand the hidden truths under the rumors that surrounded me and Shizuo previously. I’ve grown to know what people truly meant when they talked about us. The things they didn’t say combined with what they did. I could tell who detested us and who liked the idea of us as a couple. I could tell if someone admired us or if someone wished we would just go away. I could list any one of the hidden truths in their words.”

Izaya bit his lip, turning his gaze down to look at his hands. “But now…now I don’t know any of it.” He said softly. “But now…now I don’t know any of it.” He said softly. “Now all of the rumors are different. All of the feelings have changed. All of the truth has shifted. I don’t understand it. And…that…that makes me very uncomfortable. I don’t want you to bring more of that discomfort to me than I’m already dealing with, okay? I want to make Shizuchen happy by letting everyone know what’s changed between us. But…but I’m still working on dealing with it myself.” He looked over at Shinra again, an almost pleading look in his eyes. “Please don’t make this worse for me, Shinra. Don’t focus too much on it and let me work around this new aspect of my life. Okay?”

Shinra was silent for a few moments, just staring right into Izaya’s eyes without a word. “But how did you get together?” He finally asked, punching Izaya in the arm with a whine. “You still haven’t told me yet!”

“So it’s true then?! You and Heiwajima are dating now?!” The boy right behind Izaya screeched, jumping up in his seat and looking at the raven in shock.

“They are dating?!” A girl on the other side of the room repeated, her eyes shining with excitement. “For reals?”

“Heiwajima and Orihara are dating now!” A different boy cried, adding his own voice to the rousing room of excited teenagers.
Izaya was about to kill Shinra.

“I can’t believe it! How did it happen?” The first boy asked, looking at Izaya with wide eyes. “How far have you gone?” The girl asked eagerly, grinning intently at the raven. “Yeah, how far?” A third boy purred, eyes raking Izaya up and down appreciatively.

Izaya shrank back in his seat, nose wrinkling and skin crawling with disgust. He didn’t want all this attention. This was just the kind of padded nonsense that he hadn’t wanted to deal with! Why couldn’t they leave him alone?!

Izaya nearly opened his mouth to scream at them all, to yell at every one of them to get off his case, but someone else beat him to it.

“All of you two-bit gossipers sit your useless rear-ends down in those chairs and shut up before I shove a rag in each of your mouths and tape them closed myself!” The teacher snapped from the front of the room, slamming his chalk down on his desk and glaring fiercely at the class. “We’re doing this crazy thing called learning math, but if you don’t stop we’ll switch to home language and literature so you can all practice writing your obituaries!”

All of the students stared at their teacher in shock, even Izaya, as he glared at each one of them in turn. And the best part about the whole thing? The teacher didn’t seem like he was kidding.

One by one, the students slowly settled back down in their seats, closing their mouths and ceasing all chatter obediently, leaving Izaya to gape in astonishment at his new favorite teacher.

“Holy cow.” Shinra whispered from beside Izaya, gawking at the growling man as he turned back to the board and continued his lesson. “I knew Shichi-sensei had a reputation for being tough and snarky but I’d never seen him in action before!”

“Is Shichi-sensei new?” Izaya whispered back, still watching the math teacher in wonder.

“He transferred here from another school over the break.” Shinra responded. “To fill the position of the new math teacher that our school has been looking for. I heard he’s originally from Russia!”

“Russia?!” Izaya asked, his red eyes beginning to sparkle with excitement. That would explain the strange blue color of his eyes and the even stranger light blonde, almost white, color of his hair. He was a foreigner, from a mysterious country with a hard-headed attitude that didn’t take disobedience. Yet he still had a Japanese name and spoke perfect Japanese just like he’d been born and raised here. Yes, Shichi-sensei was definitely his new favorite teacher.

“Now, can any one of you useless brats solve the math problem I just wrote?” Shichi sighed as he stepped away from the board, crossing his arms and shooting a daring glare at the classroom.

Nearly every student shrank away from the harsh look, except for one. One leaned in closer, whole being practically glowing with exhilaration. That glowing being was, of course, Orihara Izaya.

Shichi’s eyes landed on him, and one of his eyebrows raised. He nodded once at Izaya, leaning back against the chalkboard. “How about you, Fluffles? Think you can solve it?” He asked flatly, pale blue eyes meeting ruby orbs mercilessly.

Izaya blinked at the odd nickname, cocking his head to the side. “Fluffles?” He repeated curiously, getting more and more intrigued by this teacher by the second.

“That’s my cat’s name. You remind me of him.” Shichi shrugged, gesturing at the board. “Now, can you do the math or not?”
Izaya felt a grin stretch his face as he stood up and walked over to the board, grabbing the piece of chalk from Shichi’s desk and turning his attention on the board.

“You might actually make me want to learn, Shichi-sensei.” Izaya purred, scribbling eagerly on the board.

“Purring, huh? You really are Fluffles.” Shichi muttered, watching all the marks Izaya was making on the problem. “But I’m so glad that my cat seems to like me.”

Izaya laughed and finished the problem, turning to the math teacher with a big smile. “Yep! I like you!” He said cheerfully. “And just to prove it to you, I’ll even turn in all my homework on time.”

Shichi smirked at him, taking the chalk from his hand and jerking his head back towards the seats. “How generous of you, Fluffles. Get.”

“Да сэр (da ser/yes sir).” Izaya purred again, smiling brightly at Shichi as he trotted back to his seat and plopped down, grinning at Shichi widely once he was seated.

Shichi’s face hadn’t changed much from where it had been before – slightly annoyed and a little bored – but that eyebrow was raised again.

“Интересно (interesno/interesting).” He said simply, turning back to the board. “Now I know the cat can do math. Who else here has a brain?” He asked, returning to the lesson without a second thought.

Izaya giggled in his seat, genuinely excited by the strange behavior of his Russian teacher. “I like him a lot!” Izaya decided, turning to grin at Shinra. “And he, unlike some of my friends, didn’t call attention to my new relationship.”

“He doesn’t care about your relationship! He doesn’t know a thing about you!” Shinra yelled, waving his arms and glaring at Izaya.

“Four-eyes! Would you like to come up and answer the next problem? You seem very animated.” Shichi called from the front of the class, holding the chalk out towards Shinra in a manner that was much more of a command than a request.

Izaya snickered as Shinra paled and began to shakily walk his way up to the front of the room. Served the blabbing annoyance right!

Yep. Shichi was definitely his new favorite teacher.

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“Hey, Izaya.” Shizuo greeted his boyfriend at lunch with a smile, reaching out a hand for the raven to hold as they walked up to the roof.

Izaya took his hand with a bright grin, greeting him with a cheerful “hi!” and practically skipping beside the blonde as they headed up to the roof. That was…unexpected.

“Did something good happen?” Shizuo asked, raising an eyebrow at his boyfriend as they headed up. “You seem a lot happier now than you did earlier.”

Izaya nodded, looking up at Shizuo with shining red eyes. “My new math teacher is the coolest person ever!” The raven said happily, and a bolt of dread went through Shizuo’s heart at the words.
“O-Oh.” He managed to get out, forcing a smile onto his face despite the worry in his heart. “That’s fantastic. Is she nice?”

“He.” Izaya corrected instantly, humming as he led them up to the roof. “Shichi-sensei is awesome. He’s Russian, too! Speaks it!”

“Wow…cool.” Shizuo said lamely, hoping his jealously wasn’t radiating as badly as he thought it was.

Izaya glanced behind him, noticing the dejected look on Shizuo’s face. The raven laughed, stopping them just before the door leading to the roof itself and grabbing Shizuo’s face in his hands. “Shizu-chan, I still love you.” Izaya promised, smiling at the blonde widely. “No one could even hold a candle to you in my mind.”

He pressed a gentle kiss to Shizuo’s lips, surprising the blonde with the forwardness of the action. He must really be in a good mood. Or be really set on making sure Shizuo knew Izaya liked him more. Maybe it was a combination of both, actually.

Either way, it definitely worked to cure Shizuo’s mood.

He smiled down at Izaya once their lips parted and kissed him on the forehead, opening the door to the roof and leading him out onto it. “Well…I think the same about you.” He managed to say, hoping it didn’t sound too stupid or dorky, but Izaya just nodded with that same happy smile and hugged his arm, walking over to the bench with him.

“Good. Because I would smack you into next week if you didn’t.” The raven said simply, and Shizuo couldn’t help but laugh.

That was his Izaya. Vicious even when being sweet.

“Ah, here you two are.” A calm voice said from behind them.

Shizuo turned around to spot Kadota walking up onto the roof with his lunch in hand, nodding in greeting at the two of them. Shinra entered a few seconds after the calm boy, bearing his own food and glaring at Izaya for a reason unknown to Shizuo.

“You are a traitor!” The future doctor declared instantly, pointing harshly at Izaya with a scowl and clearing up Shizuo’s unasked question right away.

“How so?” Izaya responded simply, grinning at Shinra. “It isn’t my fault that Shichi-sensei called you up to do math.”

“Yes it is! You made me yell!” Shinra argued, stomping petulantly on the ground.

“I did nothing of the sort! Did I tell you to yell? Did I force you or threaten you? No, I did not.” Izaya shrugged, sitting down on the bench and opening his bento without looking back.

Shinra looked like he wanted to say something else, but Kadota pushed him aside with a sigh, coming over and sitting next to Izaya on the bench to eat his own lunch. “Let’s put this matter aside and eat, okay? We’ll talk about how Izaya betrayed you to Shichi-sensei at some other point in time.”

“Have you met Shichi-sensei yet?” Izaya asked eagerly, turning to face Kadota with a grin.

“No. Our classroom hasn’t had math yet.” Shizuo answered, sitting down on Izaya’s other side and opening up his own lunch. “But it’s coming up soon. We’ll see him then.”
Izaya scooted closer to Shizuo, happily munching on his own lunch with his leg pressed up right against the blonde’s.

Shizuo stared at the way their legs were connected, thinking back to the first time this had happened, before winter break. It had been shortly after Izaya had started tutoring Shizuo, right? Back then, this action had annoyed Shizuo because he didn’t know why he’d been reacting to it the way he had. Now…it made him very happy indeed.

Shizuo smiled and took another bite of his meal, leaning into his boyfriend a little bit as he ate.

“I can’t wait to meet this Shichi guy.” Kadota remarked, looking over at Izaya curiously. “You seem to like him a lot.”

“Oh, I do!” Izaya said eagerly, nodding up and down like a frantic bobblehead. “He’s totally savage to the students and he doesn’t hold anything back! I love it!”

“He gave us a pop quiz on the first day back from winter break!” Shinra complained.

“I love it!” Izaya repeated with even more enthusiasm, smiling happily up at Shizuo. “I hope you get along.”

Shizuo kissed Izaya on the forehead. “We’ll see. Math is evil.” He responded simply. “But I do have a great tutor.”

“Yes you do.” Izaya agreed instantly, and Shizuo rolled his eyes.

“So Izaya is your tutor?!” Kadota asked in shock, staring at Izaya with wide eyes.

Izaya glanced over at Kadota. “Um…yeah.” He shrugged, popping a tomato into his mouth.

“What?! I had no knowledge of this!” Kadota declared, glaring at Shizuo. “Why didn’t you tell me earlier, man?”

“I…well…” Shizuo stammered, unsure of what to say. Kadota had been upset about Shizuo not telling him who his tutor was before but now he seemed even more upset upon finding out that it was Izaya. Shizuo didn’t want to make Kadota mad. But he didn’t know how to explain that he had just been kind of nervous about his friends finding out he and Izaya had been getting along and maybe he’d been scared one of them would catch onto his developing feelings. How did he say that without making it sound offensive?

Kadota sighed after a few seconds, waving a hand in the air. “Actually, don’t worry about it. I’m assuming that the two of you getting together had something to do with the tutoring, and if you’d told me before than that get-together might not have happened.”

He looked over and smiled at the two of them. “I’m too happy for you guys to be angry at some small thing you did earlier.” He told Shizuo, and Shizuo was amazed by the fact that he’d been able to find such a great friend.

“Dotachin! You should be the best man at the wedding!” Izaya chirped, clasping his hands over his heart and fluttering his eyelashes at the boy.

“What about me?” Shinra demanded, leaning forward with a desperate look on his face.

Izaya glanced at Shinra coldly. “You can be second best.” He said simply, and Shinra gasped in indignation, jumping up out of his seat.
An argument brewed from there on, a series of snippy comebacks and complaints that lasted throughout the entire lunch period. By the end of it, neither Izaya nor Shinra had managed to finish their meals, and Shizuo had shoved some food in his boyfriend’s mouth as they were heading to class so he wouldn’t “waste away”.

Despite the chaos of their friend group, and the strange buzzing of rumors and excitement that they were causing all throughout the school, not to mention the appearance of this new teacher whom Izaya happily pointed out to Shizuo in the hallway, Shizuo had never been more content with his crazy life.

If only the contented happiness could have lasted just a little longer.

Chapter End Notes

Don't you all just love Shichi? He's like the best teacher ever. XD But...what is this last sentence? What could it mean? Will the peace end so soon already?! ( *〇□〇 )

…… !

Anywho, here are the awards that you guys can vote for for the next one-shot:

- Best Character (includes Izaya, Shizuo, Kasuka, Mairu, Kururi, Namiko, and Kichirou)
- Best Couple (includes Izaya x Shizuo, Namiko x Kichirou, Kyouko x Shirou, and even Izaya x Hajime)
- Best Partners in Crime (includes Mairu and Kururi, Namiko and Kichirou, and Izaya and Shizuo)
- Best Villain/s (includes Hajime, Hajime’s father, Kyouko and Shirou, and Suzuki)
- Best Supporting Character/s (includes Suzuki, Shinra, Kadota, and Shichi-sensei)
- Best Fighter (includes Hajime, Shizuo, and Izaya)

and finally

- Worst with their Feelings (includes Izaya, Shizuo, and Hajime)

Please vote below! It would be really awesome if we could have this award ceremony one-shot and I'm actually really excited to write it! Thanks so much! I hope you enjoyed the chapter! I'll see you all on Wednesday! <3
The Bear's Arrival and the Rats' Return (クマの到着とラットの帰還)

Chapter Notes

Hi everybody! Sorry for the late update! I just realized last night that today is White Day (dates just don't compute in my lovely brain) and so I came up with a White Day one-shot last minute as a companion to the Valentine's Day one-shot I did a month ago. No smut in it! Just fluff! Anyway, so I wrote that whole thing and finished this chapter today, barely editing the both of them. I'll be putting that one-shot up right after I update this, so keep an eye out for that! It'll be called "White Day is Hell". You'll see why if you read it! XD

Anyway, so here's the next chapter!

*whisper* I don't know what I was thinking, writing a full one-shot and finishing the chapter in one day...I must be trying to kill myself...*end of whispering*

Enjoy! <3

*And so, my new lesson plan is going to include a few field trips to the nearby college’s mathematical center. I need approval for those.” Shichi said flatly, crossing his arms as he looked over at the principal sitting across from him.

The man seemed to be a little distracted by something out the window, his eyes wide as he stared at the schoolgrounds below him.

Shichi could feel a small twitch of annoyance in his temple and he blew out a sigh, tapping his foot on the ground as he glared at the principal.

"Idiot.” He thought to himself.

It wouldn’t do to insult his new boss on his first technical day of work, though. He needed to remain at least semi-civil to the rest of his co-workers and employer for a little while. But still…what the heck was this guy looking at that was so interesting?

“Sir.” Shichi said again, a little more forcefully this time.

The principal’s head snapped over to look at Shichi in shock, as if registering his presence for the first time. “Oh! Shichi-sensei! I’m terribly sorry. I’m a little distracted right at the moment.”

Shichi smiled brightly at his boss, making sure none of his annoyance was evident on his face. “It’s no trouble at all, sir!” He said cheerfully.

“Don’t mind the fact that you were the one who called me here.” He muttered in his head right afterwards.

The principal sighed and shook his head, staring down at his hands. “No, I know it’s a problem to not even pay attention to you while you’re here upon my request.” He said, looking up at Shichi regretfully. “It’s just…two of my students that always fight, who have literally been mortal enemies
since day one of class, are now…dating.” The principal gestured out the window, shaking his head in amazement. “I made them work together so one could tutor the other, hoping that they might start to get along but I never pictured…well, this!” He waved wildly at whatever he was looking at, clearly too shocked by what it was to even describe it.

Shichi knew what that meant.

He had to go and look.

The Russian sighed and stood up from his chair, walking obediently over to the window and looking out.

There were only two students in sight at that point in time, despite it being the tail-end of lunch. Some tall blonde kid that Shichi hadn’t seen yet with his arm around a much smaller figure…

“Oh, Fluffles.” Shichi muttered, crossing his arms and looking down in mild surprise at his most interesting student. Yep, that was Fluffles all right. Raven black hair, oddly fair and flawless skin, ruby-colored eyes, and a mischievous smirk. He was the one who knew Russian. And he’d done the challenge problem on the board effortlessly. A very smart boy.

An odd boy…a mysterious boy…but a very, very smart one.

What was his name again? His actual name?

“I…Izaya.” Shichi muttered slowly, the strange name coming back to him. “That’s right. Orihara Izaya.”

The principal looked over at Shichi in shock. “Oh! Have you had Izaya-kun for class already?” He asked in surprise. “I couldn’t tell! Most teachers come to me complaining with the ferocity of a storm about him once they meet him! He’s not the most respectful student that ever lived…and he doesn’t really do class participation…or classwork…unless he’s trying to tease the teacher by showing them just what he can do, of course.”

Shichi snorted in amusement, smiling down at the raven-haired boy below. “That’s just my kinda kid.” He said in a flat voice, watching Izaya chatter happily to the blonde beside him. Shichi had no idea why they would be hanging out at the very end of lunch instead of heading to class with everyone else. Maybe they wanted some extra time together that they hadn’t been able to get during the rest of lunch because of annoying friends.

In any case, the blonde was shoving some food in Izaya’s mouth, despite the raven’s protests, and scolding him about something or other that probably involved his lack of food intake. There was a cute pout on the raven’s face, and he seemed to be trying to argue in between bites, but he still ate quickly and dutifully so that they could get back to class. When the blonde was done force-feeding his boyfriend, he bent down and kissed Izaya.

The smaller boy kissed him back, keeping their contact for just a few seconds before pulling away and darting into the buildings, the blonde close on his heels.

“It’s amazing.” The principal said from beside Shichi, shaking his head in wonder. “Just before winter break, those two would do nothing but fight whenever they saw each other. Shizuo would hurl all kinds of school property, from desks to flag poles, in an attempt to hit Izaya, and Izaya would dodge them all and taunt him the whole way like it was some kind of game. They hated each other. And now…”

“Now they’re a pretty cute couple.” Shichi remarked aloud, turning to face the principal. “And I
definitely think they have a more stable relationship than many of the other teenagers around here. But are you still going to allow Izaya to tutor...the other one.” Yeah, he’d already forgotten the blonde’s name. So what? He would come up with a better one for the tall boy later, anyway.

Maybe Forcefeeder.

“Why wouldn’t I let him? It seems like their partnership worked out well.” The principal frowned in confusion, cocking his head at Shichi.

“Yes, but they are dating now. It could create some unhelpful distractions in the tutoring process.” Shichi pointed out, bringing a frown to the principal’s face. “Hm...you’re right.” He muttered, stroking his chin with a look of worry. “Maybe I should dissolve the tutoring agreement. There is that possibility present, isn’t there?”

“Yes there is.” Shichi thought. “And now I will crush it.”

“But on the other hand,” The Russian began, drawing the principal’s attention back to him in shock. “Their partnership could work out even better than before. I get the impression that Izaya-kun is a very responsible boy, when he feels like it. He’ll probably want his boyfriend to do very well in school, and push even harder for Shizuo’s success in the academic fields.” Shichi said smoothly, trying not to smirk at the way the principal’s eyes widened.

“That’s also true!” The man cried, thinking hard on the subject. “Izaya would want Shizuo to do well if they’re dating now...he would help Shizuo in every way that he could. Absolutely every way! Yes! Yes, I think their partnership will still work splendidly. Who cares about complications, anyway?”

The man beamed at Shichi, and Shichi smiled back, trying his best to hold back the evil laugh bubbling up in his throat. Literally, he’d just brought up the one reason anyone could come up with to dissolve Izaya and...the blonde’s tutoring partnership and then demolished it so no one could ever question the arrangement again in less than 30 seconds. Those two would be able to have that tutor thing worked out for however long they wanted it to, even if most schools’ policies banned that form of romance-inclusive partnership.

Never let it be said that Shichi Mikhailov did not help his favorite students.

“In any case, my lesson plan.” Shichi said smoothly, switching the track of the conversation back to what it had been previously. “Will you approve the field trips?”

“Field trips?” The principal repeated. “Er, how many are there?”

“I TOLD YOU ALREADY!” Shichi yelled in his head, but aloud, he simply smiled and said, “About five, sir.”

The principal hummed a few times and nodded, settling back in his chair with a small huff. “That should be fine. Just make sure to work it out with the other teachers’ schedules so that everything fits.” He instructed.

Shichi gave a quick bow and checked his watch. Class would start in five minutes. He needed to get going.

“Thank you, sir. Now I’ll just be on my way then.” He said curtly, spinning on his heel and marching out of the office before the man could find anything else distracting to stare at.

And speaking of distractions, Shichi was now quite interested in meeting this blonde boy. Who was Fluffles dating? Who had attracted the cat’s attention? It would be great to find out.
“Gotta make sure his new boyfriend is worthy of him.” Shichi hummed, pulling out his schedule and examining it. He had the list of students in his next class right there, and one of them could be the tall blonde.

Shichi didn’t know why he felt so protective over Izaya. He’d barely met the small raven that morning. But something about the way he’d spoken Russian to Shichi, and seemed genuinely excited to meet him, not to mention the brief conversation they’d had in Russian before he’d run off with Four Eyes for lunch just…it just felt like a connection.

Not some freaky romantic connection like teacher-student secret relationship crap but…there was something there. He wanted to make sure Izaya was happy and safe with this…Shi-what’s-his-face. He wanted to make sure of it.

Shichi sighed and closed his binder, realizing that he would not remember that blonde’s name until he saw his face again and just headed for his next class. Hopefully, the blonde would be there and it would end Shichi’s internal suffering sooner rather than later.

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“Today was a good day!” Izaya declared, swinging Shizuo’s hand happily between them as they walked to Shizuo’s house. School was over and they’d said their goodbyes to Shinra and Kadota at the gate, heading off in different directions. The latter set was going to their homes to do who-knew-what, and the previous set was heading back to Shizuo’s place. After all, that was where the twins were staying during their recovery. It would be pointless to shuffle them back and forth between the Orihara household and the Heiwajima household, so why not just let them stay where they were? And of course, Izaya was allowed to stay there, too.

He would never admit out loud how happy that made him.

“I’m glad you thought so.” Shizuo said simply, smiling a bit as they walked. “You seem like you really like Shichi-sensei.”

“I do!” Izaya laughed, thinking again of the awesome Russian math teacher. “Did you see his face when that kid tried to feign an illness to get out of class? He was like “Boy, I’m God. I see through all your lies.”” Izaya giggled in delight as he recalled the hilarious incident. It had been during passing period right after lunch. Shichi-sensei had been headed to the next classroom he was teaching in and some student had stopped him. They were stopped conveniently outside of Izaya’s classroom, and from his lovely front-row seat, he was able to see both Shichi and the student quite clearly.

Izaya recognized the student. It was Satomi Sachiro, a second year student (the same grade as Izaya and Shizuo) who placed more importance on girls and athletics than he did on actual academics. There had to be at least one in every grade, right? A nice dumb jock.

Well, Sachiro was that jock, and he was notorious for being able to weasel out of classes by appealing to the teachers before they started. Since he was such a stellar athlete, many of the teachers overlooked his constant ditching, even counting him present if they were asked to, and math teachers were the worst. Izaya was pretty sure Sachiro had never actually sat in on a full math lesson before in his life. He always either coerced the teacher into letting him leave early, or just flat-out didn’t go.

It looked like he was trying to get an early start on suckering the new math teacher into letting him leave on the very first day of school.

Sachiro faked a massive fever, moaning and acting dizzy and fanning his face, the whole nine yards,
begging to go to the nurse’s office instead of class.

And Shichi? Whoa boy, what he did was the greatest thing ever!

The math teacher had stared at Sachiro with a flat, highly unimpressed expression and said, “You don’t need a nurse if you’re sick. Back in Russia, we chopped off the hands of the sick to take their mind off the pain. It worked like a charm. Wanna try?”

Sachiro had yanked his hands to his chest with a terrified look on his face, shaking his head vigorously no.

Shichi grabbed the boy by his head, spun him around, and shoved him back into the classroom. “Then sit your lazy, lying behind on a chair and get ready to do some math.” He’d said coldly, not even caring the slightest bit about his student’s state of mind.

Shichi was the best.

“I wish I had Shichi-sensei for more than just math!” Izaya whined, kicking playfully at a small pebble on the sidewalk as they began to near Shizuo’s neighborhood. “School would be so much more fun!”

“I don’t think he liked me very much.” Shizuo suddenly cut in, a little slowly like he wasn’t sure how Izaya was going to respond.

Izaya looked over at Shizuo in shock, noting how the blonde’s face was turned away from him. “What do you mean?” Izaya asked, frowning in confusion. “Why do you think that?”

“Well…” Shizuo blew out a sigh and ran his free hand through his blonde hair, tousling the dyed locks in a way that made Izaya want to comb them all back to perfection immediately. He resisted the impulse, choosing instead to focus on whatever was making his boyfriend worry. Shizuo himself was more important than Shizuo’s hair.

“Well what?” Izaya asked gently, kissing the side of Shizuo’s cheek as they walked. He knew it calmed the blonde down when he did that. Maybe it would help him talk.

Izaya’s little strategy seemed to work. Shizuo’s shoulders relaxed and he blew out another sigh, dropping his free hand to his side and tightening his other hand’s grip around Izaya’s. He looked over at Izaya, golden eyes locking with his, and the confession spilt out.

“Shichi glared at me pretty much the entire class. And I know he’s always glaring but he was glaring especially hard at me.” The blonde began to ramble, pouring out all his concerns that had been building up over the last few hours. “It was like he either had some special hatred for me or that he was analyzing me for something. And I don’t know what! Everything I said or did he scowled at, and watched very carefully. It was like being under a microscope!”

Shizuo looked over at Izaya with a serious look on his face. “A very, very angry microscope.” He said gravely, and Izaya had to fight the urge to laugh at the look on Shizuo’s face.

“But not as angry as my Shizu-chan gets sometimes, right?” Izaya teased, kissing the tip of Shizuo’s nose and poking at his cheek playfully. “No one can beat that!”

Shizuo gave a little huff that was almost a laugh, a small smile coming over his lips as they walked along. “True…but he still didn’t seem to like me very much.”

“Did you ask why?” Izaya inquired curiously, honestly not sure why Shichi would take a special...
dislike to Shizuo right off the bat.

“Yes!” Shizuo sighed again, running that hand through his hair with another huff. “And he just said he was “evaluating me for Fluffles”. What the heck does that even mean?! Who’s Fluffles?!”

“His cat.” Izaya said instantly, recalling the nickname that had been assigned to him mere seconds after Shichi’s eyes had first landed on him. “He calls me that because I remind him of…wait a second…”

A bit of a warm feeling spread throughout Izaya’s chest as he realized what Shichi’s casual explanation to Shizuo meant. “Aw! Shichi-sensei is so sweet!” Izaya cooed, laughing as he swung Shizuo’s hand again, humming happily to himself.

The blonde stared down at Izaya in utter bafflement, not sure why the reference to his cat made the teacher so “sweet”.

“Could you please elaborate on that statement for all of us who aren’t inside your mind?” Shizuo grumbled, poking Izaya’s side gently.

The raven swatted his hand away but nodded eagerly nonetheless, sending a bright grin Shizuo’s way. “Of course!” He chirped. “Put simply, Shichi-sensei was trying to see if you were a good boyfriend for me or not.”

“What?!” Shizuo cried, even more confusion filling his scowling features. “He barely even met you this morning! Why would he care about whether or not your boyfriend was a good one? And how did he know I was that boyfriend?”

Izaya shrugged, swinging their arms again as they took the final turn before Shizuo’s street. “I dunno. He’s just Shichi-sensei.” The raven said simply, smiling up at his boyfriend.

Shizuo looked mystified by the entire situation, but eventually he just sighed and ran his hand through his hair (again!), apparently deciding to drop the matter entirely.

“Well whatever.” He muttered. “Will you help me out with math when we get home? Shichi-sensei threw some crazy shit at us that I don’t have the first clue about.”

Izaya laughed and nodded happily, a little amazed by how far they’d come since that first math lesson which felt so long ago. That had been back in, what, November? December? It felt like years but it was actually only a few months at the max. It was early January now, the beginning of a new year and the final term of school. Things seemed so mundane when put in that light but in reality… the new year had never been more different and promising for Izaya.

Then the date struck him again. It was January.

“Your birthday is coming up, isn’t it?” Izaya asked as they made it to Shizuo’s doorstep, the latter knocking loudly on the door and waiting for someone inside to open it.

Shizuo looked over at Izaya in shock, then nodded, a bit of a blush coming over his face as he looked at the door. “Yeah. I’m turning 18.” He muttered softly.

Izaya hummed, squeezing Shizuo’s hand thoughtfully. He would have to do something for Shizuo’s birthday. He had no idea exactly what he would do, but he had to do something.

Then again, some of the bills on the house were coming up and he needed to worry about paying those. Even once he did the thing with the Cybers he might not break even with the money he
needed. A payment from his parents might come in, but he couldn’t count on that.

Oh crud, his parents! They were coming back for a party soon, weren’t they?! He needed to fit that into the budget as well!

Then there were groceries and other such supplies for the house that needed to be restocked, and new clothes for the girls since they were starting to hit growth spurts…

Shizuo might not get anything for his birthday after all. The thought made Izaya’s heart sink. After all the blonde had done for him, he wanted to be able to do…well, something for the guy!

He needed to figure that something out by January 28th. Just another deadline to add to his growing list.

As the door to the house opened and the grinning face of Kichirou welcomed them back, Izaya’s phone buzzed in his pocket.

He ignored it for a while as he took his shoes off inside, letting it buzz until it stopped, but then the buzzing just restarted a few seconds later. Whoever it was was calling him back again. Maybe it was important.

Izaya glanced over at Shizuo as he disappeared into the house with his father, the both of them calling out to the twins to announce Shizuo and Izaya’s arrival. After they rounded the corner and left his line of sight, Izaya pulled out his phone as stared at the number on the face of the screen.

He…didn’t recognize it. That in itself was odd. It wasn’t in his contacts and it wasn’t even one of the numbers that he had memorized but never bothered to put in his actual contacts for one reason or another. Who was calling him so insistently?

Cautiously, Izaya hit the answer button and raised the phone to his ear. “Hello?” He asked, waiting for someone to respond on the other end.

“Hi! I’m just calling from a payphone nearby because I didn’t bring my phone with me today.” A voice chirped on the other end. It sounded youthful, like a teenage boy maybe.

Izaya frowned. He had no idea why a random teenage boy would be calling him. “May I ask who is speaking?” He asked coolly, and the voice on the other end paused.

“It’s Keiji. With the shipment of “video games”. You said you wanted to pick them up today, Orihara-san.”

A cold feeling of dread shot through Izaya’s heart. He’d literally just been thinking about the Cybers deal! How had he forgotten so soon?!

Crap. His gang work was rising up alongside his parents, his bills, and his new relationship. How was he supposed to balance all of this?!

“R-Right. I’ll be there in just a few minutes. I was delayed.” Izaya coughed out, quickly slipping back into his shoes with a nervous glance behind him to where Shizuo had disappeared. The Heiwajimas knew about his gang activities. None of the specifics, of course, but they were aware. He would shoot Shizuo a text saying where he had gone…and deal with whatever came of it when he got back.

He needed this money.
“Good! I’ll be waiting inside the café. Got us a table for two and everything.” Keiji said happily.

The idea of sitting at a café table with a boy who wasn’t Shizuo rubbed Izaya the wrong way. “No.” He said sharply, pulling his coat on and gripping the door handle. “I, uh, don’t want a table. I need to do this as quickly as possible so just…give me the games and I’ll get out.”

Keiji was silent on the other end for a few seconds, but Izaya could practically see the boy frowning in confusion as he said, “O-Okay. Wouldn’t it be easier to meet up if we looked like we were dating, though?”

“We aren’t dating. I’m dating someone else.” Izaya said harshly, not willing to pretend for even a second that he wasn’t. “I’m dating someone else who I happen to be very loyal to. So just get the games ready, let me pick them up, and I’ll set up the Purple Dragons’ takedown tonight. Got it?”

“Yes sir.” Keiji said on the other end.

“Good. See you soon.” He hung up the phone and swept out the door, slamming it shut behind him and bringing up his text messages so he could start the one to Shizuo.

Instead, he saw a missed text message from one Orihara Kyouko.

With dread, he opened it, still running down the street, and read it to himself.

It was a simple message. All it read was this: “The party has been moved up. You have one week to prepare everything we previously discussed. Don’t forget to get rid of the brats.”

His parents were coming sooner than expected.

He needed to set up the party much quicker than he had originally planned.

The Purple Dragons’ takedown was going to begin very soon.

And Shizuo still needed math lessons.

Why couldn’t his peace have lasted just a little bit longer than one day? Why?

Chapter End Notes

Whew! Poor Izaya! Everything is just crashing down at once. Well, at least he doesn’t have to worry about Hajime anymore!

And again, I am sorry if this chapter isn’t as good as the other ones have been so far. Like I said, I was barely able to finish and edit it today so I am not fully sure of how decent it came out. I am pretty proud of the one-shot though. I hope you guys like it if you decide to read it!

Right, and on that note, I need to head over and get THAT posted. The vote from last chapter is still open (and probably will be for a few more chapters) so if you want to comment your votes on this chapter then feel free to do so! Okay, I gotta head over and post the one-shot now. I hope you liked this jumbled update! Bye! <3
Hi, everybody! I am officially on Spring Break now and it's great! Of course, I still have a lot of things that are happening, and a friend is coming over to visit on Wednesday - she says she's planning on staying all day - so I might not be able to update on Wednesday. We'll see. If I can't, then I guess that means the next one-shot will be coming out and it will most likely be the one you guys have been voting for!

And seriously, thank you so much for voting. You guys are awesome! <3

Right! So here's the next chapter! Hope you enjoy! <3

“Seriously? How did you have no idea I was coming here?” Shichi groaned and pressed his fingers to his temples, rolling his eyes at the idiot on the other end of the phone. Really. He was the one who begged Shichi, begged him, to move out of Saitama and into Ikebukuro to take over at Raijin as math teacher. “I moved my entire life because you asked me to. The least you could do is remember that I did it.”

“Well sorry, but I’ve been having a bit of a rough time remembering things.” The voice grumbled, and Shichi could hear a sound like someone rubbing their head on the other end. “Ever since that attack…apparently I had some kind of concussion. It’s been messing with me lately.”

Shichi frowned on the other end, twirling a pencil in his finger as his eyes flicked over yet another failed pop quiz in front of him. These kids needed some serious help. Their math skills were…not very astounding.

“Well, I think that’s sort of your own fault.” The math teacher said breezily, marking off the answers easily and taking note of the final grade on his log. “You really shouldn’t let your guard down around a dangerous person. Especially alone at night.”

“He was a kid! How was I supposed to…never mind. Shichi, do you have a student named Orihara Izaya?”

Shichi paused at that, his pale blue eyes inadvertently flicking over to land on the only pop quiz with a passing grade so far. It was sitting on its own, far away from the rest of the heap, with a perfect 100% circled at the top.

“Yeah. I have him in one of my first class periods.” He responded, turning his gaze back to the papers he still had left to grade. “Why? Do you know him?”

“Yes. I want you to do something for me that concerns him.” The answer was curt, with no other explanation offered, and a demand right afterwards. How lovely.

“And what would that be?” Shichi asked with a sigh, generously chalking the poor attitude up to the concussion.

“Ask about his family life.” The response was immediate, and Shichi’s shock was immediate as well.
“His what?” The math teacher demanded, staring at the phone in utter confusion.

“His family life.” The voice repeated. “I need to know about it.”

“Why would you need to know?” Shichi asked, thinking about what possible connection Fluffles could have to the man he was currently talking to. “Maybe he has a good reason for not wanting to talk about it. For that matter, why are you even prying in the first place? Not to mention trying to send in someone he barely knows to find that stuff out!”

“I sent someone he knew very well last time and that didn’t work out!” The voice argued, and Shichi groaned as he rubbed his temples again. He could already tell that the answer to his next question was going to make him question his faith in the intelligence of humanity. “Who did you send? That little factoid is kinda important, you know.”

“It was his ex-boyfriend.” Came the reply.

There was deadly silence for a few, long seconds. Shichi’s faith in humanity dwindled rapidly.

“You truly are dumber than a rock.” The teacher finally said, in a tone so flat that it could only be the truth. Then his tone quickly shifted into one of anger. “Seriously?! What kind of half-assed idea is that?! You don’t send someone’s ex to get information out of them! That’s horrifically stupid and insensitive! That could even be traumatic for some people! Why would you even think about that?”

Shichi looked back over at Izaya’s paper with an unwavering gaze. “Izaya is a good kid. He doesn’t deserve you sending someone who was cut out of his life right back into it. And for that matter, he doesn’t deserve you sending some guy he barely met to interrogate him. It’s wrong, Roku.”

“And this is why we’re only adopted brothers!” The voice yelled on the other end, the man clearly pissed by Shichi’s lack of cooperation. “I knew I was a fool to think you’d actually help me. You deserted our family, after all. Changed your last name. Moved away. Do you really think that you’re even a part of this family anymore? Because let me tell you-”

“Let me tell you,” Shichi cut in, stopping the angry rant in its tracks with his icy cool voice. “That you most certainly are a fool. But it’s not because you trusted me. It’s because you listen to your own damn ideas. Talk to you later, Roku.” Shichi hung up the phone before the man could get out another angry word, staring at the “call ended” screen blankly.

Suzuki Shichi. That name had always sounded wrong to him, ever since he was a child.

He’d been adopted into the Suzuki family, a family which already had six children of its own, and he couldn’t have been more of an oddball. The random Russian child in a Japanese family. There were so many things that pushed him away from the members of his “family” that surrounded him. His appearance was obviously the first thing that set him apart from them.

He was far lighter-skinned than the others, had European features, pale blue eyes, and icy blonde hair. He grew at a much faster rate than they did, and was taller by all his elder siblings before he even hit puberty. He stuck out like a black sheep in a shepherd’s white flock. And his appearance wasn’t the only thing that made him a freak to them.

All his first words had still been in Russian: the last language he’d been listening to before he was adopted, apparently. And he grew up speaking in a Russian accent for the first few years of his life, sounding like a complete foreigner every time he opened his mouth. His adopted “siblings” never let him forget that.

Eventually, when Shichi was 17, he ran away from home to Russia. His original goal had just been
to get there, track down his real parents, and get out. He had no real desire to leave everything he knew behind, even if it wasn’t too nice of a life. But once he got to Russia…he wasn’t the oddball anymore.

He looked like everyone else. His accent matched up with theirs. His behavior and mannerisms fit perfectly with the society he encountered. And for the first time, the weather wasn’t ridiculously hot all day long.

After getting over his awe at the sensation of fitting in for once, Shichi had learned quickly that it would take him a lot longer to find his parents in such a freakishly large country than he’d originally anticipated. It wouldn’t be a get-in-get-out thing. He would have to stay a while, in this strange yet familiar country, and find a way to support himself on his own while he was searching.

He managed to pick up some work in a pretty shady ring of minor mafia members, mostly running messages around for them and delivering packages back and forth as they planned large stunts. It was dangerous work but it wasn’t too hard if you were careful and knew what you were doing, and the pay was enough to make a decent living on. That living being a tiny one-room apartment and ready-made meals for breakfast, lunch, and dinner. But Shichi would readily admit that it was better than what he’d had in Japan, any day of the year.

It took him 2 full years of living there, right up until his 19th birthday, but he finally tracked down his real parents. Or what was left of them, anyway. They’d died long before of an illness that had been going around Russia at the time. Their bodies were buried in a small cemetery and their legal documents had been kept in a safe by the undertaker. Apparently, he did that with all bodies’ belongings until family members came to claim them. Sometimes it took years. His going record was a young child’s corpse which hadn’t been identified in over 23 years. Pretty sad story, but it wasn’t what Shichi had come there to hear or find.

The undertaker saw the resemblance in Shichi’s face to the face of his father, asked him a few questions about where he’d grown up and how he’d been adopted, then agreed to show him the documents he was keeping in the safe. Apparently, Shichi’s story matched up with what the undertaker could glean from said documents, and that was enough to grant him access to the files.

Those files ended up being two birth certificates which gave him the names Irina and Borya for his mother and father, records of his birth as his parents’ only child, the travel documents they used to get him to Japan before the sickness broke out, and death certificates for both of them barely 3 months after their return. And in those records of his own birth, on a certificate that he had never seen before and had always wished to see when he was young, Shichi discovered that his given name was Alexai Viktor Mikhailov.

Alexai Viktor Mikhailov. It sounded much better than Suzuki Shichi.

But…he still wanted to retain a trace of his childhood in Japan. He still wanted something that reminded him of the roots he’d grown in the country his parents had wanted him to grow up safely in. He’d gone to the Russian services center and changed his name to Shichi Alexai Viktor Mikhailov. It was a mouthful, but it was his name. His name. The one he’d chosen for himself that no one else could choose for him.

While at the center, Shichi had also switched his citizenship to primarily Russian, which was fairly easy given that his newfound birth certificate was from Russia, and he reverted his Japanese citizenship to the secondary level. He was a dual citizen of Russia and Japan.

Shichi had been rather happy with his life.
He moved up in the ranks of the mafia ring he was in as he got older, actually working on the real missions with the people who used to be his bosses, making a name for himself within the place he now called home. He grew tougher and more rebellious against the rules of society he’d been brought up with. He relished the rigid lifestyle of the Russians and the harsh ways of the mafia. He became an honest-to-god assassin within their group and was given an animal code name based on his particular skill set: медведь. Medved. Roughly pronounced Meed-veed. It meant bear.

Yeah, Shichi had been living a pretty good life as a top Russian assassin, the merciless Medved, until he’d gotten a letter in the mail from the Suzuki family. They’d sent it to Suzuki Shichi, who didn’t exist anymore of course, but Shichi still remained the only Shichi in Russia and so the letter had found its way to him eventually. How exactly they’d found out that he was living in Russia, Shichi would never know. But he read the letter anyway, more out of curiosity than attachment to the “family” behind it.

It was straight out of some B-rated movie.

His mother was sick. She might not last long. She wanted to see Shichi before she died.

By all rights, Shichi should’ve just ripped up the letter. That woman had barely even seen him back when he lived with her. Her face was a foreign concept, always away at work along with his father’s, and she certainly hadn’t cared one whit about how the rest of her children had been treating Shichi the entire time he was growing up. She was a terrible mother, and he really could’ve burned that letter to the ground, turned his back on Japan and the Suzukis, and no one would have judged him for it.

Yet still…he had been raised in that household. They had something of a connection to him and his past. He was obligated to at least see them before they started dropping like flies.

So he had bid his mafia comrades farewell, a scene that wasn’t as dramatic as one might have you believe. They walked him to the boat, shook hands and exchanged some last minute advice and jabs, then Shichi had climbed on and never looked back. All in all, the parting took less than ten minutes. That was the Russian way, really. No emotion. Only silent understanding and acceptance that lasted indefinitely.

He hadn’t seen his comrades once since that swift parting.

In any case, Shichi was sure it must have been a shock for the Suzukis when he actually showed up to his mother’s deathbed. And not just because they hadn’t seen him since he was 17, and he was nearly 26 at that point in time.

Shichi had used to hide himself as best as possible while growing up, dressing plainly and speaking demurely, blending into the wall as much as a Russian could in the world of Japan. It was all in an attempt to draw as little attention to himself as possible. He had wanted to be the well-behaved, easily ignored wallflower that no one looked twice at. Showing back up at the Suzukis doorstep, Shichi had spiky blonde hair with jet-black and electric blue streaks running throughout it that screamed for attention. There were piercings lining his ears and one on his eyebrow that glinted as he moved, steel-toed combat boots which rang loudly on the floor whenever he passed by, and a thick fur-lined trench coat hanging off his shoulders that swooped dramatically behind him. Ah. And let’s not forget the new tattoos adorning his chest, one of which could be seen over the tight black V-neck shirt he’d been wearing, and the perpetual scowl telling the world to screw off stuck on his face.

Many of the younger Russian mafia members adopted this rebellious look as compared to the older, more business-like bosses, and Shichi in particular had been known for it back in his ring. Part of the reason that “bear” had become his code name was that everyone could see him coming and he
looked terrifying whenever he came, just like a lumbering grizzly on the warpath. His aggressive, eyes-on-me-and-nothing-else appearance was signature to those he hunted down. It was a symbol of who he was and how he operated more than some simple rebellious stage, but it certainly wasn’t something that his family was used to seeing from their little pushover wallflower.

Yes, his return might have been a bit of a shock for his poor adopted family. But Shichi really didn’t care what they thought of him, one way or another, at that point in time. He was used to struggling on his own. He was used to distance from those who were supposed to love him. This wide-eyed, shock-induced distance was no different than the narrow-eyed, disgusted distance that he'd grown up with in his days of youth.

Shichi walked past everyone without a word, right to the side of his dying mother, and grabbed her thin hand tightly.

“Hi.” He managed to say in Japanese instead of Russian, hours’ worth of practicing the old language on the boat boiling down to that one word.

It was enough for his mother apparently, who grasped his hand back with a weak smile and tears in her eyes. It was the first time Shichi had ever seen her show emotion on his account. He couldn’t say that it wasn’t weird, but…it was kind of nice.

A few minutes of conversation passed. The sort that made it seem as though Shichi had just been gone on a short field trip instead of going missing for nearly a decade without a word of warning. She asked how he’d been, if he’d been eating well, commented on his new look, asked what sort of job he’d picked up, all of those mundane questions that mothers usually posed to their children. Shichi answered everything in complete honesty, from the number of tattoos he’d gotten to his career in the mafia, shocking even himself with the sheer openness he was speaking to her in. Of course, he did skip the exact details and nature of his work. No need for his mother to know that he made a living off killing people.

What shocked Shichi more than his own honesty with the questions however was the way his mother handled the answers. She accepted everything with nods and smiles, making tiny comments of approval on how well he’d managed to do for himself and asking little follow-up questions about his strange choice of lifestyle as she learned more and more about it.

After those few minutes of the only sort of praise he’d ever gotten from anyone in his adopted family, his mother… had died. Still holding his hand. Still smiling in happiness at the life he’d managed to make for himself.

It was bizarre to say the least. But things quickly reverted back to normal after that moment of her passing.

Shichi discovered that the rest of the family was less happy than she had been to see him. In fact, they seemed far more interested in letting him know what a horrible person he was than grieving over their mother’s death. Was that seriously more important to them? Was ridiculing his actions really so much more imperative than crying at the loss of a family member? He couldn’t take being around those sorts of people.

So Shichi had left barely minutes after his mother’s death because he didn’t feel like listening to nothing but reprimands and guilt trips about his absence. Again, no one could blame him if he turned his back on that family right there and then.

Yet for some reason, he just couldn’t find it in himself to return to Russia. It was his home, a far nicer one than he’d ever had here in Japan, but he couldn’t make himself go back for some unknown
So Shichi had decided to find work in Japan. Initially, he’d meant to join the yakuza, jump from one mafia to another. But it was pretty hard to get into the yakuza as a high-ranker out of nowhere, and Shichi had no intention of starting over at the bottom of the pecking order again. So what did a member of the Russian mafia turn into once he decided to leave the mafia?

Why, a teacher of course.

Surprisingly enough, it wasn’t too difficult to get his old co-workers to make up false recommendations for his “teaching capabilities” and to forge an education diploma from Russia. All his fake credentials checked out, no questions asked, and Shichi started a new and much less glamorous career as a math teacher in Japan. And while he had to give up the piercings, his dyed hair, and the habit of showing off his tattoos, he wasn’t able to drop the hard-ass attitude he’d adopted in Russia, nor was he intending to anytime soon.

He was a pretty unorthodox math teacher, but he was still a damn good one. There was really only one aspect of being a teacher that the ex-assassin had never been able to get a grip on:

Connection to his students.

Shichi had had many students over the last 2 years in the different schools he’d taught at, but none had really ended up mattering to him very much. He knew teachers were supposed to support and love all their students…however, love wasn’t exactly something that came easy to him.

But when Roku called Shichi, asking him to move to Ikebukuro in order to help him out with something, Shichi finally found a student which activated that difficult emotion. Orihara Izaya. There was a look in that boy’s eyes that had struck Shichi upon meeting him. Struck him more than the curiosity, excitement, and intelligence that had been his overwhelming impression of the raven before. He only now realized, after reflecting upon his past, just what that look was.

It was independence. It was solitary, lonely, determined independence. It was the same look that had graced Shichi’s pale eyes every single year he was in Russia making his own living, utterly left behind by those who were supposed to love him. It was the look of someone who was used to isolation and the struggle for survival. The look of someone who wasn’t used to love.

That was why Shichi liked Izaya so much. That was why he wanted to look out for the raven. Izaya…was him. Yes, there were most likely several differences in their pasts that would not match up. Izaya probably hadn’t joined the mafia, gotten tattoos and piercings, or started learning multiple assassination techniques before he was even a legal adult. He probably hadn’t spent years tracking down the legal documents of people whom he knew nothing about, searching through cemeteries and death records and local census files for ghosts and whispers of his past. But he probably had his own set of issues that Shichi had never dealt with either. His own issues that Shichi wouldn’t be able to handle with the way he’d been brought up and lived his life up to that point.

No matter which way you looked at it though, they were both kids struggling to survive on their own.

“Well, Fluffles.” Shichi mumbled aloud, leaning back in his chair with a sigh. “I wonder what kind of shit you’ve been dealing with to make me look twice at you.”

He frowned and thought about the phone call that had just ended with his daycare-nurse “brother”.

“And I wonder what kind of shit has him looking into you as well.” He added, dread curling in his stomach at the possibilities.
Shichi was still for a few moments, just thinking about all of them, and then he shook his head furiously, trying to clear his mind.

It was none of his business. If Izaya didn’t want anyone busting in on his personal life, then Shichi certainly had no right to do so at all. That boy could take care of himself.

“It doesn’t mean he wants to.” A voice whispered in Shichi’s head before he could stop it.

Shichi stared off into the classroom, all the pop quizzes laying on his desk practically forgotten. “That…doesn’t give me the right to take over his life.” He said aloud, closing his eyes with a frown. “All I can do is…is be there for him if he needs someone. That’s it. And I think he has Blondie for that.”

Yeah, Blondie. Also known as Heiwajima Shizuo.

Shizuo was a good kid. Shichi had looked him up and down maybe a thousand times during class that day, and it was like reading an open book. A very honest, compassionate, misunderstood book. Shizuo was good for Izaya. He wanted to help and love him, probably more than anyone else in Izaya’s lonely life, and that was something Shichi wished he had had back in Russia.

“I highly doubt he’ll need me for anything but I guess I’ll be here all the same.” Shichi finally decided, nodding his head and throwing his phone into the bag at his feet. And he certainly wasn’t going to be running any errands for Roku that involved screwing up Izaya’s life.

Roku had always had that stupid, entitled attitude, ever since they were young. He thought he knew what was best for everyone, he thought he had the power to help absolutely everyone out with any problems they might be having, and he always thought that whatever ideas he came up with were clearly the best ones for the issues at hand. He may seem like a nice person, heck, he actually was a nice person most of the time, but he was a spoiled brat who didn’t know when to quit and whose “niceness” often ended up doing more harm than good.

Roku probably thought he was helping, or doing what he had to do by pushing into Izaya’s personal business, but Shichi knew better. He had dealt with those kinds of “good intentioned” people when he was younger, in both Japan and Russia. Typically, they just made things worse by doing something stupid.

Like calling an ex.

That was just common sense! No one calls exes to fix problems! It was pure idiocy! The next time Roku tried something like that, Shichi was going to walk over to his daycare and beat the crap out of that blockhead until he had so much brain damage that he needed a daycare.

“Izaya can handle his problems on his own, for the most part.” Shichi said firmly aloud, refocusing on his quizzes once more, and hopefully to the point where he could actually get them done this time instead of getting distracted by something else.

“I just hope he knows the limits of what he can do, and when he should ask for help.”

Chapter End Notes

Sorry to derail from the main storyline with Izaya and all his crazy problems for a bit,
but it's important to understand Shichi since he's going to be taking on a much more important role in the storyline from now on! I hope you found this chapter on his past enlightening and interesting!

I'll (hopefully) see you guys on Wednesday with the next update, which will bring us back into our main storyline! And if I don’t see you then, I'll see you on Sunday with an update and a one-shot! Okay, bye! <3
Hello everyone! As you probably noticed, I missed the Wednesday update last week. Yes, my friend really did end up staying the whole day and I could not find the time to update at all. So, as I usually do, I have written something else to be posted along with this chapter to make up for it! Rather than a one-shot though, this is just the second episode of "Private Lessons Confessions", if you guys have read that one. It's the results of the vote I started for your guys in chapter 28! I decided just to add the Awards Night on as an episode to "Private Lessons Confessions" so that'll be updating after I post this!

Right, and a quick warning before you read: I was literally falling asleep when I wrote part of this on Saturday because archery practice completely drained me that morning. Like my eyelids kept falling while I was typing and sometimes I was typing with my eyes closed. Literally, a whole portion of this chapter is something I have very fuzzy memories of writing. I went over everything like usual but I didn't have enough time to change too much so if something seems rushed or doesn't make sense, that's probably why.

Anyway, onto the chapter we go! <3

Izaya was bad with limits. He had always been bad with limits and knowing when he should ask for help. It was a gift, actually. The ability to totally overexert himself was a gift unique to him. And this instance was no different at all.

By the time Izaya got to the café where he was meeting Keiji, he’d already had 5 missed calls and several worried texts from Shizuo, wanting to know if he was okay and if he needed any help. Izaya found that incredibly touching somehow. He wasn’t asking where he was or demanding to know when he’d be back. He didn’t care what Izaya was doing so long as he was okay and Shizuo could offer help right away if Izaya needed it.

Izaya really did feel guilty for leaving Shizuo out of the blue like that, but he didn’t want the blonde to get caught up in any of this gang crap. He was able to send his boyfriend a quick text telling him not to worry and that he didn’t need any help, saying he’d be back in about thirty minutes.

If he wasn’t back in thirty minutes…well, then something was going wrong.

But Izaya couldn’t worry about that right now. Right now he was putting on a self-righteous smirk, shaking Keiji’s hand as he glanced at the white packages clutched in the teenage boy’s hands. Seriously? He couldn’t even put them in empty movie cases to at least make them look like video games? They were still in small bags with the pill outlines showing, for the sake of all that was holy! Clearly, Keiji was not a master of stealth and deception.

“I’ll just take those and leave.” Izaya said tersely, reaching for the bags.

But before his hand could make contact with them, Keiji’s hand yanked them back. “Not yet, Orihara-san.” The boy said in an almost taunting voice, a smirk on his face as he looked at Izaya.
The smaller raven raised an eyebrow, noting the unexpectedly confident behavior with mild fascination. Keiji was supposed to be loyal to him above all else. What on earth was bringing about this change in demeanor? It wasn’t exactly helpful for him and his tight schedule, and he needed to get a move on as quickly as possible.

“Has something absolutely imperative come up which gives you the gall to withhold what you promised from me?” Izaya asked sweetly, making sure there was a sharp flash in his ruby eyes as they locked on the teenage drug dealer. “Do I need to cancel this deal with your group right now?”

Keiji snorted at the mild threat, tossing the drugs casually in one of his hands with a grin. “Please. We all know you aren’t as tough as you claim to be, pretty boy.” He said nastily. “Even if you can be helpful every now and then for, say, saving one’s reputation.” Keiji’s eyes sparkled as he added, “But don’t go thinking that just because you helped me, I won’t eventually realize that I don’t owe you anything at all.”

Shit. Keiji’s fanatic loyalty to Izaya had worn off. Izaya hadn’t had enough contact with the boy following the attainment of his allegiance, and that time apart had no doubt opened Keiji’s eyes to the fact that he really didn’t owe Izaya anything if he didn’t want to. Even if Izaya had blackmail dirt on him, Keiji had quite a good reputation in the gang now, and Izaya denying what he’d already told the gang about Keiji would damage the reliability of his information.

Now, Keiji might not have realized all of this, but he had still realized at least the first part. This was a bad situation to be in.

Izaya grit his teeth, red eyes narrowed sharply at Keiji as his hand remained outstretched in the air. “This isn’t about you owing me anything.” He said in a low, dangerous voice. “This is about you giving me the materials required for the assignment which your gang wants me to complete.”

Keiji wagged a finger mockingly in the air at Izaya, that stupid grin still plastered on his face. “Ah ah. See, you had me all fooled and pinned down to the point where I was actually going to give you these babies for free. Not anymore, though.”

He held out his own hand, stretching it towards Izaya with a nasty sneer curling his lips upwards. “Pay up, pretty boy. You’re going to be buying these drugs from me.”

Izaya let out a harsh laugh at this order, although his insides were churning with disgust and anxiety. He didn’t really have all the information he needed at that moment to know if taking on Keiji was a good idea or not. For all he knew, the drug dealer had brought back-up in the form of his drug dealing buddies, and Izaya could be surrounded at this very moment in time, about to be beaten up if he refused or stole the drugs right away. But if Izaya ended up actually paying, then the transaction would be put on their records and if Keiji’s group was busted (or rather, when Keiji’s group was busted) the cops could easily track the drugs to Izaya. And those possibilities didn’t even go into the sheer lack of resources that Izaya was getting around with here. He had no money to buy those drugs! Not in the amount he needed, and not really any at all. That was the whole point of taking down the Purple Dragons. To make a little bit of money that went a long way for his upcoming bills.

He couldn’t pay for these drugs, and there was no way he was going in debt and giving Keiji an IOU or some sort of favor. He would just have to change Keiji’s mind.

“You can’t be serious. The raven said smoothly, rolling his eyes and planting his hands on his hips with a smirk. “I’m not paying you for something we previously agreed would be free.”

“Do you have our “previous agreement” in writing? Show me the proof that it happened.” Keiji responded, waving the drugs in Izaya’s face smugly. “I don’t need to give you anything if you don’t pay up.”
Izaya sighed nonchalantly, seriously trying hard to make sure his growing panic wasn’t showing. “And if I don’t even have money with me considering our previous deal was for free games?” Izaya asked, emphasizing the word “free” in the hopes of putting Keiji back in the right mindset.

Keiji snickered at the comeback and his eyes traveled up and down Izaya’s body greedily. “Oh, I didn’t say you have to pay in money.” He purred, licking his lips as he grinned widely.

Izaya literally felt his stomach do a flip-flop of revulsion at the lewd look coating Keiji’s face.

“Boyfriend. I have one.” Izaya said tersely, clenching his fists at his sides and doing his best not to throttle the drug dealer right then and there. “I believe we already discussed this. And if this is the only way to take down the Purple Dragons, then maybe I’ll just switch over to their side and help them take you down.”

Keiji’s eyes narrowed at that threat, and Izaya kept his face perfectly devoid of emotion, staring right back into the drug dealer’s eyes without flinching. He was not bluffing. He needed money and he needed it however he could get it. If that meant jumping ship and switching to the Purple Dragons, inciting the wrath of the Cybers in return, then he would do it without a second thought. The Cybers were much smaller than the Purple Dragons anyway; it would probably be a much better gig.

“I will be leaving in 10 seconds.” Izaya informed Keiji, placing his hands casually in his pockets and leaning away from the drugs like he could care less about them. “After those 10 seconds are up, I will head straight to the Purple Dragons’ hideout and offer them my services. If you want me to help you, you’ll give me the drugs for free, and you’ll give them to me now.”

Keiji was scowling at Izaya, his eyes flicking suspiciously over Izaya’s face like he wasn’t sure if the raven was honestly telling the truth.

Honesty wasn’t a look that Izaya wore well, and it might be hard for Keiji to find that honesty in Izaya’s face, so the raven decided to make his eyes look particularly cruel and calculating in order to depict the image of not having enough mercy to stick around and help the Cybers.

The cold look seemed to work. Keiji scowled and handed over the bag of drugs, glaring fiercely at Izaya as the informant’s much smaller hand landed on the bag, tightening briefly before looking up at Keiji.

“You shouldn’t mess with your informants, Keiji-san.” Izaya said coldly, his tone probably biting into Keiji like a winter wind. “They can always leave you and find something better. Just like ex-boyfriends or girlfriends.”

And with those graceful parting words, Izaya spun on his heel, clutching the drugs to his body and hoping that he wouldn’t get caught with them as he marched away.

The farther he got away from Keiji, the more his panic subsided, until it eventually gave way to the logic of the situation that came with its own kind of fear separate from the panic of the moment.

He couldn’t work with the Cybers anymore. There was no way. No matter how interesting a group of people they were, their members were too aggressive. They were going to start expecting more and more of him, and if they followed Keiji’s example, then they would begin to pose a serious threat to his way of life. For example, Izaya would absolutely not put it past Keiji to find out about Izaya’s sisters and use them as leverage to get Izaya to sleep with him. The boy was depraved, that was for sure. He was depraved, he thought he was God, and he was dangerous in the worst kind of way: the stupid kind that ends up as a danger to itself and drags everything around him with it.
That gang, if it caught onto Keiji’s attitude, would be going to ruin, and it would want to drag Izaya
down with it. It would be a toxic relationship to maintain direct contact with them after this incident.
He might still do simple information searches for them and send them all information electronically,
but meeting physically at this point was far too risky. Izaya’s lifestyle did not condone it.

He felt a buzz in his pocket and quickly checked his phone, wondering if his parents were calling to
move the date of their party up yet again.

But it was only a simple text from Keiji reading: “I forgot to tell you. Riku wants the Purple Dragons
taken down earlier than expected. Get their gang down by this weekend. See you then.”

Izaya grit his teeth, clenching the phone tightly as he glared at it. Everyone was moving dates up.
There was too much going on! How was he supposed to plan an extravagant party and the takedown
of an entire gang within the same week? The takedown was this weekend and so was the party. He
couldn’t catch a break at all! Not to mention how much money that party would be sucking up once
he actually got the dang thing ready. And he wasn’t the greatest at making parties. He needed help if
he was going to do everything so fast! But…he had no idea who to ask for help.

And how was he going to find time to tutor Shizuo in the midst of all this? He wouldn’t have time to
go to school, go home, set up a tutoring lesson, bring whatever it was to Shizuo’s house, tutor him,
go home again, set up the steps of the takedown, begin planning the party, and restart everything
each day for the rest of the week! He had to figure out a way to cut down on the time it took for all
of these things!

He didn’t want to cut down on his time with Shizuo. Shizuo was his boyfriend! He supported Izaya
more than anyone else! He couldn’t let the blonde down.

And yet he had his parents to think about. They technically still owned him and his sisters until they
were 20 years old. If he did something that they did not agree with, who knew how they might ruin
his life?

Plus he needed money, and the gang was the easiest way to get it quickly. He was backing out of the
gang right after this, and maybe backing out of all his gang work entirely for a little while just to let
things in the underground cool off, but he was still neck-deep in it now and he couldn’t quit.

It seemed like nothing could be cut down on! How was he going to do this?! How was he going to
do this? How…

Izaya could feel his grip on the drugs getting weaker as he trudged back to his own house instead of
the Heiwajimas’. He would put the drugs away there so that wonderful family wasn’t implicated in
anything, and head back over to help tutor Shizuo while he brainstormed a way to get the Purple
Dragons destroyed by the weekend. He didn’t have the energy to start on it all today. He just…
couldn’t do it.

Izaya only hoped that Shizuo wouldn’t notice something was off about how tired Izaya was when he
got back.

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Shizuo noticed Izaya looked exceedingly tired the instant he stepped through the doorway.

There were heavy lines of exhaustion underneath those beautiful eyes, his face was a little paler than
it had been before, and his gaze was almost glossed over like he was about to fall asleep at any
second. He also had a definite aura of stress about him as he yanked off his boots, throwing Shizuo a
weak smile.

Something had definitely happened to Shizuo’s boyfriend. He didn’t know what, but something had definitely happened. Maybe even several somethings.

“Izaya-kun?” Shizuo asked gently as he rubbed the back of Izaya’s hand with his thumb, the two of them sitting together at the living room table as they looked over Shizuo’s math homework. “Do you want to take a break and talk for a bit?”

Izaya looked up at Shizuo in shock, then quickly dropped his gaze back to the worksheet before him. “No! Not at all! You have a test tomorrow so we should focus on that first!” He said cheerfully enough, but with a tiredness in his voice that Shizuo couldn’t miss if he was a thousand miles away.

“No. We should focus on you.” The blonde said sternly, putting down his pencil and gently grabbing Izaya’s chin, tilting the lovely face to look at him. Shizuo examined Izaya’s face carefully, noting the guilt that seemed to be crossing it, marring the cheerful image that the smaller boy was trying to portray.

“Izaya,” Shizuo said gently, releasing Izaya’s chin and letting the raven’s head drop back down to stare at the floor. “What happened to you?”

Izaya was silent for several minutes, just staring at the floor without a word, until he finally heaved a large sigh and looked up at Shizuo with sadness in his ruby eyes.

“I’m sorry, Shizu-chan.” He said softly. “I thought I could handle everything…but I can’t. I just can’t. I…I need to let something go but I don’t know how to do that. It’s all too much but nothing can be pushed aside. Nothing can be ignored. I…I…” The raven looked like he was at a loss for words, and Shizuo gently pulled him into an embrace, holding the small boy against his chest, tenderly kissing the top of his head.

“Tell me about it.” Shizuo said softly. “Maybe we can figure something out together.”

Izaya shook his head, completely silent as he leaned against Shizuo’s warmth.

Shizuo wanted to respect his need to keep things secret but…he wanted to help Izaya more. Even if that meant going against what Izaya thought was best.

“Izaya-kun, you can’t keep all this to yourself.” He said flatly, squeezing the frail body slightly, yet noting the lean muscles he could definitely feel underneath his fingertips. That was his Izaya. He seemed so small and delicate, but he was unbelievably strong. Yet despite his strength, he broke as easily as porcelain would under the weight of an iron. So many contradictions in one tiny body. Shizuo loved them all. He felt like they completed him. But at the same time, he almost wished Izaya didn’t have them because they were too much for the raven to handle at times. Izaya was too much for even Izaya to handle. It was like he was born to make life hard on himself.

“I’m here to help you.” Shizuo said aloud, holding Izaya tightly and closing his eyes. “I want to help you. In any way that I can! If you need me to help you fight someone, then I will. If you need me to track someone down, no problem. If you want me to go with you to some family event, I’ve got your back. If…if you need me to back off…then I’ll do that too. But only if you need it. Because other than a scenario in which you truly can’t have me by your side without hurting you, I will always be right here for you. So just…tell me what you need. How can I help you, Izaya?”

After that short speech, there was total silence within the room. Only the sounds of Shizuo’s mother cooking in the kitchen and his father checking on the twins in their bedroom (the guest bedroom
turned property of the twins) could be heard throughout the house. Kasuka was probably in his
room, doing who knew what. It was only Izaya and Shizuo out here, holding onto each other like it
was their sole purpose in life.

After several seconds of this silent, frozen moment in time, Izaya released a shaky breath, pulling
back slightly from Shizuo with his eyes directed right at the floor.

“Actually…” He said in a quivering voice, small hands clutching at Shizuo’s shirt with surprising
strength. “There is something I need you to do.”

Shizuo could feel his heart stop in his chest as he looked down at the wonderful boy in front of him.
The person he loved more than anyone else in the world.

“What is it?” He asked gently, brushing some of Izaya’s raven bangs out of his face.

Izaya kept his gaze directed at the ground for a few more seconds before he lifted it with
determination, looked Shizuo right in the eyes, and said:

“I need you to take on a suicide mission.”

Chapter End Notes

Oh my. What on earth is Izaya doing now?! What is going on?! What suicide mission is
he talking about?! ( antics ) …… !

Well, like I mentioned, I was falling asleep for quite a bit of this chapter. Sorry if it came
out rushed, if any of the details or inaccurate, or anything like that! I’ve been working on
a lot of things lately and so everything is beginning to wear me down just a tad. And
with final exams coming up, archery contests, my big evaluation for bilingualism, and
the hectic process of graduation...well, everything is a bit much, haha.

Hmm...maybe I am reflecting my problems on Izaya right now since he is starting to
have a lot of things pile up too...if any of you are psychology experts (*cough* 3B
*cough*) then let me know what you think! XD

Anyways, now I'm off to edit and post the Awards Night update to "Private Lessons
Confessions" and then finally eat some food! I'll see you all on Wednesday! <3
The Bear's Support

Chapter Notes

Hi everybody! Whew, this update is coming in late, but it is still here! I still made it! I had an unexpectedly long meeting after school that was supposed to be like 30 minutes and ended up being closer to 2 hours. Eesh. But enough on that! This little chapter here is a small bit of goodness before we jump into the "suicide mission" that Izaya was talking about with Shizuo. Yes, you don't QUITE get to know what the mission is just yet. But we are very close to it!

Anyways, here's the chapter! <3

Izaya tapped his desk nervously, his gaze directed out the window at the falling cherry blossoms outside. He couldn’t sit still in class today, just like he couldn’t the last few days. Now usually, he was a very rambunctious and energetic person by nature, and it wasn’t really his style to sit quietly in class when he could be causing wonderful disruptions, but there was a different kind of energy that had been fueling him over the week. It was nervous and anxious, and it distracted Izaya’s mind from anything that was going on in the classroom. Even the pop quiz that landed on his desk in math class.

Izaya just stared at the slip of paper, not comprehending a single one of the numbers swirling around on the page, only able to think about what he was going to have Shizuo do tonight. Their cover plan for Shizuo’s parents was that Izaya’s newest tutoring lesson required a lot of Wi-fi and so they were going to an internet café in order to get a good connection. Both Namiko and Kichirou had fallen for this explanation, probably thinking that it was an excuse for the two lovers to go on a date together, and they told both boys that they didn’t need to be home until 11:30. It was plenty of time for what Izaya and Shizuo had been planning to do since Monday…in theory.

Because in theory, Shizu-chan wouldn’t be hurt by the plan even if it could very well kill most regular people. In theory, nothing would go wrong and Izaya would be able to plant the drugs without being detected. In theory, this would be the end of Izaya’s gang activities and Shizuo wouldn’t be dragged into any gang wars or feuds that Izaya was causing. In theory, everything would go off without a hitch and they could just go in and come back out.

But Izaya just couldn’t shake the feeling that that wasn’t what was going to happen at all.

No…he felt like something far worse than what he had prepared for or expected was going to happen, and he’d end up hurting himself, or worse, Shizuo in the process. One of them might even…die.

He just couldn’t focus on a math pop quiz when he or the love of his life could be dying in just a few hours!

Apparently, Shichi-sensei noticed the blank, anxious look on Izaya’s face, or he at least noticed that something was off about the way Izaya was just staring at the pop quiz without making a move to start it.

“Orihara-kun.” The math teacher called, making Izaya’s head snap up to look at him instantly. Pale
blue clashed with red as the two beings stared at each other, silent messages being conveyed between such similar spirits that even they were not aware of.

“I have some papers in my office.” Shichi finally said, standing up from his desk with his eyes still on Izaya. “They concern you so I need you to come with me to look at them. Alright?”

Izaya nodded numbly, slipping out of his seat without a word and walking for the door.

“Hey! Doesn’t he have to do his test?” Another kid demanded, glaring at the blank piece of paper still sitting on Izaya’s desk. “And shouldn’t there still be a teacher in here to monitor us?” A girl added, frowning in worry.

“I’ll ask Yoko-sensei next door to watch over you for the few minutes that I’m gone.” Shichi responded breezily, opening the door for Izaya and waiting for him to pass. “As for Izaya’s quiz, this is just a make-up quiz which will replace the grade of the one I gave you on Monday since pretty much everyone failed it except for Izaya. He got a perfect score. He doesn’t really even need to take this quiz since I’d just put it in as extra credit or something for him. Got it?”

“How the hell did he get a perfect score on the last quiz?” The boy growled under his breath, but he nodded in understanding nonetheless.

“Good. Now I’ll only be gone for a few minutes, like I said. Behave until then.” Shichi ordered the class, slipping out of the room behind Izaya and closing the door firmly.

He popped his head into the next classroom over and asked Yoko to briefly watch his class, just like he’d promised, and then he and Izaya began wordlessly heading for Shichi’s office together.

The walk was a pretty short one, but in the knowing silence that stretched between teacher and pupil, it seemed almost unbearably long. Izaya couldn’t help but feel like Shichi knew exactly what he was planning to do later as they walked side by side, and Shichi couldn’t help but think that Izaya was somehow aware of his rather shady past. There was an unspoken understanding between the two of them, where each could see right through the actions of the other, while neither knew any specific details about what those actions were or what they meant. It was a curious sort of muddled clarity between two people raised in such similar yet vastly different circumstances.

By the time they reached Shichi’s office, the silence had grown so heavy that both of them felt an uncontrollable urge to break it, words straining in their throats for escape as Shichi unlocked the door and they both headed inside, wrapped in a veil of awkward secrecy.

The very instant the door closed, words poured out of Izaya’s lips like rice from a slit bag.

“I don’t know why you brought me here but I probably didn’t cause the problem. Well, I might have caused the problem but it shouldn’t lead to more problems! And I clearly don’t have any problems of my own so you don’t have to interrogate me about any of those totally nonexistent problems either and…and…and…” Izaya ran out of babbling words to say, the stream of rambling excuses drying up as Shichi’s pale eyes watched him carefully.

Shichi waited a few seconds for all the words to fade away and for silence to descend on the room once again before he finally spoke.

“Listen,” He sighed, leaning back against his desk with a frown. “It’s Friday today, and the very first time you ever saw me was this Monday. You’ve only known me for those few days that have passed. I’m not entitled to any information about your personal life, so I don’t expect you to tell me about it nor am I going to ask. What I am entitled to is knowledge on matters that affect your
academic performance. I’m your teacher. Those are the things that I’m supposed to watch out for in my students.”

Shichi glanced at a file cabinet in his office, and Izaya’s eyes unwittingly followed them as well, finding the label that said “Student Information” on one of the drawers. His throat immediately went dry.

“Normally, I would call the parents if I thought something was wrong.” Shichi continued, looking back at Izaya with a sigh. “And normally, I wouldn’t even be looking into this until I noticed you doing this for more than a week, maybe even two weeks. But you’re a bit of a different case, aren’t you Izaya?”

Shichi paused here, like he didn’t want to push too far at such a tentative stage in the beginning of their relationship.

“I don’t think you have quite the parental support for me to contact that other kids do.” He finally said, nodding once as if satisfied with the way that had come out. “And I also don’t think that something small like an insult from a classmate or a bad breakup would affect you as much as it does regular students. So clearly, if something has affected you so quickly and its effect has been lasting for several days now, then it must be bad and it’s probably not easy to solve. That’s the reason I’m trying to talk to you so soon after noticing something wrong with you.”

Shichi folded his arms, sighing deeply and shaking his head. “Honestly, I’m not sure how far I’m allowed to go when it comes to asking you about these things.” He muttered. “If it isn’t something with school, then I can’t really do much. Just answer me a yes or no question: is something at school bothering you or distracting you from your work?”

Izaya remained silent and thought about what he should do. The way Shichi-sensei talked about “lack of parental support” made it sound like he had experienced it as well. He knew what Izaya was going through, or at least part of it, and he could potentially help. And yet…Izaya felt like after it had taken so much work to get him to trust the Heiwajimas, trusting Shichi this quickly would almost be like a slap to the face for their loyalty. He was more trusting now that he’d opened his heart to the Heiwajimas, but he still shouldn’t be trusting every seemingly decent person who walked his way. Not if they hadn’t earned it like Shizuo and his family had.

But Shichi still wanted to help somehow, at least in the ways he could as Izaya’s teacher. He wasn’t pushing into Izaya’s personal life, and Izaya wouldn’t quite let him in, but he could help out with something involving school and that’s what he was offering. Was there something academic that Izaya could ask Shichi for to help relieve any of his current burdens? Was there something Shichi could do to help Izaya that didn’t let him too far into Izaya’s life?

“Shizu-chan.” Izaya said aloud, realization striking him like a bolt of lightning. “Shizu-chan.”

Shichi raised an eyebrow at this, a frown crossing his face. “Your boyfriend Blondie is giving you problems?” He asked, and Izaya instantly jumped in place, waving his arms frantically to dissuade that line of thought.

“No! No, that’s not it at all!” Izaya assured the math teacher, trying to get Shichi to understand. “I just…well are you aware that I tutor Shizu-cha…ah, Shizuo after school?”

Shichi nodded, a bit of confusion furrowing his brow as he tried to figure out how this was relevant to the situation. “Yes. The principal pointed it out to me on the first day of school…for reasons beyond me. Anyway, why is this important for me to know?”

Izaya nodded his head slowly, more to himself than as a response to anything Shichi was saying, and
answered his teacher’s question. “Well, it’s been getting pretty tough for me to come up with resources and space to tutor him. See, we normally do it at Shizu-chan’s house, and that works fine, it’s just…I would really like to have school resources that are already set up for this sort of thing so I don’t have to spend a lot of time getting everything together myself and bringing it over to his place, then taking it back to mine and…you get the idea, right?”

Shichi hummed lowly, a little bit of understanding filling his eyes. “I think so. You put a ton of effort into finding ways for Blondie to learn, but it’s a cumbersome task for just you alone.” He said, and Izaya beamed, his red eyes sparkling as he nodded eagerly. “Exactly! And it’s kinda stressing me out when combined with a few of the other things I’m doing. Is there any way you can help with that?”

Shichi frowned and seemed to think for a bit, stroking his chin as he mulled over options, before he reached a decision with a definitive nod.

“I guess I could offer you two my classroom right after school for a few hours so you can just begin your tutoring session right away with all the class materials I can offer.” The math teacher suggested. “It would cut down on the time you spend traveling between your house and his, and you wouldn’t have to tote a bunch of materials all over the place. Plus you can access any of the school resources that you want right here.”

Shichi shrugged, planting his hands on his hips with a nonchalant expression on his face. “I’ll even let you borrow my keys so you can skip around to other classrooms like the science labs or art rooms if you want.” He said casually. “Just so you can formulate whatever crazy lessons you need to. Think that will help at all?”

Izaya could feel the excitement and relief growing so quickly in his chest that he was shocked Shichi couldn’t see it pouring from him like a tidal wave. “Yes!” The raven blurted, leaning forward and clasping his hands together excitedly as he grinned widely at Shichi. “Yes, that would help so much! It would give me more time to work on other things, I wouldn’t have to put in as many resources as I have been, and I think Shizu-chan might find it a little easier to study if my toddler-brat sisters aren’t running around and trying to get him to play with them!”

Shichi looked a little surprised at that last comment. “You bring your sisters with you to tutor Blondie?” He asked, cocking his head to the side. “That’s a little unusual. If they’re toddlers, then why not just leave them at a daycare or something?”

Crap. Izaya hadn’t meant to blurt that out loud. Now he had a problem: how to dissuade attention from that fact that his sisters were not in daycare.

“O-Oh.” The raven laughed weakly, his brain racing frantically to come up with some kind of excuse or explanation. He couldn’t exactly just tell his math teacher that his sisters were living in Shizuo’s house and recovering from near-fatal injuries as a result of being physically assaulted by his crazy ex-boyfriend after he kidnapped them!

“They…like it there.” He said lamely, mentally wincing as soon as the words left his mouth. “So I always take them. Ha ha…”

His red eyes flicked away from Shichi’s suspicious blue orbs, the small boy wishing he could bash himself in the head for his idiocy. What the heck?! He was an informant! He was supposed to be able to keep crap secret! And lie well! And utilize many other subtle tactics of manipulation and trickery which he was so not doing right now!

“Well, this is the end.” The raven thought miserably. “This is where he gets concerned for my personal matters, looks into my life, and Child Services come crawling down the street. I’m officially
“Izaya…” Shichi said slowly, and the raven closed his eyes in something that was almost fear, waiting to hear the inevitable questions about his family that he just couldn’t answer in a positive way.

“You need to get better at lying on the spot or you won’t make it very far on your own.” The voice finished, and Izaya’s eyes snapped open in shock.

He looked over at Shichi with wide eyes, and the math teacher was smiling at him with an almost fond look in his eyes. His eyes were softer than usual, too, and that smile could practically be mistaken for something caring. What?

“How’s?” The teacher asked gently, blue eyes locked on Izaya. “Lie a little better. Keep your secrets safe unless you trust someone with them. And always protect your family.” He walked over and laid a hand on Izaya’s shoulder, still smiling down at him with that fond, caring look. “Can you do that, Izaya?” Shichi asked, fingers tightening slightly on Izaya’s shoulder. “Can you keep everything safe among those you trust?”

Izaya stared up at the math teacher for a few seconds, trying to understand how this person could be so different from anyone he’d met up to that point. How he could be backing out of Izaya’s life and telling Izaya to keep his problems to himself…while also seeming like he cared about those problems and silently offering help if Izaya ever needed it?

Izaya just couldn’t figure it out. The only thing he could come up with was what he felt like he’d already known since the day he first saw Shichi.

The Russian had been through the same thing Izaya was going through. He’d been alone, too, once upon a time. He knew what it felt like and he knew what had to happen. He…knew.

Izaya slowly nodded, his red eyes still looking up at Shichi in wonder. “I can do it.” He said firmly, his voice coming out far more determined and stable than he thought it would.

Shichi squeezed his shoulder again, chuckling a little as he smiled at the raven. “Good.” He responded simply, releasing the boy and turning to head for the office door. “Now we should get back to class before rumors start circulating about a student-teacher relationship and I end up losing my life.” He said, opening the door and gesturing for Izaya to walk through it.

Izaya obliged and the two began another short-yet-long walk back to the classroom, except they spoke to each other on the way this time.

“So me and Shizu-chan can use your classroom for tutoring after school?” Izaya asked, just to make sure before he began revolving all his future tutoring plans around this one gift from above.

Shichi nodded, hands in his pockets as they strode through the halls. “Yep. Come in anytime you want. But make sure the lesson ends before 7 because that’s when I head home.”

Izaya nodded in understanding, turning his attention to the front as he thought about his next question. “And…you aren’t going to look into my personal life…or the thing with my sisters?” He asked carefully, keeping his voice a little low just in case anyone was walking around the halls with them.

“Not unless you feel as though you can trust me with that information.” Shichi said softly, also lowering his voice as they walked. “And I mean fully trust me, as much as you do with Blondie or his family.”
“As much as Shizuo or the rest of the Heiwajimas, huh?” Izaya thought to himself, staring at his feet as they padded across the school floors. “That might take a while.”

But it was nice to know that he had someone else along with that family to support him.

Now if only Shichi was some kind of professional assassin with specialized techniques and skills so that Izaya could send him into the mission tonight instead of Shizuo.

Ah well. You can’t have everything, can you?

A final thought occurred to Izaya right as they reached the classroom again, and the raven turned to look at Shichi with a frown right as the math teacher grabbed the handle to yank the door open.

“Why did you say you would end up losing your life if rumors started about a relationship between us?” He asked curiously, making Shichi pause in his motion of opening the door to look over at the small boy.

“I mean, they don’t murder teachers for that sort of thing. They just fire them or sometimes lock them up.” Izaya continued, cocking his head at Shichi. “So why would you lose your life?”

“Simple.” Shichi said, pulling open the door fully and stepping into the classroom. “Blondie would smash me into oblivion with a flagpole if he heard about it.”

And despite the deadly mission that was awaiting him and “Blondie” right after school, Izaya couldn’t help the laughter that burst out of him at that comment, filling the air with a light and happy sound that he hadn’t let out in days.

Chapter End Notes

And that was today’s slightly-shorter-than-usual update! The editing might be a little sloppy since I didn't have too much time for it thanks to that meeting. Sorry if any parts of the chapter sound weird or incorrect! And when I see you guys next on Sunday, you'll all get to see the big mission that Izaya and Shizuo are planning!

Dun dun duuuuuuuuh!

So anyway, I'll see you all on Easter Sunday! Because I literally just remembered that it's going to be Easter despite all the bunny-themed things I keep seeing around me all day!

...And that is the summary of my observational skills. I'll see you next time! Hope you guys liked the chapter! <3
It was time. Time to begin the plan. And Izaya was freaking out.

“Okay, you remember what you have to do, right?” He asked the tall boy sitting next to him for what was probably the millionth time that night.

“Yes, Izaya! I know what I have to do.” Shizuo sighed, looking over at the raven in worry. “We’ve been over it quite a few times. I can handle a few thugs. Don’t freak out on me.”

“These aren’t just a few thugs, Shizu-chan!” Izaya insisted, his finger twirling in his hair at lightning speed as he chewed his lip. “This is a full-on gang of organized crime with resources, a drug ring, weapons, and who even knows what else hidden up their sleeves!”

“They’re still just a bunch of humans running around like they own the world.” Shizuo growled, rolling up his sleeves and punching a fist into his palm. “Which makes them exactly the same as every other idiot who’s ever tried to pick a fight with me.”

Shizuo didn’t understand why Izaya was panicking so much about this. They had a plan, they’d talked about it all week, Shizuo knew it by heart at this point, and everything was going to be fine. He had taken on plenty of gangs before and come away without a scratch. He knew how to handle himself in a fight and he was totally fine with fighting off people who were bigger, older, or more experienced than himself.

But…he did have to admit that this situation was at least a little different.

All the people Shizuo had fought up to this point had been attacking him on his own turf: in his neighborhood, on the route he took to get back home, around the shops he frequented. Basically all those places were ones Shizuo knew well. This time it was Shizuo who was attacking someone else on their home turf. And they could have just as many traps or weapons to help fend off intruders as Shizuo could find light poles and vending machines on the street to fend off attackers. It was a different playing field.

And that wasn’t taking into account the fact that he wasn’t even technically trying to beat them in this
fight: his role was to keep them distracted for as long as possible while Izaya performed his part of the plan. Shizuo drew the gang’s attention and Izaya performed the stealthy operation. That meant that Shizuo needed to keep his strength in check but still defend himself against all of their attacks for as long as Izaya needed him to. And that could turn into a huge problem.

Let’s add onto everything else that, according to Izaya, the Purple Dragons were an outfit of highly specialized gangsters with specific routes, plans, strategies, and attacks that they had always stuck to over the years which had not only given them infamy and power in the underground, but also kept them out of the cops’ radar. They were skilled, professional, and not exactly foolish.

All in all, they were a much more advanced gang than the ones Shizuo had fought before, and he couldn’t fight them at full strength.

But still, even with all those factors being taken into account, Shizuo was still confident in his boyfriend’s plan and their ability to succeed if they worked together. So why did Izaya seem so darn worried? Didn’t he have the same confidence in them that Shizuo did?

“If it’s freaking you out so badly, I can just knock them out right off the bat.” The blonde offered, peering around the corner of the building they were hiding behind and examining the warehouse which the Purple Dragons called their hideout. “I mean, wouldn’t it be simpler for us both? I don’t have to worry about holding off their attacks pointlessly and you don’t have to sneak around.”

“Plus, you would be safer and less worried about this whole thing.” He added silently in his head.

“No! We would be leaving suspicious evidence of our involvement here if you did that.” Izaya hissed, clearly too nervous to be comforted right now as he held up the backpack he’d brought with him for their mission. A backpack full of the drugs that he’d never let Shizuo see, or told him where he’d gotten them from.

“Look,” Izaya began, chewing on his lip nervously as his eyes flickered over to look at the warehouse before flickering back over to Shizuo. “We’re trying to trick the police into coming here and busting up this gang. If they see all the massive injuries on the gangsters and damage on their hideout, they’ll know someone was setting them up. The gang might tell the cops that they’re completely innocent, give nice descriptions of us, and the plan will totally backfire. We can’t make it look like an attack.”

“I get that! And I’m not worried about that part or any other part of the plan like you are! I just don’t want you to be freaking out.” Shizuo insisted. “And I want you to be safe.”

“We’re running into the middle of a gang’s headquarters and trying to set them up. There’s nothing safe about that.” Izaya pointed out flatly, unzipping the bag so he could check on its contents one more time. “I…I want you to be safe, too. I want to make sure the plan goes off without a hitch because we can’t change it to make it safer. There’s no way of doing that. And so…I’m just worried that something is going to go wrong. Can you really blame me for freaking out about that?”

“I’m not blaming you for anything.” Shizuo said gently, placing a hand on Izaya’s shoulder. “I’m just trying to make sure you stop freaking out about the plan. I can do whatever you need me to do while you plant all those drugs in their hideout. After you’re done and you give me the signal, we head over to the nearest police box and leave an anonymous tip-off. I understand the plan.”

Izaya zipped up his backpack and shrugged it on, glancing over at Shizuo with worry in his red eyes. “I…I still don’t want you to get hurt, Shizu-chan.” He said nervously. “ If need be, I can do this by myself.”

Never mind the fact that they were already standing outside the door to the hideout.
Shizuo’s gaze hardened immediately and he planted both hands on Izaya’s shoulders, looking unwaveringly into the raven’s eyes. “I will do anything for you.” He said firmly, meaning every word.

Izaya stared at Shizuo for a few seconds, almost like he was taking in every aspect of Shizuo’s face as much as he could before nodding his head once, and turning to glare at the entrance to the gang’s hideout. “Alright.” He said harshly, determination coating his features in place of the anxiety that had been there earlier. “Whenever you’re ready, Shizu-chan.”

Shizuo was ready. He was ready to beat up any of these assholes that Izaya needed him to, for however long he had to, no matter how many injuries he sustained. He was ready to put himself on the line for Izaya and prove to the raven that when they worked together, Izaya didn’t have anything to worry about. He was ready to prove that his love for Izaya was stronger than anything those thugs could throw at him.

So he turned and began walking into an abandoned building at the edge of the Ikebukuro district that sort of looked like one of those warehouses you always saw in animes where low-budget villains on the run plotted things maliciously…all in the name of love.

Yeah, his heart had made some good life choices.

“What am I supposed to say when I open the doors?” Shizuo wondered as he neared the old building. There was a light shining from the inside and plenty of laughter, as though some teenagers were throwing a party. Who knew. Maybe they were and Shizuo was about to crash it. But seriously, how did one crash a party?

Of all the loopholes that could have existed in the plan, this had to be the one Shizuo was focusing on.

“Do I just walk in and declare “I am Heiwajima Shizuo! I am here to challenge you!”?” He thought, and then immediately shuddered in rejection at the terrible idea. Sounded like the script of some B-rated movie. No way he could just waltz in and say that. He’d have to ditch the name declaration.

“Plus Izaya wants to make sure no one knows who is behind this.” Shizuo muttered to himself as he got closer and closer to the door. “I mean, I know they’ll probably figure out who I am since I have a bit of a bad reputation but…well no sense in helping them along if they don’t figure it out.”

He took a deep breath and composed himself, wondering if he should say something cool when he busted inside. Maybe some kind of movie one-liner? Or something from an anime? Or wait…what if one of them had seen that movie or that anime? Then that would so not be cool. Not only would they get the reference but they might insult him for copyright infringement. No, he had to think of something else.

Something that was a little more Shizuo…

What did Shizuo yell for a war cry?

“Well, the name of my boyfriend for one thing but that’s sort of taboo.” The blonde sighed, running a hand through his hair as he stared at the crack of light in front of him. Coming up with a good entrance was harder than he thought. He could never be a scriptwriter for a movie or show. At least he had his wonderful boyfriend to support him in whatever he ended up doing anyways, though.

“What are you doing, you hulking buffoon?!” A voice hissed from behind Shizuo, glaring ruby eyes
practically burning a hole into his back as someone threw a rock at Shizuo’s head. Gee, who could that someone be?

“Get in there and make yourself useful like you said you were going to! We have a curfew that your parents gave us!” Izaya scowled, pointing both fingers at his eyes, at Shizuo, back at his eyes, and so on until he slipped around the corner of the wall like the little demon he was.

The perfect little demon.

That Shizuo just had to be dating.

How Izaya had gone from nervous to demonic in so short a period of time was baffling to Shizuo… but he supposed he could also take it as a testament to how good he was at alleviating Izaya’s fears. Still…

“That rock kinda hurt.” Shizuo mumbled, rubbing the back of his head as he turned to face the door again. Looks like he was just going to have to do this in a freestyle sort of manner. Otherwise his “wonderfully supportive” boyfriend might chuck another rock at his head…or worse, a knife.

“Why am I dating a slightly homicidal manic?” Shizuo wondered aloud, slipping his hands into his pockets as he raised one foot in the air. “Oh, right. Because I love him more than life itself. That’s the whole point of this endeavor.”

And a powerful leg snapped out, smashing into the door of the warehouse and sending it flying into the building.

“I’m feeling pissed off and itching for a fight!” Shizuo growled as he stalked into the room, eying each of the gawking faces that were directed at him, unable to believe that some random guy had just stumbled upon their hideout and kicked down the door. Well too bad. Heiwajima Shizuo was here to stay.

At least for a little bit.

Shizuo cracked his knuckles, shooting everyone in the room a nasty grin. “So who’s first?” He asked, a bit of a glint in his golden eyes.

***

Shizu-chan’s question was answered by a screaming gang member who charged at him full force, a heavy wooden bat in his hands and a look of rage on his face.

Wow. That guy must have been very attached to their warehouse door. He was running at Shizuo like the guy had just kicked his grandmother.

Izaya shook off the distracting thoughts and peered around the gaping hole in the warehouse where the door used to be, trying to see if any members of the Purple Dragons hadn’t joined the fight yet.

It seemed that after the first five of them had flung themselves at Shizuo and been rebuffed without effort, the gangsters had decided that attacking this crazy blonde all at once would yield a different result. The raven watched as the gangsters shouted cries of battle, grabbed their various weapons from stashes around the warehouse, and charged his beloved boyfriend who was defenseless, alone, and nowhere near any kind of civilization who could come to his rescue anytime soon.

In short, Izaya wasn’t worried at all now that he saw the situation at hand and it looked like Shizuo had been right about him not needing to worry.
“Okay, Shizu-chan. Just hold them off for a bit. This shouldn’t take too long.” Izaya whispered, slipping into the warehouse and dashing past the shouting crowd of mayhem to a door on the far side. Side rooms were the perfect place to begin stashing the drugs. When the police searched the warehouse, he wanted to make it look like the gang had been trying to hide them. That would be far more realistic and believable than if they were just lying around everywhere, especially with a gang that had been managing to avoid the police for so long.

Izaya pulled a small bag of the white pills out of his backpack, giving it a tiny shake as his eyes scanned the room around him.

It was small, with a few chairs spread all over that were tipped in various directions; some standing upright, some tipped against the wall, some that had crashed down against the floor. There were stains of some kind of drink (probably alcoholic) all over the walls, floor and furniture, and a large boombox was resting in the corner, currently turned off but ready to be turned on again at any moment. It looked like a mini-party had been thrown in here at some point. What a great place to plant the party drugs.

Izaya ran over to the boombox and opened the CD hatch on its front. Inside was some kind of heavy metal rock CD but Izaya wasn’t really interested in that. He was interested in how good of a hiding place this boombox would make. Carefully, Izaya removed the CD and placed it on top of the boombox, sliding the Ziploc bag of drugs into its place instead. The bag was too thick to allow the CD thing to close entirely again, but it could close far enough to not be noticeable for the time being.

Izaya ran back over to his backpack and grabbed another bag of drugs, stashing this one under a small stained sofa in the corner of the room. He lifted the sofa’s seat cushion and decided that he should leave one there as well.

“But after this bag, that’s enough for this room.” Izaya muttered to himself as he ran back over to the backpack, checking on his supply. He only had about nine bags total from the shipment Keiji had given him, three small Ziplocs that he’d split each package of Devil’s Bliss into after receiving it, and one of them was going to be devoted to crushing the pills and sprinkling dust around the place, not to mention leaving random pills here and there to make everything look a little more believable.

So that left him with about five more full Ziplocs to hide in other rooms. There weren’t too many side rooms that Izaya had seen when he’d gone running through the center of the warehouse, so five should be enough to hide in the rooms he had left to cover.

Izaya grabbed the bag he was using to spread individual pills, crushing a few in his hand and sprinkling dust all over the place, plucking a few pills and dropping them on the floor by the walls and behind chairs, wiping his hand off on one of the walls when he was done.

The entire time that Izaya had been working, he could hear Shizuo fighting in the main room, roaring and yelling loudly to keep the gang’s attention on him as he fought off the twenty or so gang members attacking him. Despite not being worried anymore about Shizuo getting hurt, Izaya was still worried about how Shizuo was doing. He was fighting and trying to make it look like he was fighting hard, but also trying not to badly hurt any of the gang members rushing at him who were definitely out to kill him. It was a delicate balance that left room for error or injury if Shizuo lost focus.

Izaya opened the side room door and carefully poked his head out into the main room, observing out the fight was going as he chewed nervously on his lip.

Shizuo was punching and kicking left and right, yelling insults at all of the gang members surging at him, his gold eyes narrowed in intense concentration as he dodged a few attacks and gave back a
few more. Izaya, an expert at fighting Shizuo, could tell the blonde was pulling his punches, trying not to hit as hard as his body wanted him to, yet still defend himself from these gangsters and their lead pipes, baseball bats, and various other blunt weapons. One guy managed to get him with a pipe, smashing it into his arm and knocking it away from his body. A jagged end of the pipe sliced into Shizuo’s arm, making the blonde roar in pain as blood began to drip from his body.

Icy fear shot instantly through Izaya’s heart and he began to step forward to help his lover out of pure instinct, but his mind managed to stop him.

“Shizuo can handle himself.” It whispered firmly in Izaya’s ear. “You have a job to do. The sooner you get it done, the sooner you two can leave and the smaller the risk Shizuo is taking. He’s fighting with an injury now. You need to hurry.”

“Yes, I do need to hurry.” Izaya muttered in worry, his eyes locked on Shizuo as the blonde spun away from another swing of the lead pipe, driving a punch into the gangster’s face in retaliation with gritted teeth and a shout of pain. A cut like that shouldn’t hurt Shizuo too much, even if he was bleeding pretty badly, so it looked like he was playing up the amount of pain for the gang’s benefit. But that didn’t stop the fact that Shizuo was now bleeding, and he would start to become weaker with blood loss, no matter who he was. No matter if a weakened Shizuo was still stronger than these bozo’s, it would increase the danger Shizuo was in. And Izaya couldn’t allow that.

The raven slipped out of the side room and darted for the next one along the wall, his heart pounding as he listened to the gang’s excited increase of shouts and battle cries. Yes, he really had to hurry.

Izaya yanked open the next door and ran inside, not taking as much time to examine this one as he had the first one.

It was another small room that looked like a party had occurred in it at some point, but this one was furnished with a massive pool table, a few dartboards, and a foosball machine instead of tumbled over chairs. Izaya dropped his backpack to the ground and fumbled desperately with the zipper, yanking out three bags of Devil’s Bliss and running over to the pool table with fear still making his heart pound like crazy.

He dropped one bag into a socket in the table, another he chucked onto the foosball table so that it slid through the goal and landed in someone’s score pocket, and the final one he hid under a large radio that was taking up the corner of the room. Then he ran back to his backpack and grabbed the bag of individual pills, spreading those around the room as fast as he could.

He had to be quick but he still had to be subtle. Izaya needed to keep reminding himself of that as another cry of pain from Shizuo reached his ears, further spurring along his already maddeningly quick heart. Adrenaline was beginning to course through the raven’s veins, making him run even faster than usual as he dashed to his backpack, slipped the bag inside, and flung open the door to look out at his boyfriend in fear.

Shizuo’s other arm had been sliced open by a glass shard that one of the more desperate gangsters was holding, the shard dripping with blood as its wielder laughed manically, his eyes glowing with delight at having been able to hurt the monster. Shizuo hissed as he grabbed his arm, kicking the guy in the stomach and sending him flying straight into the wall. But another man smashed a baseball bat into his back, causing Shizuo to stumble forward a few steps before he turned around and punched that one. But another attack was already flying at him barely seconds after he finished fending off that one. The attacks were getting quicker and more fervent. The gang was starting to see Shizuo as a serious threat. He needed to move quicker!
Izaya looked around in terror for another side room, spotting one on the far side of the warehouse, and running for it as quickly as his adrenaline-pumped body could move. He ran straight past the crazed crowd of gangsters and Shizuo, trying not to look at them for fear of stopping and blowing his cover at the sight of his boyfriend, being injured over and over and fighting off a crowd of bloodthirsty gangsters.

He reached the door, flinging it open and rushing inside, squeezing his eyes shut at the sounds of Shizuo’s shouts of pain ringing in the warehouse behind him. It was getting to be too much. He couldn’t listen to Shizuo’s pain much longer, even if it wasn’t all real.

Izaya rummaged clumsily around in his backpack, taking deep breaths in a vain attempt to calm himself down, making sure hysteria didn’t overtake his mind as he pulled out the last two bags and searched for places to hide them.

Compared to the other two rooms, this one was quite plain with just a long couch over against the wall and a poster of a purple dragon hanging right above it. The sounds of the fight still ringing in the air behind him, Izaya ran over to the couch, hiding one bag under the cushions and then climbing on top of it to lift the poster, blinking away the tears threatening to cloud his vision. He unpinned one corner of the poster, slipping the Ziploc bag under the poster and repinning it and the corner once more. It left a sizeable bulge under the detailed dragon, but Izaya didn’t really care at that moment in time. He and Shizuo would be sending in an anonymous tip to the police right after they got out of this, and there wouldn’t be hardly enough time for the Purple Dragons to get rid of all the Devil’s Bliss before they got here.

Right after Izaya finished pinning the bag, he ran to his backpack and pulled out the final Ziploc, ready to spread its final contents around the room.

But just as he grabbed the bag, a strange feeling shot down his spine. It was some sort of tingling sensation, one that wasn’t quite fear, not yet…but one that could cause fear at any second. It was… anticipation? No, it was a feeling that something bad was about to happen. It was a feeling of… foreboding.

Izaya’s head slowly moved to look at the door to the room, the Ziploc bag of Devil’s Bliss shaking slightly in his hands, and the feeling of foreboding growing stronger. He took a few steps towards the door, his hand reaching out for the knob as his blood began to pound in his ears, wondering what on earth he was about to see. His hand grasped the knob firmly enough, but he almost felt like all the strength had left his grip, leaving him unable to turn it. He stared at the knob for several seconds, that horrible feeling of negativity growing stronger and stronger by the second, simultaneously freezing him in place and telling him to move.

“I can’t move. I can’t move.” Izaya thought over and over again, staring with wide eyes at his hand just stuck on the knob. “Why can’t I move? Why can’t I move when Shizuo might need me?”

And the answer struck Izaya as swiftly as lightning.

It was because he didn’t want to see it. If Shizuo was in trouble, he didn’t want to see it. He wanted to close his eyes, cover his ears, and ignore the entire thing. He wanted it to go away and never exist in his lifetime. What better way to pretend something didn’t exist than by ignoring it? His body had frozen him in place, refusing to acknowledge the possibilities of what he could be about to see behind the door. He didn’t want Shizuo to be hurt or in danger. So he wouldn’t even look at it.

But…but that was a coward’s way out. That was a coward’s way of avoiding the problem, of ignoring the one he loved instead of helping him. That was a coward’s way of protecting himself from something he should be protecting Shizuo from. The problem was that Izaya was a coward. He
was used to running away from issues that he couldn’t handle.

“But you faced Hajime.” The voice reminded him. “You went after Mairu and Kururi. What’s different about that?”

What’s different was that Shizuo had been with him. Shizuo’s silent support had helped him get the strength to fight off one of his greatest demons in support of his dearest angels. He’d had Shizuo with him.

“If you don’t move now,” The voice whispered. “Then Shizuo might never be with you again.”

And it was that thought, that mind-numbing panic which overtook him, which made Izaya throw open the door and look out at the fight that every fiber of his body didn’t want him to see.

At first, he couldn’t see what was wrong. Beyond the injuries steadily peppering Shizuo’s body and the fervent efforts of the gang as they attacked him, he couldn’t see anything that warranted the horrible feeling he had in his gut.

He looked around the room, trying to figure out what it was as he clutched the knob of the door, taking deep breaths to calm himself with the final bag of Devil’s Bliss shaking in his hand. He looked around the room, finding nothing at all, not knowing what was happening.

He didn’t see anything…until his eyes landed on a gangster on the far side of the room.

The gangster was glaring at Shizuo, but a wicked grin was steadily creeping its way onto his face as he ran into a room that Izaya hadn’t been in yet, disappearing inside for several seconds. Izaya’s heart pounded as he waited for the boy to reappear, his hands shaking as he stared, unmoving at the door. He didn’t even care if someone looked over and saw him. He had to know what that boy was doing. He had to know what was going on.

And when the boy reappeared, bearing arms full of gleaming metal that he began steadily passing around to other members of the gang, each of them grinning as they relinquished their current weapons in exchange for the objects being handed to them, Izaya knew why he hadn’t wanted to look.

As the boys began to ready their weapons, eyes locked on Shizuo, Izaya’s blood ran cold in his veins.

They had guns. The Purple Dragons had guns. And they were aiming them right at Shizuo.

Chapter End Notes

What is going on?! Is Shizuo going to be shot?! What is Izaya going to do?! WHAT IS GOING TO HAPPEN?! I JUST DON’T KNOW!!

Aaaaand neither will you guys until Wednesday! Very sorry (but at the same time not sorry) about this cliffhanger! Well, I'll see you guys next time! Gotta leave before someone kills me. Love you! Bye!! <3
Hello everyone!!! I have a few things to say before we jump into the chapter!

First: I need to give a belated shout-out to Awww for finding the issue with Chapter 32's title when I first released it! It was "Wolf" instead of "Bear" and that created a bit of confusion, haha. So a big "thank you" to Awww for catching that! I totally forgot to put it in the notes last time so here it is. (⁎^▽^*)

And second: Today I got the results back from my bilingualism examination and I'm officially certified as bilingual in English and Japanese! Yay for me!!! (⁎▽פע ⁓⁎)θ ~ ♪

Last but not least: This chapter has some triggering content in it. Now, the level of which you are triggered is totally decided by you. But the content is there! I have warned you.

And now onto the chapter! <3

This is a brief warning for this chapter not included in the notes: at the start of the chapter, just a short while after this opening scene, there are graphic depictions of blood and injuries. It's probably not too terribly bad, not as bad as other things, but if you can't read that part then just skip it.

How did they have guns?! How could they possibly have gotten their hands on guns?!

Izaya knew for a fact that the only people in Japan with easy access to guns were the yakuza themselves and, as far as he knew, the Purple Dragons had not once tangled with the yakuza or entered their territory. They certainly hadn’t started any agreements with the yakuza or stolen their weapons. So why did they have guns?!

“That's not important right now!” Izaya screamed in his mind, watching in horror as the weapons were all readied at Shizuo, their handlers readying them with nasty smiles on their faces.

How did he help Shizuo? How did he help Shizuo?!

Izaya didn’t have time to think of a solution to this problem. And of all the worst case scenarios that he had imagined and practiced for, this hadn’t been one of them, nor were any of the others remotely similar to it. So he had to do something on the fly, and he had to do it now.

Shizuo was too busy fighting off the other crazed members of Purple Dragons to notice the guns being aimed his way. They were going to hit him at any second!

Izaya dropped the drug bag in his hand, not even caring where the Devil’s Bliss went when it hit the floor, and charged out of the room, adrenaline pumping his body more than anything else. He had to get to Shizuo as quickly as possible. He couldn’t get to the guns on time, no matter how fast he ran, so he had to get to Shizuo.
It felt like hours as he ran towards Shizuo, hours that stretched so long they completely terrified him, but it was probably only a few seconds. He shoved himself through the hordes of gangsters still rushing at his boyfriend, feeling his lips part in a scream that he didn’t even mean to release himself. It was purely instinctual, purely animalistic, a pure need to protect what he loved.

“SHIZUO!”

The blonde’s face turned to look at him in shock just moments before Izaya slammed into his body, knocking them both to the ground. At that exact same moment, Izaya could hear a loud blasting sound off to his right, made up of several bangs that reverberated throughout his skull almost painfully. The shots rang in his ears, deafening the raven as he squeezed his eyes shut and tucked his face against Shizuo’s chest, forcing the both of them into a freefall towards the ground.

Shizuo’s back slammed into the concrete, probably jarring the blonde considerably, and Izaya landed on top of him, his fall cushioned by his boyfriend’s body.

But no amount of cushioning would take the place of the searing pain that tore across his hips and back as the bullets glazed Izaya’s skin.

Hot metal. A burning trail through his body that seemed to shake his whole being and rearrange his insides as it went. A tunnel of heat in several places that Izaya couldn’t describe. It was hot metal, forcing its way through his body, even if it was only cutting across the surface of his skin.

Izaya had seen a video of what a bullet did to a hunk of pig meat once. Pig meat was close to an anatomical match for the structure of human flesh, so it made for an excellent stunt double for something like a bullet test. When the bullet entered the pig, it made a massive hole of flesh that ripped itself apart, flying outwards like a mouth opening on the surface of the skin, then rapidly closing in on itself and collapsing its innards into a much smaller hole, with just a small cavity left by the bullet remaining clear through the flesh. The bullet’s momentum had transferred through the body of the pig, forcefully rearranging its insides and ripping them apart, then allowing gravity to harshly crush everything back inwards. It didn’t crush in the right spots, however, and there were crazy amounts of internal damage. Internal damage, a hole in the body, excessive bleeding, and major hemorrhaging. All from a single 9 mm bullet.

Izaya felt at least three ripping across his back as he went down on top of Shizuo, searing pain that blinded his mental processes.

But the searing metal was accompanied by something much worse. Something he only became aware of once he had fallen completely, the ringing in his ears blocking out the panicked shouts of the boy beneath him, all his focus centered around the pain in his body.

He became aware of the blood.

The hot, sticky, terrifying blood.

It felt like someone had poured some kind of thick liquid on his body, letting it ooze over him and drench him slowly in its wet embrace. In his shock-addled brain, Izaya thought it might actually be regular liquid for a moment, some kind of hot drink spilled on his back…until he turned around.

His movements were sluggish, as if the ringing was somehow throwing off his motor skills as well as his balance, and he felt almost distanced from his own pain-ridden body as he turned his head to look at his back. The shouts of the people around him and the new bangs that were ringing through the air might as well have been occurring on another planet for all the attention Izaya paid to them.
His eyes slowly moved down his black shirt, trailing over his own body almost casually, until they saw the red. Red coating him. Red coming out of him.

And the shock of seeing his own blood, pouring out of his body and seeping down to the floor…that was what made Izaya nearly pass out instead of the pain. How could that much blood be coming from him? It made his head dizzy. It felt like a nightmare. There couldn’t be that much vital liquid pouring from him. Not from the surface wounds he’d gotten from the bullets.

Unless…

Izaya’s eyes moved to his side, right in the dip of his waist, where his black shirt was seemingly darker than before. His hand moved numbly to touch it, and it came away soaked in red. He hadn’t just been shot in the back. The bullets hadn’t just grazed him. One had gone into his side. Clear through his body.

“I…I got shot.” Izaya said aloud, his own words floating into the array of chaos around him that he couldn’t pay attention to. “I got shot.”

The mere thought of it had Izaya sinking even further away from reality. Was he…bleeding out? Had his internal organs been hit? Were his insides already rearranged to the liking of the bullet’s chaotic force? Was he dying, without even noticing it? Perhaps…he’d already died?

He couldn’t tell. There was pain everywhere. There was shock in the searing heat shooting through him and the wet warmth coating him like a sick blanket. He couldn’t feel much beyond anything. He’d been shot. There was too much to comprehend. He’d been shot. What was even happening? He’d been shot.

He’d been shot.

He’d been shot…

He’d been…shot…

“IZAYA!” A voice screamed, breaking through the chaotic haze that was wrapping Izaya’s world of pain, shock, and disbelief.

The raven looked up quickly, spotting a tall blonde boy punching the guns out of the hands of startled and terrified gangsters, all backing away from the pure fury radiating from him. The blonde was practically like a monster, growling and gnashing his teeth at the gangsters, physically snapping their weapons in half like playthings and smashing his fists right into their terror-frozen bodies.

A few gangsters were still grabbing desperately at guns and trying to attack the blonde, but he didn’t even seem fazed by their perseverance. He ran straight at them, an animalistic roar tearing from his throat as he swiped his arm across their bodies and sent a few of them flying. head-butting another who’d gotten too close to him, grabbing one more by the shirt and throwing him into his friends, kicking one behind him in the chest, screaming as he ripped a piece of the very wall out and slammed it against three more. There was so much going on. So much violence in one place, all originating from one terrifying boy.

Izaya watched in a numb, astonished daze as the boy used his wall as a shield against the bullets flying at him, rushing towards the gangsters firing at him with another roar. The gangsters yelped, some abandoning their guns and trying to run away, others still helplessly firing at the surging monster as though one hit might save them.

A lucky bullet slammed into the blonde’s leg, tearing a hole through it and staining his pants deep
red, but the blonde practically ignored it as he swung his wall with a scream of fury, knocking the last five gunman right off their feet and sending them flying into the far side of the warehouse with a final crash.

Then everything went silent.

Izaya’s heart pounded in his chest as he stared at the blonde, bleeding from his arm and leg, panting heavily, anger contorting his features into those of a beast’s as he glared into the space in front of him. He seemed lost in an entirely separate world. A world where he could only feel rage and loss and pain.

“No.” Izaya murmured dreamily, trying to push himself up onto his feet. “Not that world. No.”

Izaya couldn’t remember the blonde’s name. He couldn’t remember who he was through the hazy cloud of his mind. But he knew…he knew it was the blonde’s voice that had brought him back to reality. It was the blonde’s voice that had reminded him of his own name and brought him back to life. It was the blonde. It was all for him.

“I love you.” Izaya found himself saying aloud as he stumbled towards the blonde monster, the beast still quivering and snarling with rage at the nothingness in front of him. “I love you.”

The blonde roared viciously, spinning around and glaring at Izaya as he stumbled closer, the golden eyes covered in a film of anger and pain, beyond human recognition. He growled at Izaya, clenching his fists and raising them as though to punch him.

Izaya could only look at his eyes. The golden eyes masked by pain and rage.

“I love you.” He repeated, taking another shaky step forward as warm blood continued to seep from his pierced body. He didn’t know why he loved the monster. He knew the blonde was lost in another world and probably didn’t even recognize him. Logically, he knew he should be running away, at least until the monster came to his senses and returned to being human. He knew he should only approach this boy when he was a human, like Izaya. But even so…

“I love you. My monster. My human.” Izaya said aloud, tears filling his eyes as he stumbled shakily towards the snarling beast. “Yes. You’re my monster. Even when you’re like this. Even when you don’t know who I am and I don’t know who you are.”

He raised his hands out to the blonde, the searing pain in his body reminding him of the bullets that had torn through it probably only minutes before.

“I love you.” Izaya croaked out, a tired mantra that wasn’t even reaching the ears of the blonde who was pulling his fist back to release the punch. That punch would probably kill him. He should run. He should start running away now.

“You. You as a monster and you as a human. I love you both, even if one is more terrifying than the other.” Izaya found himself saying instead, his vision blurred out by pain and by tears. “I won’t let you believe that you’re alone. That you’re lost in that rage and pain. Because…because you have me. I’ll be your anchor to drag you back. I’ll make sure you aren’t alone.”

Izaya was so close. He couldn’t see a thing anymore through the blur of his vision, he couldn’t tell if he was about to lose his life at the hands of this monster who’d just knocked out an entire, armed gang single-handedly.

It didn’t matter.
“You aren’t alone.” He cried, feeling the tears stream down his cheeks as he walked forward. “I love you…Shi…Shi…” The name was on the tip of his tongue. It was traveling through his mind like a phantom, urging him towards it. Towards the blonde monster.

Izaya heard a roar break out through the air and felt wind flying at him as a fist came crashing towards his face.

And the name appeared.

“Shizuo.” Izaya said. “I love you Shizuo.”

And then everything went black.

***

The phone was ringing. It was very annoying.

Kyouko looked over at the expensive device with disdain, her fingers freezing over the keyboard of her laptop along with her scowl.

“Is something wrong, dear?” The voice of her husband drawled as he walked over and sat beside her with the martini drinks he’d just gotten from the bar.

Kyouko glanced over at the drinks, noting with mild appreciation that they were set-up quite aesthetically for drinks made on a private jet, before glaring back at her incessant cell phone. “Yes. This device won’t stop ringing to allow me to continue my work.” The cold woman sniffed in disdain, waving her hand at it to emphasize her point. “I only have five more hours of this flight before we must meet with the board of directors in the Swiss outlet. I need to utilize this time to its fullest extent. This ringing is making it near impossible!”

Shirou grabbed the phone and hummed as he looked at the number, frowning slightly.

He didn’t recognize it himself. Granted, he and his wife often split their business contacts between the two of them so that they could each handle certain regions and interactions with clients across the world. Because of this, there were many numbers on his wife’s phone that he wouldn’t recognize. But this one wasn’t listed with an ID, and Kyouko was religious about labeling all her contacts with proper, updated information.

Shirou had finished his last correspondence e-mail and query report in the first three hours of the flight, so he supposed he had time to look into this number for his wife.

“Very well. I shall see who it’s from and we’ll call them back if it’s necessary.” He said smoothly, and his wife nodded in brief gratitude, her nimble fingers resuming their frantic typing on her keyboard as Shirou opened his smooth leather briefcase and pulled out his own laptop. He quickly opened its lid, rebooting the device back to its previous browser, and began searching for the unknown number’s area code right away.

The phone stopped ringing after a few seconds, but started up again like the great annoyance that it was proving to be, the same number calling his wife determinedly.

Eventually, Shirou found its area code and opened a corresponding phone book online, hoping that that would do the trick and offer him the identity of this mystery caller.

He frowned when he saw the result.
“Dear,” He called, looking over at Kyouko as she typed away. “Yes?” She responded without looking up.

“Why is a hospital in Ikebukuro calling you?” He asked smoothly, and Kyouko paused briefly in her typing.

“I have no idea.” The businesslike woman said smoothly. “I have no outstanding bills, debts, or scheduled appointments to any hospitals.”

Shirou checked the result again. “It’s a number devoted to the Emergency Room of that hospital. Those in urgent, immediate, or critical care.” He announced, glancing back over at her to see if this would ring a bell.

Still, the woman shrugged. “Wrong number. Block it.” She said sharply, resuming her typing on the computer.

“As you wish.” Shirou nodded and ended the call, blocking the number right afterwards. A hospital so far away? It couldn’t possibly have anything to do with them.

Besides, their business in Switzerland would be far more important than whatever business or nuisances they may have in Japan.

***

Namiko and Kichirou were on a date.

Well, being frank, it wasn’t much of a date when there were two toddlers tagging along. But both parents were having the time of their lives.

“It’s so nice that Shizuo and Izaya are out on a cute little date right now!” Namiko said cheerfully, practically humming as she held her husband’s hand, Mairu perched on her shoulders as they walked under the lights of the park.

“I know! It’s about time for another one!” Kichirou laughed, Kururi sitting regally on his own shoulders and reaching quietly up at the branches of the trees they passed to see if she could touch them. “And besides, it leaves us time to hang out on our own.”

Namiko nodded in agreement with this statement, smiling lovingly as Mairu started chatting about the lights and playing with her hair.

She and Kichirou hadn’t had too much time to spend on themselves now that the Oriharas had come to live in their house. The twins were recovering from their injuries from that horrible bastard Hajime, and it was easiest for them to recover in a nice, safe, doting household like the Heiwajima household rather than making poor Izaya take care of them again. Izaya was living with them as well, sleeping in Shizuo’s room, since it made no sense for him to live alone in that house when he could be taking care of his girls in a far more comfortable environment.

Thanks to the presence of the three Oriharas, the Heiwajima household had grown even more unruly than usual, with the presence of toddlers filling the rooms in the form of crayon drawings on the walls, toys scattered around the house, and constant laughter in the air. Izaya and Shizuo had grown closer, their tutoring lessons becoming an almost intimate scene that involved plenty of kissing, hugging, and laughing from the two love-struck boys. Everything felt so bright and peaceful with the raven-haired siblings around.

It was hard for Namiko to imagine any parents who would be willing to leave behind these wonderful children for so long, and having next to no contact with them.
Izaya was so smart and beautiful and funny and quirky. Namiko couldn’t help but be proud of him and everything he’d accomplished, everything he’d been through and fought for, even if she wasn’t his biological mother. And the twins were gorgeous and playful and creative and resilient, rising up from something that would have traumatized many other children like the little superheroes they were. The Orihara children were incredible. Namiko would have cried of thanks every day had they been her children alongside Shizuo and Kasuka.

She and Kichirou had begun looking into adoption for the Oriharas shortly after meeting them, wanting to make that dream a reality, but they’d stopped just a few days ago. Kichirou had pointed out that since Izaya and Shizuo were dating, it might be extremely frowned upon and possibly an illegal act of incest if they adopted the Oriharas now. There was no way they were going to force Izaya and Shizuo to break up just to adopt the Oriharas as their own. They had to find some other way to take care of them.

“Mommy! I see a bird!” Mairu screeched, grabbing at Namiko’s phone like her life depended on it, and eagerly snapping a picture without even asking.

How the little creature had gotten ahold of her password, Namiko would never know.

But she loved the little girl all the same.

Kichirou sighed as he swung Namiko’s hand lazily in the night air between them, smiling up at the sky. “These girls are going to kill our phone batteries with all their picture-taking.” He joked, his having already died from Kururi’s frantic photo barrage earlier on in the evening.

“Pictures good.” Kururi protested softly, nuzzling down into his hair. “Make memories.”

Kichirou felt his heart squeeze at the reaction and he reached his free hand up to ruffle Kururi’s own short hair, smiling brightly at the little purring sounds he got in return.

“Yes, my darling. They do make memories.” He agreed, his mind still wondering how he and Namiko could find a way to take care of these wonderful kids. If his phone weren’t dead, he would pull it out and start Googling right then and there.

Maybe his wife still had some battery left.

“Namiko,” He said, and the woman glanced over at him with a raised eyebrow. “Yeah?” She asked, smiling brightly as she squeezed his hand.

“Got any battery left on that thing?” He asked, pointing at the device currently trapped in Mairu’s toddler hand.

“3%! ” Mairu declared loudly before Namiko could even say anything.

“3?! How many pictures have you been taking?” Namiko cried, poking the little girl’s thigh accusingly.

Mairu giggled and held the phone high in the air fiddling with it some more. “Also playing games.” She admitted, and the sounds of Candy Crush filled the air.

Kichirou laughed, shaking his head as they walked along the park path, smiling in the chilly night air. “Figures. The toddler sees a game and she will play it.” He said cheerfully, swinging Namiko’s hand again.

“2%! ” Mairu called next, bouncing happily on Namiko’s shoulders as she beat the level.
Well…they could always Google things later.

After Namiko’s phone died, the small group of four just chatted as they walked in the park, content with each other’s company more than anything else. Even with the occasional winces of pain from the twins as a reminder to why they were living with the Heiwajimas, the evening felt perfect.

With both phones dead, neither parent received the panicked call from the Ikebukuro hospital that they would soon hear about the next day.

And they would dearly wish that they had.

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“There aren’t any other numbers listed in his emergency contacts.” The nurse said worriedly, glancing at the slightly shattered phone as she scrolled through the ICE list.

“Yes! There’s one more.” Her colleague cut in, pointing out a number at the bottom that was much different from the rest.

“But this one doesn’t even have a Japanese area code!” The first nurse protested, biting her lip as she looked at it in worry. “That’s why I haven’t called it yet! It won’t do us much good if the person is in another country.”

“Did you try the blonde’s phone already?” A third nurse asked, holding up a different, even more battered cell phone.

The first nurse sighed and nodded. “Yes. Both of his contacts were the same as two of this one’s contacts. They didn’t pick up for him either.” She explained, looking down in worry at the cell phone screen.

They’d been trying to get ahold of any sort of contact for the two boys for the last forty minutes, since those boys had been admitted at 11:17. Repeated calls to the numbers listed as parents yielded no results, for either boy, and the nurse was pretty sure they’d even been blocked by both parents in the raven’s phone. Time was running short. “But we need an adult here or we can’t legally perform many of the surgeries that they need. They’re minors!” The nurse said aloud, pulling herself back into the present.

“Not necessarily!” The second nurse argued. “We can start the surgeries if the authorized guardian can’t be located or contacted during the time in which the minor needs the treatment.”

“After reasonable diligence!” The first nurse countered. “We need to try everything we can to find their parents or guardians first. These are serious surgeries. And we’re wasting time! Life support only holds out so long before we have to enter surgery.”

“Then call that final number! We’ve got no other choice.” The third nurse ordered, marching over and grabbing the cell phone. “If this person doesn’t pick up, then we’ll start the surgery without consent. The blonde is doing okay but the raven needs it now.”

She hit the dial button beside the final contact and placed it to her ear, her heart pounding in her chest as she prayed for someone to pick up this time.

It rang about three heart-stopping times before a voice spoke on the other end.

“Hello? Who the hell is calling me this late?” An annoyed voice demanded, followed by a huge yawn.
The nurse couldn’t blame him. It was nearly midnight. She’d probably woken him up.

“Sir, this is Ikebukuro Hospital. We’re calling from the Emergency department to let you know that a young boy named Orihara Izaya is in critical care. He has you listed in his emergency contacts. We need some sort of adult approval to begin operating on him.” The nurse spoke clearly and concisely, hoping to get this man’s approval as quickly as possible. They needed it.

There was a brief pause on the other end, almost like this man was shocked to hear the news. They almost always were. No one ever expects to get a call like this.

She didn’t know just how unexpected this call was for the man.

“Alright. You’ve got my approval. Start the bloody operation.” The man growled, and the nurse could clearly hear shuffling sounds on the other side like he was getting ready. “What’s the address of this hospital?”

“5-4, 3-Chome, Higashi-Ikebukuro, Toshima ward in Tokyo.” The nurse recited instantly. “Will you be coming?”

“Like hell I won’t be!” The man yelled on the other side, and then his speech drifted off into another language that the nurse didn’t understand. It sounded Slavic. Maybe…Russian?

Eventually, the voice came back, speaking in Japanese once more. “I’ll be there in about ten minutes. Don’t wait for me to start the stupid procedure. I just want to be taken to him once I get there.” He said gruffly.

“Alright, sir. There’s another boy here as well, though. A taller one by the name of Heiwajima Shizuo. Do you, by any chance, know him as well?” The nurse asked, hoping against hope that he did. If these two boys shared emergency contacts, then they probably knew many of the same people, and the blonde might even know this man just like the raven did. The nurse could get approval for both surgeries from this one call.

“Shizuo? Blondie is there, too?” The voice asked in shock.

So he knew the boy was blonde. Then he definitely knew him in real life. Blonde hair wasn’t exactly common in Japan, and neither was the nickname “Blondie”.

“Yes. Can I get your approval for his surgery as well?” The nurse pressed.

There were some more sounds of the foreign language filtering through the phone that almost sounded like cussing, a loud huff and a bit of a thumping sound, and then the coherent words returned.

“I don’t know if I’m authorized to give consent for him, for either of them actually, but I do know them both. And I’m giving consent for both. Just do what you have to do, okay? I’m leaving right now.”

The nurse nodded even though the man couldn’t see her, frantically waving a hand at the other nurses around her, signaling that they had the go-ahead. The two women instantly ran out of the room, no doubt heading right for the ER where the young men were, and the nurse returned to her conversation.

“May I have a name to tell the front desk when you arrive?” She asked.

“Mikhailov Shichi.” The man responded. “I’ll be there as soon as I can.”
Oh my word. Oh my word, they're in the hospital! What's happening?! What's going on?!! THIS USED TO BE SUCH A FLUFFY FIC!!

Just a little note, I looked up a bunch of different hospital procedures for surgery on minors without parental consent and this scenario is the best one I could come up with that fit all those different procedures. I believe it's decently accurate, but obviously I'm no nurse so still some room for error. Yep yep. And...that is all I have to say on this chapter.

I am so sorry for my grievances against this ship. I promise I still love these dorks and you guys.

I'll see you all on Sunday!
The Bear’s Devotion and the Cat’s Love (クマの献身と猫の愛)

Chapter Notes

Okay! Hello everyone! The actual chapter is up and ready! And - after several days of total indecision - I finally figured out whether to do another one-shot or a new episode of "Private Lessons Confessions" to help make up for missing Sunday. After I post this... *insert drumroll here*... a new episode of "Private Lessons Confessions" will be out! It took me a seriously long time to figure out which one I wanted to do since there are a few readers that I really want to write one-shots for, but people have been asking for a new episode a lot recently, and so I decided to write one!

I also got a great idea for a different episode after this one from a reader, but we'll have to wait on that for a bit before I can get it all set up.

Whew. So much writing. In any case! Sorry about the lateish update (my excuse involves the news on how my archery competition went which will be in the bottom notes if you're interested) and it may take a little bit of time for the new episode of "Confessions" to be posted after this simply because...well, I need to eat dinner here shortly. XD

Anyway, that's all from me! Here's the chapter you guys have been waiting for! Sorry to leave you on that cliffhanger for so long! <3

See the end of the chapter for more notes

It looked bad. It looked really really bad.

Shichi was stunned as he sat by the hospital bedside, staring at all the equipment and medical junk littering the space around it, various pieces connected to the tiny boy lying on it and seeming to swallow him up as a part of the whole machine. His frail body barely moved, only a small rise and fall of his chest indicating any life was left in him at all. His skin was sickly pale from blood loss, like he’d either been drained of all his blood by a vampire or had turned into a vampire himself, and the wounds marking his body were disgusting. Holes peppering his sides that had recently been stitched up, the blue medical stitches standing out clear against his sterilized, pale skin as they pulled it closed. IV drips were hooked up to his arms in order to pump vital liquids that he had lost over the last 9 hours. Some were pumping blood into his barely breathing body, others were pumping nutrients and water solutions that Shichi couldn’t name. The doctors told him it was because he couldn’t eat or drink anything for at least 2 days. It wasn’t safe. Not with the locations where the injuries had occurred. Everything needed to be injected into his body via these tangled and terrifyingly numerous IV drips. A heart rate monitor was hooked up to the slim body as well, displaying a weak but steady heartbeat that hadn’t gotten any stronger since Shichi had arrived. And just in case, the doctors had also attached an oxygen mask to the pale face, gently supplying the boy with precious air in case he stopped breathing entirely.

It looked bad. It looked really really bad.

Shichi sighed in worry, running his hands through his hair for what felt like the thousandth time since he’d arrived at the hospital around midnight and demanded to see Izaya. The nurses and doctors had taken him back where they were beginning surgical operations on the boy, asking if he thought he
could handle seeing it.

Considering Shichi had once removed bullets from his own body and the body of his best friend with a knife and his bare hands in the middle of a gunfight with a rival mafia faction in Russia in the winter...yeah, he was pretty sure he could stomach a professional surgery. He hadn’t told them all that, of course, but he was pretty sure they had gotten the general message from the look on his face.

So they’d taken him into the back where Izaya and Shizuo were, both boys laying on operating tables with a startling amount of surgeons positioned around them, already started on the surgery. Shichi didn’t fully comprehend what they had done. He was aware of tubes and surgical knives and strange machines and sterilizing shit that they injected into the two boys, but he was more focused on those horrible wounds that they found all over the boys’ bodies and watching the actual lead come out of them.

Shizuo only had about two or three bullets in his legs, and although the doctors were worried about the projectiles having hit nerve endings and possibly removing his ability to walk, Shichi wasn’t too worried. He was nearly certain that with Shizuo’s unnatural strength came unnatural healing abilities, and that the doctors would soon be proven wrong. One of the doctors had even treated Shizuo before when he was a child, and that man assured his coworkers that Shizuo would be fine in just a few hours.

Izaya on the other hand...he wasn’t as lucky.

Shichi watched with growing horror during the surgery as bullet after bullet, fragment after fragment of lead, was removed from his tiny body, blood spewing out of his wounds the entire time as the doctors all moved in tandem to fix and examine the damage while getting the bullets out. The viewing screen in the room that showed his internal damage was hard to look at, but still somewhat hopeful. It seemed that, miraculously, most of the bullets had missed Izaya’s organs, or he would surely be dead by now. They had gone through his body, splintering and leaving trails of metal along the way, but for the most part, exiting his body in clean wounds. Only one had torn into his intestines, requiring fast surgery that Shichi didn’t understand and almost couldn’t watch.

He stared at a tray that the doctors had set beside the operating table for a large part of that operation, counting the horrid lead projectiles that had come from Izaya’s little body one after the other. Seven. Seven freaking bullets. He’d been shot seven times, eight if you counted the one in his intestine, and most people died from just one bullet.

Shichi was terrified. For the very first time in a very long time, he was absolutely terrified.

The doctors worked hard on Izaya’s body, removing Shizuo from the operating room after a bit but keeping Izaya for much longer, focus written all over their faces as they tried to save his life.

One of the nurses had gently removed Shichi from the viewing area, telling him to go to Shizuo while the doctors kept working. He hadn’t wanted to go. He had wanted to stay with Izaya the whole time and see if he would be alright. He wanted to argue with the woman that even Shizuo would want him to do that instead of going to check on him, but he didn’t want to run the risk of getting removed from the hospital entirely for unruly behavior. So he’d just nodded and followed her to a small hospital room.

Shizuo was lying on the bed, hardly anything attached to his body at all aside from a simple machine to monitor his heart rate, eyes closed peacefully in medically-induced sleep. Shichi had stared at him for a few seconds, wondering what in the hell those two boys had gotten themselves into. He wasn’t sure if he should ask when Shizuo woke up, if he even had a right to ask, if there was someone he should call, or anything at all. He was just...there.
So he waited in Shizuo’s room, watching him, praying for a nurse to come in and give him an update on Izaya’s condition, until the golden eyes finally fluttered open.

Shizuo sat up in confusion, looking around the room like he wasn’t sure where he was, and then his eyes landed on Shichi. His gaze grew even more confused, and he started looking around some more, possibly for his actual parents.

Then panic filled his eyes and he looked at Shichi urgently, leaning forward in his hospital bed as his heart rate spiked on the monitor.

“IZAYA!” The boy croaked out, his voice raspy from its time without use and the effects of the medicine still making him slightly drowsy. “IZAYA!”

Shichi had stood up and walked over to the panicking boy, placing a firm hand on his shoulder and looking into his eyes unwaveringly. “IZAYA is in surgery right now.” He told the blonde. “I’m not sure how it’s going. But he’s in the best shape he can be in at this point in time. He’s better than he would be out on the street and he’s got a much better chance of living now than he would if you hadn’t taken him here.”

Shizuo stared at Shichi, his eyes filled with an almost animalistic fear that made Shichi want to back up a bit. That fear was beyond human reasoning. It was protective instinct. It was utter terror. It was a need to see the person he was thinking about. It was something that didn’t comprehend anything beyond the quickest way to Izaya. Shichi had no doubt that in that moment, Shizuo would easily crush his spine, snap his neck, slam him into a wall, whatever it took to however many people that got in his way in order to get to Izaya.

He wasn’t sure what he would do if Shizuo began acting on that impulse which he saw so clearly in those wide, golden eyes. He only waited to see what the beast would do.

After a few seconds, the primal instinct seemed to die down, although the fear was still firmly in place. Logic and reasoning flowed back into Shizuo’s eyes, and he blinked as he looked up at Shichi in worry. “IZAYA.” Shizuo repeated, the raspy quality much lower now and his words far more comprehensible. “When can I see him?”

Shichi shrugged, relief shooting through his body at the fact that he was going to get to keep his spine. “I’m not sure.” The math teacher said aloud, glancing back at the door behind him. “They won’t let me see him, and I don’t think they’ll even let you leave this room. But once Izaya gets out of surgery…whether the result is good or bad…” He turned to look at Shizuo, a promise in his icy blue eyes. “I’ll make them take him in here so you can see him one more time.” He swore in a low voice, meaning every word of it.

Even if all he would see was a body…Shizuo deserved to see the person he loved.

Shizuo’s eyes teared up slightly, no doubt thinking about that worst case scenario, but he bit his lip and nodded, staring at his hands as they fisted up in the blankets atop his lap.

Then they both fell silent, listening to the steadily slowing but still slightly fast rate of Shizuo’s heart, waiting for something to happen.

A nurse eventually came into the room, calling Shichi into a different one to look at Izaya.

Shichi and Shizuo had exchanged one meaningful look before he went, and then he’d followed the nurse out, hoping against all other things that existed in the universe that he wouldn’t be clutching a dying or dead hand of someone else that he truly cared about, yet again.
When the nurse opened the door to the room, he saw Izaya lying on that hospital bed, pale and alone, completely unconscious as the nurses hooked him up to all kinds of devices.

“He’s stable.” The nurse told Shichi from the doorway. “Very weak, and barely alive, but still stable. A little bit of rest and waiting is the best we can do for him now.”

“Did…did you get everything out?” He heard himself asking, his eyes still riveted to the pale form in front of him.

“Yes. And the bruise on his face just needed some ointment.” The nurse responded. “It looked like some blunt object barely grazed him. It was a powerful object, but still just a graze. Nothing serious.”

Shichi nodded, watching as the nurses all stepped away from the boy’s body and gave him some space to approach him.

He couldn’t yet, though. Someone else had to be with Izaya first.

“Can you…can you move him to Shizuo’s room or move Shizuo here?” He asked, looking back at the nurses with a slightly teary expression. “They…they would want to be together…and Shizuo is very worried.”

Whether it was the fact that tears were coming from a grown man, or the scenario of two small boys who wanted to be together was very touching, the nurses agreed and immediately left the room to carry out his request.

Shizuo was rolled in on his hospital bed a few minutes later, clearly annoyed and wanting to jump off the thing himself, but obedient to the doctors’ instructions so that he could see Izaya.

The instant his golden eyes landed on Izaya’s tiny form, a montage of emotions that Shichi had never seen before swept across his face like a vicious storm.


There were so many things in Shizuo’s eyes, so many things racing through his heart, that he eventually ducked his head, unable to look at Izaya without getting up and running right over to him.

The nurses pushed Shizuo’s bed beside Izaya’s, careful not to mess with any of the machines ringing him, and left the room.

Since then, it had been Shichi and Shizuo, both staring at Izaya’s sleeping form and praying for the tiny boy to open his beautiful red eyes. To come back to them once more.

9 hours of waiting. That’s how long Shichi had been waiting if you included the surgery time. It was 9 am of the next day now, and still nothing. Shichi hadn’t slept all night. Shizuo had only slept when he was in that medically-induced coma after his surgery. He’d woken up about 6 hours ago, at 3 am, and hadn’t gone to sleep since. Hours upon hours of nothing at all.

The beeping of the heart monitor was going to drive them crazy.

A nurse opened the door and Shichi and Shizuo’s heads both snapped around to look at her, their eyes wide with panic like they were both expecting bad news.

The nurse looked startled by their alert stares, probably having expected them to be asleep by now, but she quickly recovered and smiled at them, assuring them that nothing was wrong.
“Some more people showed up to see you both.” She told Shizuo, nodding her head at Izaya as though they couldn’t tell who the other person was. “It seemed their phones were dead last night and that was why they didn’t come. But they’re here now…and very worried.”

She stepped aside and gestured for someone in the hallway to enter, and then immediately afterwards, two figures burst into the room, panic written all over their faces as they scanned it for occupants.

Shichi could see the resemblance almost immediately, even if their hair wasn’t dyed like their son’s. The father was tall and broad, much like Shizuo was going to be someday, with warm brown eyes that were filled with worry and panic. The mother was smaller but had the same fierce aspect about her that Shizuo did, like a lioness or a wolf ready to protect her young. They both reminded Shichi so heavily of Blondie that there was no way they weren’t his parents.

But…

“Did any others show up?” He found himself wondering as the adults cried out in relief and ran over to their son, hugging and kissing him frantically. He stared at their backs, thinking rapidly about the other people who were supposed to be there. The ones that he knew were neglectful, like his own had been, but should at least be concerned if their only son had been shot.

“Where are Izaya’s parents?” Shichi thought.

“There are also two more.” The nurse announced, and Shichi’s head snapped over to the door, expecting some kind of black-haired set of models or businesspeople to walk through at any moment. Maybe a little cold, but still at least slightly worried.

Instead, two tiny and adorable girls ran into the room, panic and tears filling their brown eyes as they ran straight to the hospital bed in the middle of the room, completely ignoring all the machines and wires in their way as they clambered up onto it, sobbing on the pale boy’s chest.

“Iza-nii!” One of the little girls wailed. “Wake up, Iza-nii!”

“Wake up.” The other one, far quieter than her counterpart, added with a sad tug on her brother’s hospital gown that also tugged at Shichi’s heartstrings.

Almost unbidden, the math teacher found himself rising and walking over to the little girls, standing beside Izaya’s bed and placing an awkward hand on both of their little heads. He’d never really been good at “comfort” or “family” but…well, he would give it a go.

“Iza-nii needs his rest.” He said softly, dragging the two sets of teary brown eyes over to him. He swallowed a pang in his heart, and willed any tears away from his own icy blue eyes as those adorable little toddlers looked up at him with such fear coating their faces.

“Who are you?” The first one asked, sniffling a little as she wiped at her eyes.

“Doctor?” The second one wondered, mimicking the motion with a small hiccup at the end.

“No. I’m Iza-nii’s math teacher.” He said gently, stroking their hair in a manner he hoped was comforting. “I was here for his surgery because they called me when he came in.” The first twin’s eyes widened and Shichi realized what a horrible mistake he’d made in mentioning the surgery.

“Iza-nii had surgery?! The little girl screeched, looking down at the raven in panic. “What happened?! What’s wrong?! What’s wrong with Iza-nii?!”
“Going to die?” The second asked, desperately clutching to Shichi’s shirt with terror in her eyes.

Shit. Real smooth, Shichi. Soothe that over.

“No. No, your brother is just sleeping.” Shichi assured the girls, removing the toddler hand from his shirt and holding it in one of his hands. With his other hand, he gently turned the other twin’s face to look at him, directing her gaze away from her unconscious brother and back at Shichi. “He’s just sleeping.” The Russian repeated as calmly as he could, willing his calm to sink into the frightened little girls. “He’ll wake up once he feels better. And he’s been in here for a little while, so I’m sure he’ll be waking up any minute now.”

The first twin look down at her brother again, then back at Shichi, hope filling her brown eyes. “Really?” She asked hesitantly.

Shichi smiled at her and nodded. “Really.” He said.

“Promise?” The second one asked softly, squeezing one of his fingers with her tiny hand, looking into his eyes with a seriousness that he had never before associated with toddlers.

Shichi didn’t know what to say. He couldn’t promise that Izaya would wake up. It just wasn’t certain. There were too many factors that could slip things in the wrong direction. He couldn’t promise that Izaya would wake up any time soon, or even at all.

“I promise that he’s trying his best right now to come back to you.” Shichi finally said, smiling at the serious twin.

A bit of peace entered the worried eyes, and she gave a small smile, looking over at Izaya like he was the only thing that mattered in that moment. “Then…give him time to rest.” She whispered softly, snuggling up next to Izaya and closing her eyes like she intended to sleep right beside her brother until he woke up.

“Yeah. We’ll give Iza-nii time to rest and get back to us!” He louder counterpart declared, doing the same on Izaya’s other side and clutching his hospital gown tightly.

Shichi stared down at the three Oriharas, cuddled up together on the hospital bed, and he could feel his heart breaking.

The twins, as adorable as they were, were moving in such a way that Shichi could tell they were recovering from injuries. He couldn’t see their skin so he couldn’t tell how bad they were, but there was a slight jerkiness to both girls’ actions that told him the injuries had, at one point, been severe. Izaya was in between them, pale from blood loss and barely clinging to life as he recovered from gunshot wounds, his whole existence really up to a coin toss from fate. They clung to each other like they were all they had in the world, like they were used to this family of three, and they were each broken in their own ways. A broken family of wonderful, hurting children.

Where the hell were their good-for-nothing parents?

“Shichi-sensei?” A voice asked from behind him, and Shichi spun around.

The tall man who’d Shichi assumed to be Shizuo’s father was standing there, his wife beside him, both of them looking pale from worry and exhaustion.

The woman’s eyes were locked on Izaya, terror clearly coating her face as she saw him laying still on the bed, along with a huge amount of guilt that nearly made Shichi feel guilty just looking at it. When he looked back into the man’s eyes, he could see the same amount of guilt reflected in there.
What had the nurse said about why they hadn’t shown up yet? Because their cell phones had been dead?

Ouch. No wonder they felt so horrible.

“Yes. I’m Shichi-sensei. Your son’s math teacher.” Shichi said smoothly, nodding at Shizuo as he lay watching them from his hospital bed, those golden eyes flicking constantly over to Izaya like the raven was the very center of his universe and he couldn’t look away, even for an instant. And in Shizuo’s mind, maybe that was exactly what Izaya was.

“It’s nice to meet you. I’m Heiwajima Kichirou and this is my wife, Namiko.” The man said, gesturing at himself and the woman beside him in turn.

“Have you been with them for a while?” Namiko asked, her tone composed and calm but her eyes filled with worry and guilt as she turned her gaze away from Izaya and to Shichi. Shichi nodded, glancing over at Izaya himself. “Yes. The hospital called me because I’m in Izaya’s emergency contact list, apparently. I was the only one out of both Shizuo and Izaya’s lists who picked up when the hospital called last night, so…” He trailed off, realizing that his wording might have not been the best just now. He’d essentially just shoved a big sign in their faces reminding them about how they hadn’t picked up when the hospital called. How they hadn’t been there for their son while he was undergoing surgery.

“I am so sorry.” Shichi said instantly, bowing to both parents and wishing he could punch himself in the face. “I’m not exactly the best with comfort or people skills. I’m just…I’m very blunt.”

“Don’t worry about it.” Kichirou said lightly, patting Shichi’s bowed back. “I’m a pretty blunt man myself.” He fell silent for a bit, and Shichi could feel both Heiwajimas’ eyes on his back as he bowed, no one in the room quite knowing what to say.

“We…we know that we weren’t there for Shizuo.” Namiko finally said, her voice shaking a little. “Or Izaya. We weren’t there when they needed us. Perhaps when they needed us more than they ever have before. And…and I don’t even know how horrible a mother that makes me but—”

Shichi’s head snapped up instantly, his ice blue eyes locking on the teary-eyed woman with an intensity that he didn’t know he possessed. “That’s not true.” He interrupted her, practically glaring at her as his determination rose up. “You’re a wonderful mother. You showed up the instant you found out about it, didn’t you? You’re here now, aren’t you? And you care about what happened to them both and you’re supporting them in every way you can.”

He gestured over at Izaya and the twins, feeling anger flare up along with his determination. “Their parents aren’t even here. I overheard the nurses talking and they said that the Orihara parents blocked the hospital from their phones. Those assholes, wherever they are, could care less about these kids and what happens to them.”

He walked over to the bed, standing almost protectively over the Orihara siblings as he glared at the shocked Heiwajima parents across from him, one hand resting on Izaya’s forehead and the other laid atop the point on Izaya’s chest where the twins were now holding hands.

“But you showed up.” He insisted, tightening his grip on the tiny hands underneath his as his voice became louder and louder. “You actually had the heart to be here and watch over not only your own child, but these ones as well. Don’t you dare, don’t you even dare, say that you’re a bad mother.” He looked over at Kichirou, fire raging in his icy eyes. “Or say that you’re a bad father. Because you aren’t! Neither of you are! You’re great parents. Fucking fantastic parents, if you’ll pardon my language.”
He looked down at Izaya, feeling his heart twist with pain as he thought about his own past. His own experience with a neglectful family and making it on his own in a harsh world. These kids...these kids were going through that right now. But the Heiwajimas were there for them. They were there for them right now, in their moment of greatest need, abandoning whatever else they'd been doing to see these kids as well as their own. They...were there.

"You're helping them out more than you know." Shichi managed to get out, his throat closing up as tears threatened to fill his eyes. "More than you'll ever know..."

Silence fell over the room as everyone stared at Shichi, marveling at the sheer emotion that was coming off the stoic Russian at that point in time. No one really knew what to say. There was only one thing to say.

"Thank you." Namiko whispered softly. "Thank you, Shichi."

The use of his name without any honorifics gave Shichi pause, and he looked over at Namiko and Kichirou with a bit of a startled expression.

Both parents were smiling kindly at him, their eyes filling with tears of gratitude that were because of...him. Because of Shichi, these people had been consoled. Even if it was only slightly, and by the tiniest of amounts.

He'd actually managed to comfort someone.

"You...You're welcome." Shichi got out, looking back down at Izaya after he said it.

The nurse came in a few minutes after that, asking to see all guardians in the room in order to fill out some medical paperwork. The Heiwajimas were obviously taking over for Shizuo, and they asked Shichi if he wanted to take over for Izaya since he had been technically considered a guardian for the raven during his surgery. Shichi was honored by the offer. He knew the Heiwajimas were way closer to Izaya than he was, probably almost like the parents Izaya wished he could have gotten. But here they were, giving the reigns to him. He didn't know if he deserved it, even after seeing both boys through their entire surgeries and staying up all night to make sure they were okay. But...but for some reason...he wanted it.

So Shichi accepted responsibility for Izaya (even though it came with a shit-ton of paperwork. Like, what the hell?!) and left the room with the Heiwajima parents and the nurse. He wasn't sure just how closely this was tying him in with the Oriharas and the Heiwajimas both...but he got the feeling that he was suddenly a lot closer to a family unit than he'd been since his days in the mafia.

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Shizuo was left alone in the hospital room with Izaya and the twins. Only the beeping of the heart monitors made any noise as his golden eyes stared at Izaya’s sleeping face, praying for him to be okay. For him to wake up soon from the injuries that Shizuo hadn’t protected him from. This was Shizuo’s fault. Shizuo was supposed to be the one who made sure Izaya didn’t get hurt during that mission. But here he was, dying on a hospital bed. Or was he crawling back up to survival? Either way, he’d been badly hurt...and it was all Shizuo’s fault.

"I’m so sorry, Izaya.” Shizuo whispered, feeling tears start to run down his cheeks. “I...I screwed up again. I hurt you. I even...I even punched you. This is all my fault. I’m so so sorry.”

He ducked his head in shame, not even feeling like he had the right to look at Izaya’s perfect face right now. No, he had no right to do that. Hell, he didn’t even have the right to date the raven once
Izaya shouldn’t be forced to love a monster, or have to pretend that he did.

No one could love a monster.

“I love you. My monster. My human.”

Shizuo’s head snapped up, his heart pounding in his chest as Izaya’s voice filled his ears. That… that voice. Where was it coming from?

He stared intently at Izaya’s face, hoping to see a flutter of the eyelashes, a bit of a smirk on his face that said he’d been faking his sleep for a while and had heard Shizuo’s whole apology. Something. Something to prove where the voice had come from.

But Izaya’s chest was rising and falling steadily, the twins’ arms and legs folded over his body like a tiny cage of toddler limbs, all three of them sleeping peacefully on the hospital bed. There was no other movement. Izaya hadn’t spoken.

“Was that your voice?” Shizuo asked aloud, staring at Izaya’s sleeping face. “Why did I hear your voice just then?”

There was no response. Just silence filling the air.

He must be going crazy now. He was already going crazy from the thought of losing Izaya. But maybe that would be better. Shizuo didn’t want to be in his right mind, fully aware of the loss he was going through, when he didn’t have Izaya anymore. He’d rather be crazy and living with hallucinations and voices from the one he loved than not having any reminder of him in his life at all.

Ha. That was so pathetic. So pathetic and creepy. He really was a monster. How Izaya could have even pretended to love him for so long was beyond Shizuo. He was a beast just waiting to snap. And when he had snapped… he’d hurt Izaya, without even recognizing who he was. He hadn’t recognized Izaya at all. He just wanted to rampage.

Who could love that?

“Yes. You’re my monster.” The voice came back, perfect and beautiful in Shizuo’s ears, ringing like a locked memory being released for the first time. “Even when you’re like this. Even when you don’t know who I am and I don’t know who you are.”

“When did you say that?” Shizuo croaked out loud, his hands reaching up to grab his hair as he stared desperately at Izaya. Tears started to streak down his face as he looked at the sleeping boy, not knowing what was happening.

Izaya had never said that. Not once before. Shizuo was hallucinating everything. All of this was a figment of his mind, trying to cope with the fact that Izaya wasn’t there anymore. Trying to get him to believe that Izaya could love a monster.

“No. I know that’s a lie!” Shizuo yelled, ducking his head and covering his ears, golden eyes squeezing shut almost painfully. “It’s a lie!”

“I love you.” The voice rang out in response, unhindered by the forceful hands trying in vain to block it out. “You. You as a monster and you as a human. I love you both, even if one is more terrifying than the other.”

“No.” Shizuo sobbed, curling in on himself. He took it back. If these were the “memories” he got of
Izaya after the raven was gone, then he didn’t want them at all. He didn’t want to delude himself into thinking something impossible was actually true. He didn’t want to turn into a fool who thought Izaya could love him. “Stop lying to yourself!” He screamed, golden eyes snapping open to glare angrily through tears at his lap. “He doesn’t want you! You’re going to lose him and be alone so stop thinking you won’t be! Stop it! Stop it! Stop it!”

“I won’t let you believe that you’re alone. That you’re lost in that rage and pain.” The voice chanted on, perfectly timing itself with the roaring grief that was flowing through Shizuo’s body. What kind of torture was this? How could this even be possible? It wouldn’t let him believe that he was alone, even when he was drowning in his own sorrow just at the thought of it? What proof could this voice give to back all these claims up? Why wouldn’t Shizuo be alone?

Izaya’s voice continued gently, answering his questions just like before. “Because…because you have me. I’ll be your anchor to drag you back. I’ll make sure you aren’t alone.”

“But I am alone.” Shizuo whispered, body shaking as his eyes closed once more. “I’ve always been alone.”

“You aren’t alone.” The voice sounded like it was crying now, weeping with Shizuo’s grief as it stumbled towards him.

Wait…towards him? Voices couldn’t move. Why was he picturing a voice moving? No…he…he could see a figure now. There was a figure coming towards him. A small, fragile figure approaching through a haze of grief and rage. Reaching out for him. Reaching out as Shizuo’s fist began to fly at it.

“Shizuo.” The figure said, and Shizuo’s world seemed to stop.

“I love you Shizuo.”

And the haze around the figure vanished as Shizuo’s fist flew forward, revealing the tear-stricken form of Izaya, smiling lovingly at Shizuo even with blood pouring from his body, his whole being limping forward and barely able to move, his arms reaching out for Shizuo like he was the only thing that mattered in the entire world.

Shizuo’s fist flew at Izaya’s face, and he tried to stop it but he just couldn’t. The fist kept moving of its own free will, too far gone to stop, and Shizuo could only desperately change its direction at the last minute to keep from smashing it directly into the beautiful face.

As it was, his fist still glanced the side of it, and the blunt force to his face along with all the blood seeping from his body was finally too much, even for the raven’s love. Izaya’s eyes rolled back in his head and he collapsed to the ground, completely unconscious. A declaration of love for Shizuo still ringing on his lips.

Now ringing in Shizuo’s mind.

The truth. It had happened. Those words. All of those words were things Izaya must have been saying to Shizuo while he was rampaging. All of those things were…true.

Shizuo looked up in astonishment, the tears still blurring his vision slightly as he stared off into the space in front of him.

“Izaya…” He croaked, not even trying to identify all the emotions that were surging up in him at once. He felt like a geyser about to burst, with good and bad emotions mixing together in some kind of hurricane force that needed to be released as soon as possible. “Izaya…”
He clenched his fists and stared straight ahead into the hospital room, Izaya’s words of truth replaying in his mind over and over. “Izaya…”

The declarations of love. The promises to never leave him alone. To be his anchor. He already was his anchor. He had dragged Shizuo back to reality when no one else could. At the cost of his own wellbeing. Possibly even his life.

“Izaya, I love you.” Shizuo sobbed, praying to whatever forces were at work in the universe that they wouldn’t take his perfect angel from him. If they did, if Izaya was gone…Shizuo didn’t know what he would do.

“I love you, too.” A weak voice said, echoing in the silent hospital room.

Shizuo’s head instantly snapped over, golden eyes wide, as a pale form sat itself up in the bed, gently rearranging the little girls laying on him to lay their heads across his lap, smiling lovingly at them. Then he looked over at Shizuo, his ruby eyes gentle and kind, his face drained of all its usual color and his body weaker than it had ever been.

He was more radiant than any universal force ever could hope to be. More beautiful. More perfect. More *everything*.

“Izaya.” Shizuo said, looking into the eyes of the smiling raven as his tears began to fall again. “You’re…you’re okay.”

Izaya smiled again and held out his arms weakly, beckoning Shizuo over to him. “Yes.” He said softly, voice small and shaky from the struggles his body had just been through. “Now will you come over here…and hold me for a bit?”

Shizuo wasn’t hooked up to any machines or IV drips, but those wouldn’t have stopped him even if he’d been connected to over a hundred of them.

Shizuo threw the covers off himself and ran over to Izaya as fast as he could, stumbling a bit as his leg muscles strained from the effort he was putting them through so soon after they were operated on. But he couldn’t care less about that. He collapsed right beside Izaya’s bed, his arms flung around the raven and gripping him tightly, sobbing into Izaya’s shoulder.

“Izaya.” He cried again, squeezing his eyes shut and taking in everything he could. The silky feel of raven hair against his cheek. The frail body secure in his arms. The gentle hands stroking his back comfortingly. The scent that he’d recognize within any crowd at any point of the day. Everything he could.

“Izaya.” Izaya’s soft voice said from above him, the raven’s soothing strokes changing into a tight hug as he squeezed Shizuo back as hard as his weak arms could. “Shizuo…my monster. My human.”

“Izaya.” Shizuo said in response, face still buried in his boyfriend’s neck as he cried. “My angel. My anchor.”

And that was all they needed to say to each other. Nothing else needed to happen as they held each other in the hospital room, each one thanking the universe that the other was alive and okay, the twins waking up from their deep, exhausted sleep some minutes later to discover that their brother was awake again, and the adults coming back in some minutes after that to discover the same thing. Everything was okay as the Heiwajimas cried and hugged Izaya tightly, trying their best to do so around the little twins sobbing uncontrollably into his chest and their son who was refusing to let go of his arm. Everything was okay as Shichi smiled at Izaya and Izaya stared at Shichi in shock, both
of them filled with a strange happiness to see the other at that moment in time. Everything was okay as Kichirou grabbed Shichi and pulled him into the group hug, the startled Russian’s arms getting tangled with everybody else’s as they too looped around Izaya. Everything was okay as Shizuo snuck a gentle kiss to Izaya’s lips in the middle of the hug, reaffirming the miracle that his boyfriend was alive and loved him more than anything else.

Everything was okay.

Everything was perfect.

Until Izaya’s parents found out what happened the very next day.

Chapter End Notes

Whew. THAT was a ton of drama! And, oh boy, here come the Orihara parents. All raise hands who want them to stay away or have their plane get lost in Switzerland somewhere leaving Shichi to adopt the Orihara siblings? *raises both hands frantically in the air and waves them around*

Anyway, that was the chapter you were all waiting for! I hope it was worth it, haha. And now for my wonderful excuse as to why this is so late.

My mom took me out shopping to look for a prom dress because I didn't have one yet and she didn't want me to borrow one like I did before. I don't normally do...shopping...but we went anyway. Found a really nice dress and that was all great. Then we got a call from the local county office saying that I moved up in the rankings for the archery tournament! I was ranked 10th once the competition was over, and the top 8 competitors get to go to state. One dropped out right away so I moved up to 9th. Today, another dropped out and so I took the 8th place spot and I am going to compete at the state archery competition! Yay me! o( ﾟ▽ﾟαι ﾟ▽ﾟαι )o

Then after we found that out we have to go on a shopping errand for last minute medicine, pick up my little sister...it was a mess. "Come find a prom dress with me." She said. "It won't take longer than an hour." She said.

...But no matter! I still made it back at a decent-ish time. I'm going to post this, eat, edit the new episode of "Confessions", and I'll have that up for all of you guys here in a bit! Again, thank you so much for waiting for me. Hope you liked this chapter! See you on Sunday! <3
Hey everyone! The parents are coming back! Oh my goodness! What is going to happen now? Let's find out!

Well, sort of find out anyway. This chapter will focus a lot on the perspective of Kyouko and Shirou, and the age old question about them will be answered: why on earth did they have children? Soon, you'll find out!

Oh, and thanks to all of you guys for waiting for the last chapter so patiently. Really, it was awesome of you to wait for so long and I'm so glad that you guys were happy with the chapter when it came out. Thanks a ton! And thanks for all the well wishes I got for state competition! You guys are the best! °˖✧◝(︨押金إمكانك⋅̮̭̥̥̥̥̥̥̥ē셐)◜✧°

And now, without further ado, on to the chapter! <3

Kyouko and Shirou were pulling into their driveway, having just gotten off their plane after the meeting in Switzerland, when they first noticed something was wrong.

Kyouko frowned as she looked out the window of the car, her forehead wrinkling in discontentment. "Why isn't the garden set up yet?" She asked curtly, looking over at her husband. "Izaya should have placed the glass tables and manicured the lawn by now. And the rock arrangements look pitiful."

"I don't see our fountain either." Shirou added with a nod, his own frown as equally pronounced as his wife’s as he parked the car in the driveway. "Izaya is usually so punctual with his preparations. I wonder what brought about this sudden change."

"That lazy boy." Kyouko scowled, her eyes darkening as she opened the car door and stepped outside their black vehicle with a sharp slam of the door. "He needs to learn some independence and take on his responsibilities in this household."

"I agree, my dear." Shirou sighed, stepping out of the car and shutting his own door deftly behind him. "However, you must admit that it is unusual for him to slack off in the responsibilities which he does take on. I’ve never known him to disappoint us when we ask him to prepare anything for our returns."

"He’s obviously taking our generosity for granted!" Kyouko snapped, her eyes flashing with outrage. "He thinks he can push aside his duties as our son and ignore our requests simply because we’ve been so lenient towards him."

"Or..." Shirou said gently, placing a hand on his wife’s shoulder to calm her down. "He could have come across some sort of trouble or obstacle. Something may have prevented him from fulfilling his duties to us."

Kyouko huffed and turned away from her husband, clearly upset that he was not taking her side in
Shirou sighed, shaking his head as he walked to the back of their car to begin unloading their bags. His wife was a very stubborn woman. She didn’t compromise, or settle for anything less than perfect. And for Kyouko, “perfect” was exactly what she wanted, when she wanted it. It made hiring employees difficult, keeping them on even more so, and raising a family nearly impossible.

Shirou hadn’t even wanted a family in the first place when Kyouko suggested having children. He wanted to be completely focused on his business ventures, building up his empire and maintaining it, perhaps having children at a later date when he had enough international support and staff to handle most of the traveling business and could spend most of his time at home. He didn’t want children unless he could provide for them, and more so than that, he wasn’t of the proper mindset to raise a child. Business always came first with him. It was his number one priority, even over his beloved wife. And until he could operate his business without being present, he couldn’t promise a good life for any children that he had.

He’d always thought Kyouko believed that as well, so it had shocked him greatly when she first suggested that they “produce offspring”, as she so romantically put it. He’d brought up all of his concerns about having a child – raising it, fitting it into the family, balancing it with business, etc. – and tried to understand what appeal his wife saw in having children at that juncture in their lives. Yet she assured him that there were broad advantages to having a child, including it becoming an heir to their business’s fortune or even it helping to run the business someday, and that all of its needs would be provided for.

She gave no indication as to how its needs would be met, and Shirou assumed that this was Kyouko’s way of saying she wanted to back out of the business life. Perhaps her maternal clock was ticking. She wanted to have babies, stay at home, and raise them as a true mother. Shirou was fine with whatever visions his wife had, strange as they were for a person like her, and so had agreed to “produce” children for her.

When their first child was born, Shirou realized his mistake.

He had completely misinterpreted his wife’s wishes, and he saw this the instant she laid eyes on their son. After 9 hours of labor, an endless stream of nurses and doctors and panic (on Shirou’s end, anyway), the child had been born. Its umbilical cord had been severed, and it was handed to its mother.

Kyouko looked at the baby, and Shirou waited nearby, slightly curious to see what kind of face his wife would make when she was overcome by affection or tenderness for something. Even he had never seen that on her face. But if her maternal instincts were finally kicking in, and she wanted babies of her own, then surely he would see that look on her face now that she was looking at her very first child.

But on her face, Shirou saw…nothing. Nothing at all. Kyouko held her baby and looked at it like it was a piece of merchandise, or a new product that their company was trying to launch. Like she was evaluating its worth before it even opened its eyes. Her face was unimpressed, although it held some degree of satisfaction that the baby had come out looking fairly good, and Shirou could honestly say that the most caring emotion he saw on his wife’s face when she held her son in her arms was… begrudging acceptance. This baby would do. If not, he had no doubt that she would put it up for adoption.

Then the baby had started crying, and Kyouko’s nose wrinkled with disgust. That crushed any chance of Shirou’s hopes for his wife becoming a homely mother instantaneously. No mother would wrinkle her nose when hearing their baby cry for the first time.
Shirou removed the child from his wife’s arms, and she gladly handed it over, telling him that she would ask the nurses if she could be removed from the hospital immediately instead of undergoing the one-week training period.

Shirou had no doubt that if anyone could convince the nurses to let her leave, it was his wife. In Japan, women who give birth are kept in the hospital anywhere from 4 to 10 days in separate, hotel-like rooms after their pregnancy and are given classes in child care like breast-feeding and the proper way to hold it and so on. It’s a mandatory part of their stay since they want to ensure that the mother is comfortable with taking care of their new baby and knows exactly how to do it.

Seeing his wife demand her immediate release, even going so far as to pay the hospital to discharge her, Shirou could see with absolutely certainty that there was no way Kyouko was raising this child. What did she want it for, then?

He had no idea. Maybe if he analyzed it like she had, he would understand her purposes.

That was the first time Shirou looked down and saw his child.

It was beautiful.

It only had a little bit of hair, but from what Shirou could see, that hair was an incredibly deep black, more so than his or his wife’s. It was inky, like the pitch black sky of night, and it covered the baby’s little head in a soft sheen of black fuzz. It had very pale skin, like porcelain, which gave Shirou the eerie feeling that he was holding some kind of living doll. It was somewhat small for a baby, and the doctors had mentioned this at some point, but its petite size almost seemed to add to its charm. And when it opened its little eyes, getting its first look at the world, Shirou was utterly stunned.

They seemed brown to him at first, little brown eyes just like his or his wife’s, but upon closer inspection, Shirou could see a definite tint of red to them. Ruby red. Like gemstones glittering in the porcelain face. The doctors told him that after a few days, the infant’s eyes would begin to shift into their final and natural color. They would start off as brown or bluish-gray, typically, and then gain the rest of their color soon afterwards. Which meant his baby would most likely develop these vibrant, lovely red eyes. And with those small eyes, the baby looked at him.

It looked at him, right at him, and it just stared. It stopped crying and just stared. Like it wanted to make sure it could see everything it needed to before it kept crying out for whatever it wanted at that moment. It was so smart. So smart…right out of the womb. Was that even possible, or was Shirou just imagining all this?

He had no idea. He didn’t know anything about babies. But he knew, somehow, that his was special. A very special, strong child. Oddly beautiful, but strong.

He and his wife had just gotten back from a trip to America after staying with a family who was heavily religious, and rather focused on the Bible. They had preached all kinds of things to Shirou and his wife, none of which either of them really cared about, but some of the obscure Bible characters that the family mentioned were rather intriguing. For some reason, looking at his son, Shirou was recalling the story of the prophet Isaiah. Another man who’d served the God of Christianity, bringing salvation to his followers. Isaiah. Spelled in a Japanese manner it would be… Izaya. Yes, it would be Izaya. The one who watches over the crowd.

Shirou looked into his son’s eyes, and his son watched him with that same strange intelligence as before. If it weren’t intelligence, it was simply the focused stare of a baby. If it were, then it seemed like an intelligence that transcended human thought. A transcendent being, watching him. Watching the crowd.
Izaya.

Orihara Izaya.

Shirou had chosen the name of their son. He had been the one to carry it in the car after his wife was discharged. She wanted to drive and she didn’t want to touch the “wretched thing that had put her through hell” for 9 hours. Shirou was fine with that. It meant he got to hold the beautiful, strangely intelligent baby of theirs a little longer.

When they had arrived back at the house, Kyouko explained her plan for the child to him. And everything made much more sense to Shirou.

Kyouko didn’t want babies. Her maternal clock was in no way ticking. She just wanted a free servant.

Kyouko informed Shirou that the child would be raised in their Japanese home, no matter where she and Shirou went, and its job would be to care for the home while they were gone. They would send it money so that it could do so, support it from afar, hire babysitters until it was old enough to take care of itself, and use it to help them keep their home in prime condition. They wouldn’t pay it a salary (even though Shirou quietly thought to himself that they would still be technically paying the child every time they sent it money so it could live), and in the long run, that would save them on hiring a permanent maid or butler.

The child was supposed to be their butler.

Kyouko had already set up 15 different babysitters to work on shifts in taking care of it, making sure none of them saw the others and that none of them were in place for longer than a few hours at a time so as to make it seem like the child’s parents were coming home to take care of it at some point. In reality, it was just being passed from babysitter to babysitter, never actually seeing its parents at all.

Kyouko thought that this idea was brilliant, and even laughed at the idea of all those babysitters being foolish enough to think she would care for the baby once they were gone, but Shirou had an uneasy feeling in his stomach. What would that do to the child’s psyche? How would this affect its mental health? There was no way that this could be a proper method of raising a child. It was so…robotic. Structured. Unfeeling. No child could be raised in that and still come out as a good, warm, friendly person who was ready to take on society.

But Kyouko assured him it would be fine. Just leave the baby inside in the crib that she’d bought. Apparently, she’d even had a fake baby room done up to make it look like she was ready to care for it.

Shirou had a meeting in a few hours, and business took priority over everything else. So he walked into their house with the baby, the small child crying again…like it could tell it was being left. He’d frozen in the living room, looking down at it in shock. Could it tell? Could it sense that it was being abandoned by its own parents?

No, not it. He. Izaya was a boy. A beautiful baby boy.

Izaya had cried loudly, his pitiful brownish-red eyes staring right into Shirou with a sort of profound sadness that just wasn’t supposed to be in a baby’s eyes. It shouldn’t even understand emotions yet. What was Shirou thinking? The baby didn’t know it was being left. It didn’t know anything. It probably just wanted food.

Trying to convince himself of this fact, Shirou had marched pointedly to the baby room, set Izaya
down in his crib, and never looked back, even as the heart-wrenching sobs and wails reached his ears all the way out of the house.

Shirou hadn’t seen their child for…how long was it before he had seen Izaya again? Kyouko started up a business venture right after they left the house. She put Shirou in charge of it, taking on the responsibility of going back to check on Izaya and keep up appearances herself. It was Kyouko, ironically, who had the most contact with their baby during that first period of its life. Each time when she came back, Shirou asked for a report, and each time when she came back, Kyouko responded that the child was progressing well and left it at that.

By the time Shirou finished his business venture and gained Kyouko’s permission to travel home and see his son…right. Two years had passed.

Two whole years…without a single drop of contact.

Shirou felt horribly guilty as he unlocked the front door, opening it and looking around for his only son. He wasn’t even sure why. He had been on business. What did he have to be guilty for?

Yet not seeing a child for two years seemed so…cold.

He heard gentle footsteps from off to his right, padding softly down the stairs, and he glanced over to see what it was.

Shirou was just as stunned to see his child then as he’d been when it was a baby.

There were the vibrant, ruby red eyes that he’d predicted seeing right upon their first encounter. There was the raven black hair, much longer now and covering his toddler head in thick, silky locks. There was the porcelain-pale skin, glowing in the dim lighting of the house and giving him that doll-like appearance. His lips were strangely full, a light shade of pink just like his mother’s. His face was heart-shaped, and his body was oddly lean and skinny for a toddler. Shouldn’t he have that baby-fat thing that Shirou had heard about? A sort of chubby clumsiness that added to his cuteness? This toddler didn’t have that. He was lean, and moved with a definite grace which surpassed even Kyouko’s. His body was small and cute, but Shirou couldn’t deny that it was also lovely. And combined with that intelligence, that same haunting intelligence which hadn’t left those orbs since the moment of his birth, Izaya seemed…ageless. Otherworldly. Inhuman.

Shirou stared at the little two year old, and it stared back at him.

“Who are you?” Izaya asked, his voice high and small, but each of his words far more clear and enunciated than any toddler’s words had a right to be. “What are you doing in Mother’s house?”

Mother. He said Mother. He didn’t say Mommy or Mama or even Mom. He said Mother.

“Kyouko taught you to say it that way, didn’t she?” Shirou found himself asking before he could stop himself.

Izaya’s brow scrunched a little, and he cocked his head to the side in confusion.

Shirou almost wished he could slap himself. No matter how intelligent this child seemed, he wouldn’t understand even a simple sentence like that. He only seemed intelligent. He probably had a very basic vocabulary, despite how clear his words were. Shirou needed to speak in a way the child could understand.

But before he could open his mouth to try saying anything else, Izaya spoke again.
“Kyouko is the name of the woman who comes to see me sometimes.” He said in that tiny voice, nodding his head slowly like he finally figured out what Shirou was talking about. “I heard her name…from Number Six. Yes, Kyouko told me to call her Mother.”

He looked at Shirou, the ruby red eyes boring right into his soul, and asked, “Are you…Father, then?”

“The way he says it.” Shirou thought. “Like they’re job titles…or labels. Designations for humanity.”

“Yes. I’m your father.” Shirou said aloud, nodding his head at Izaya.

Izaya nodded back, respectful and polite like before. The word “father” meant nothing to him. It didn’t mean safety or comfort. It didn’t mean that he could relax and smile and be happy. It just meant…that Shirou was the man who would come to see him sometimes.

Shirou felt something twist harshly in his chest. He wasn’t sure what it was, but it wasn’t pleasant.

“What do you mean by Number Six, Izaya?” The businessman asked, trying to take his mind off the pain in his chest. “Who is that?”

Izaya looked up at him calmly, red eyes unwavering. “The sixth babysitter.” He said simply. “She is the one who visits me sixth. Number Six. Six out of fifteen.”

“Oh.” Shirou said simply, staring at his son. “I see. That makes sense.”

Izaya nodded, still watching Shirou carefully.

“Do you…want something from me?” The toddler finally asked. “Mother wants things when she visits. Do you?”

Shirou wondered briefly what on earth his wife could want from a child, but quickly brought himself back into the conversation.

“Ah, no. No I don’t require anything from you at this point in time.” He said curtly, getting down on his knees so that he was eye-level with the child still standing across the room from him. “But…will you come closer? I want to get a better look at you.”

Izaya nodded and walked over to Shirou without a word, his footsteps padding softly across the ground as he came. He certainly seemed like some being from another world. No human child could move like that.

When Izaya stopped in front of him, Shirou examined him from head to toe. He seemed healthy. He looked beautiful. But something was still off.


Izaya stared calmly at Shirou’s face, tiny body unmoving as it stood underneath Shirou’s gaze. “I don’t need to be happy.” The child said flatly. “Mother says I just need to survive.”

Shirou hadn’t been able to say anything after that.

This was the child he was raising. One who didn’t need to be happy. The perfect product for his emotionless wife.

He stood up, and spun around on his heel, grabbing his briefcase at the door and exiting the house as
quickly as possible. He ran away. There was no other way of putting it. He ran away from Izaya, unable to face him, to face that mistake. That child which held so much potential but was losing it all thanks to him and his wife. It had been a mistake to have Izaya. It had been a mistake to go see him. He didn’t want to do it ever again.

He heard a soft, “Goodbye, Father” from behind him as he left, completely lacking any of the sobs or wails that the little voice had held the last time Shirou ran away from him…but that same profound sadness and understanding of his abandonment seeping into every inch of it.

Shirou never went to see Izaya in person after that. Sometimes he called, of course, just to check up on things at the house. He tried to think of the boy in the same light that Kyouko did. As a product that was fulfilling its responsibilities. He squashed the guilt of his mistake and encouraged the satisfaction of Izaya’s success.

The Izaya Project. That was what he and Kyouko referred to him as. A project to create their own servant to take care of home base that had worked to perfection. He was a failure as a child. He was a success as a project.

It helped to think of him like that. Yet Shirou couldn’t deny that he often felt far more affection and gave the boy far more leniency than his wife did. He was the one who made sure money was still sent to the boy even though Izaya could hold a job now if he wanted to. He was the one who limited the things Kyouko asked Izaya to do while they were gone. He was the one who tried to soothe his wife’s rage whenever something Izaya did was incorrect.

He was probably far too lenient on their product. But he wasn’t anywhere near caring enough for their child.

He just didn’t know which one Izaya was anymore. So he followed his wife’s lead for the most part.

Like right now, as he carried the bags to the front of the house, letting Kyouko furiously sweep past him to jam her key into the door and throw it open, ready to yell at the first living creature she saw in there that wasn’t working hard to appease her.

When they were greeted by pure darkness, Shirou began to feel that something was wrong. There was no life in the house. Everything was empty and silent. The lights were all off, and no one was home. Izaya had always been home to greet them before, even if the other two weren’t. The failed projects. The ones that he and Kyouko sincerely regretted even though it was again Kyouko’s idea. More help for the house since she wanted more done at the home base in Japan. More free servants. Yet it looked like they could only be blessed with one perfect product, because the twins came out just like normal children. Successes as children, failures as products. No good for the Orihara family.

Izaya knew that neither of his parents like seeing the twins, so he often kept them away whenever Shirou and Kyouko came home. Just another thing that made him a success. But he himself was always there to give them an update on their plans.

Except for now.

“Izaya?” Kyouko called into the household in a demanding voice, the name ringing around the empty space almost mockingly. “Where are you, you blasted child?”

“Perhaps he’s not here.” Shirou said slowly, glancing around as he flipped on a light switch. “Unusual. Should we be concerned?”

“Of course not!” Kyouko snapped, ripping off her heels angrily. “We need to find that child and
smack him upside the head. He’s clearly hit a rebellious phase where he thinks he can disobey us.”

“Clearly.” Shirou drawled, not wanting to point out that Kyouko would have no idea what a rebellious phase looked like when she hadn’t even seen Izaya’s other phases.

“Find Izaya and bring him here.” Kyouko ordered, beginning her own search on one side of the house with sharp yells of his name.

Shirou sighed and lugged the bags into their own room, noting with a bit of worry that the house didn’t seem anywhere near ready for the party tomorrow. Seriously, why had Izaya shirked his duties so much this time? It wasn’t like him at all.


That was right. Ikebukuro Hospital was in this area, wasn’t it? It was the primary medical establishment for most people of Ikebukuro. If Izaya lived in this area then he might go to that hospital if he ever needed treatment as well. And when a child went to a hospital, or anyone at all really, their emergency contacts were called.

Kyouko and Shirou were both Izaya’s emergency contacts, weren’t they? So then was the hospital yesterday calling because…

“Kyouko.” Shirou called, spinning on his heel and leaving their room. “I do believe I know where to find our dysfunctional project.”

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Izaya was very happy at that moment in time. Oh, he could blame the drugs coursing through his system for that, sure, but he knew that he was very happy regardless of whatever was pumping through his veins.

He had the Heiwajimas around him, supporting him in a moment of his deepest need. He had his sisters, both safe and secure and very much worried about their big brother, right at his side. He had his boyfriend, tall and strong, ready to be there for him for anything at all that he may require. He had Kasuka calling to check in on him just like a brother would. And he even had his favorite teacher right there beside him, filling out all his medical paperwork like a real parent was supposed to.

“Damn, Fluffles.” Shichi growled, angrily scribbling down the answer to yet another question as he flipped through the pages of the packet. “How much fucking information do I need to give about you before they can just let us get out of here?”

Izaya laughed at his teacher’s sour face, grinning widely when the Russian looked up and glared at him. “висит там (visit tam/hang in there)” He said cheerfully, patting Shichi on the shoulder supportively.

Shichi rolled his eyes, swatting the hand away and turning his attention back on the packet. “Хуй тебе (khuy tebe/fuck you).” He said in response, flipping the page and scowling. “Вам не нужно иметь дело с этим дерьмом (Vam ne nuzhno zanimat'sya etim der'mom/You don’t have to deal with this shit).”

Izaya laughed and nudged Shichi playfully in the shoulder with his leg, smiling brightly at the grumpy math teacher. “Но я действительно ценно это(No ya deystvitel'no tsenyu eto/But I really appreciate it)” He said cheerfully.
Shichi gave him one single, icy glare that would have made any other person start shriveling right where they stood. “Деревья скоро садят, да не скоро с них плоды едят.( Derev’ya skoro sadyat, da ne skoro s nich plody yedyat/One generation plants the trees, another gets the shade).” He deadpanned, pointing harshly at himself, then Izaya, before returning to his work with a huff.

Izaya laughed once more, turning happily to his boyfriend who was staring at them both with a completely blank look on his face.

“What the heck were you talking about?” Shizuo asked bluntly, getting straight to the point as usual.

Izaya grinned and leaned over to kiss Shizuo on the cheek, giggling at the way his face turned red instantly. “Oh, Sensei is just upset that he has to do so much paperwork outside of school!” Izaya said breezily, waving a casual hand at Shichi.

“Damn right I am!” Shichi growled, slamming the pencil down and glaring at the paperwork like it had personally offended him. “I mean, why is all this stuff even necessary?”

“If you want, we can do it instead.” Namiko offered, clearly stifling a laugh as she hid her grin behind her hand, looking right at Shichi.

Shichi sighed, shaking his head and glaring at the paper again. “No, I won’t let it beat me. I can do this.” He muttered, pencil scratching at the paperwork once again. “I swear if they come in and hand me another packet though, I’m going to kill somebody.”

“Fluffy funny!” Mairu laughed, patting Shichi’s cheek with a wide grin stretching her adorable little face. “Fluffy can’t kill anyone. Killing is bad!”

Shichi paused and looked at the small girl, a little bit of tenderness softening those icy blue eyes. “Not if they’re really annoying.” He said sweetly to the little girl, patting her cheek before looking back down at the packet of paper.

“Shichi!” Kichirou laughed, slapping the math teacher on the back with a grin. “You can’t say that to a toddler, man! They’ll take you seriously.”

“And the problem with that is what exactly?” Shichi asked pleasantly, and the two of them laughed together at the joke, their combined laughter bringing smiles to the faces of everyone in the room.

Izaya looked over at Shizuo, and saw that Shizuo’s eyes were already on him, watching him with that same loving look which he’d had since Izaya had woken up. And Izaya had to admit that waking up to those loving golden eyes was something he could get used to.

“Are you feeling okay?” Shizuo asked softly, brushing some of Izaya’s hair out of his face with a gentle smile. “Not dizzy or anything like that?”

“Shizu-chan, I’m fine.” Izaya assured him, grabbing his boyfriend’s hand and holding it tightly. “Seriously. You don’t have to worry about me.”

“You just got shot and underwent serious surgery. Then you were unconscious for hours. I have a right to be worried.” Shizuo grumbled, a little bit of a pout on his face as he leaned forward and pecked the raven on the cheek.

“Even so, you don’t need to check up on me every few seconds.” Izaya told him, subtly leaning into the kiss despite his words.

“Mmhm.” Shizuo hummed, pressing a little deeper on his end as well.
“Get a room if you’re gonna start making out.” Shichi ordered, pointing his finger at the exit without looking up from his paperwork. “Get a room right now.”

“Aw, does Sensei feel uncomfortable watching his students eat each other’s faces?” Izaya teased, pushing the math teacher in the arm playfully.

Shichi scowled and smacked his hand away, glaring hard at Izaya yet again. But Izaya knew the man behind the glare wasn’t as angry as he would have Izaya believe. There was a definite hint of a smile threatening to flicker across Shichi’s lips every time he looked at Izaya, and the relief at seeing Izaya awake and okay was obvious in his icy blue eyes.

He was just trying to be tough.

“No. I just can’t focus on all this stupid paperwork with you making kissy faces and gaga eyes at each other.” The Russian growled, flicking Izaya on the forehead and looking back down at the packet. “I only have three pages left. Save the make-out session til after they’re finished, okay?”

Izaya laughed brightly, the sound ringing like crystals throughout the air of the hospital room. He looked down and smiled at his teacher, leaning over to press a quick kiss to the grumpy man’s cheek.

“Sure thing, Sensei.” He promised, trying not to laugh at the shocked look Shichi gave him while he turned to smile at Shizuo again.

Yes. Izaya was really very happy at that moment in time. Right now, in this hospital room, he felt like each and every important person in his life was present. He had his perfect boyfriend. He had his darling sisters. He had the incredible parents of his boyfriend who supported him like he was their own. And he even had a man sitting down beside him who was taking care of him like he was the only thing that mattered in the world. Like…a father.

He had a father. He had support from his lover’s parents. He had his sisters. And he had Shizuo. There was even a family of birds who had landed on the tree just outside his hospital window, playing and chirping cheerfully with each other in the sunlight of the world outside.

Was there anything in the world that could mess this up?

Immediately after he thought that, the nurse opened the door to the hospital room, smiling brightly at them all. “I have good news!” She announced cheerfully. “It seems you have a few more visitors!”

Izaya sat up in his hospital bed, frowning in confusion at the door. More visitors? Who could they be? He had literally just listed all the important people who were sitting in the room around him. Maybe Kasuka was finally here? Was that it?

“Send them in, I guess.” Izaya told the nurse, and she nodded, gesturing to some people waiting out in the hallway.

But once those people stepped through the doorway, Izaya immediately wished he had never told the nurse to let them in.

Time seemed to freeze as Izaya stared at the figures in the doorway.

They were identical to the figures of his memory that popped into his reality every once in a while. They were as poised and controlled as they had always been, their faces betraying no emotion and their eyes holding no semblance of humanity. Their hair was styled to perfection, slicked back with a smooth shine in the case of the man and ironed straight without a strand out of place in the case of the woman. Their clothes were businesslike and formal, not a wrinkle or a piece of lint in sight. They stood up straight and professionally, looking down at the occupants of the room like they were
potential business partners or competitors which needed to be analyzed quickly in order to be squashed. As a matter of fact, they probably were thinking of the occupants of the room in terms such as those. Business was all they understood. Neither one of them knew how to treat “people”.

Including their own children.

“Mother. Father.” Izaya said into the empty silence of the room, making the silence grow even heavier as realization hit every other person in the room staring at the newcomers. “What are you doing here?”

Outside the window of the hospital, the birds flew away.

Chapter End Notes

*GASP* (Debe) Д ((O))) They're here! THEY'RE HERE! THEY'VE SHOWED UP AND THEY WANT SOMETHING FROM IZAYA!

But hey, they also just walked into a room with a loyal and inhumanly strong boyfriend, lions in the form of fiercely protective parents, and an ex-assassin for the Russian mafia. Not to mention the butt-kicking, pressure-point smashing, ninja fighting, gets shot 8 times and still snaps his boyfriend out of rage mode before passing out Orihara Izaya. We got a pretty good team lined up here.

BUT WHAT WILL HAPPEN NEXT?! I JUST DON'T KNOW!

Guess we'll have to wait until Wednesday to find out! I'll see you then! <3
The Doll (その人形)

Chapter Notes

Hello to you all! Today's chapter is coming out very early because my funky school schedule ended up giving me the entire morning off! Great, huh? So I finished up and edited the chapter and had to decide between posting it later and posting it early. Then I thought, "What the heck! Why not post it early so I have more time to write in the afternoon?" And so here it is!

Now we all get to see Kyouko talk much earlier than we expected! Not that we really want her to talk or exist. o(*^▽^*)o

Sorry that this one is a little shorter than the others. It left a better ending point to lead into the next chapter. Here you go! Hope you enjoy! <3

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Shizuo had no idea what he should do.

What he wanted to do was march straight over to those two cold robots who’d just walked in, punch them into next week, and fling them out the window of the hospital for good measure. He wanted to make them suffer so badly that they would be regretting what they’d done to Izaya for years after they died and had eternity to think about their sins in whatever hell they got sent to.

But what he knew he should do was wait and see what happened. What exactly were these people here for?

Shizuo highly doubted they were here because they were worried about what happened to Izaya. He knew that in one way or another, these two people had been neglecting both Izaya and the twins for years. It was Izaya who had raised all of them, who took care of the house, and who basically held responsibility for everything that happened in the lives of the Orihara siblings. These two “parents” were not a part of their lives at all. In fact, hadn’t the nurse said something about the hospital number being blocked when they’d tried to call the Orihara parents? Nothing said “get out of my face and out of my life” like a blocked number.

So why? Why were they here now?

Shizuo subtly looked around the room in the tense silence that it had fallen into after Izaya’s question, trying to see how everyone else was reacting to the presence of the Orihara parents.

He saw his own parents’ faces, and the sort of tight-lipped, barely suppressed anger from both of them that told him they were in much the same mindset as himself. Ready to blow at any minute just from the tiny amount of knowledge that they had about these despicable people.

His gaze moved from them to the little twins who were sitting around Izaya, and his heart felt like it was being crushed in his chest. They had looks of…of fear on their faces. Actual fear coating their little expressions as they clutched Izaya’s hospital gown with white fingers. Both sets of toddler eyes were wide and locked on the two Orihara parents like they were afraid of what they were going to do.
That didn’t help Shizuo’s impression of these maniacs at all.

And when his gaze finally landed on Shichi, he knew that absolutely no one in this room was happy to see the Orihara parents, even the guy who’d probably never heard a single thing about them before. Shichi’s icy eyes were narrowed coldly at them, anger seeming to radiate from the blue orbs on a level that Shizuo had never seen in them before. For whatever reason, Shichi was also pissed at the Oriharas.

The only person in the room who didn’t seem to have drastic emotion covering their face was… Izaya.

Izaya’s face had gone completely blank. It had lost all the happiness and warmth that it had held just seconds before, and those emotions were replaced by a flat, expressionless mask that eerily mimicked the face of Kasuka. His eyes were calm and his body was straightened and poised, like he was preparing for some kind of photo. Without any of the emotions Shizuo had come to know so well on the small raven, Izaya looked almost like…some kind of doll. A life-size doll that could move and talk. Was this what his parents turned him into every time they arrived?!

Shizuo turned back to glare at the Orihara parents with a snarl, his golden eyes narrowed in rage at the two cold businesspeople who still hadn’t answered Izaya’s question. They were instead looking around the room in analytical disdain, taking in each of its occupants and seeming to pass judgment on them all as their eyes swept over them, efficient and precise. When the mother’s eyes passed over Shizuo, they seemed to pause and the frown on her face got deeper, a harsh and loathing glare narrowing her cold gaze just the tiniest bit. Shizuo had never seen that expression on his own mother. It gave him the feeling that this “mother” had never even looked kindly at a child before in her life.

The father was just as analytical as his wife, eyes sweeping methodically over every figure in the room, the man giving a short nod as he finished observing each one and moved on to the next. When he got to Shizuo, the businesslike eyes raked him up and down, like they were dissecting every portion of Shizuo’s body and laying it out bare in front of the man to poke at and experiment with. Shizuo felt horribly exposed under his eyes, but he refused to cover up his body like he wanted to and instead gave this guy the harshest glare he could.

The father didn’t respond other than to take in the glare like he had everything else, analyze it for a few seconds, nod, and move on.

It felt like an eternity to Shizuo before the Orihara parents finished their perusal, even though it had probably only been a minute or two, and they both looked back at Izaya with the same businesslike expressions that they’d been wearing this whole time.

“We don’t need to explain our actions to you, son.” The mother said, her voice distant and sharp as she looked scornfully at Izaya. “But you do need to explain yours.”

She waved a dismissive hand at all the machines plugged into the raven, her eyes narrowing suspiciously at her child as she spoke. “What is all this nonsense? Why are you holed up in some hospital instead of preparing our party like you were supposed to? Why are you disobeying us?” Her eyes flashed dangerously and Shizuo couldn’t possibly miss the slight flinch that came from the doll-like Izaya at the sight of them. “Well?” The mother demanded, her voice carrying easily throughout the room and snuffing out any feelings of goodwill that had tried desperately to remain in it. “Are you malfunctioning? Have you decided to rebel? You good-for-nothing brat. Your only job is to ensure absolute perfection of the household while your father and I are away. This injury is no excuse to escape that responsibility.”

“This “injury” happens to be 8 gunshot wounds.” Kichirou growled, his fists clenching tightly as he
glared furiously at the mother. “8 gunshot wounds which nearly killed him, by the way.”

The mother snorted indifferently at the claim, crossing her arms and keeping her eyes locked in a glare on her son. “Irrelevant. He wouldn’t have gotten those wounds in the first place if he had been at home doing what he was supposed to like a decent child.”

“A decent child?!” Namiko demanded in outrage, jumping to her feet with her eyes flashing in livid rage. “A decent child, you say?! Izaya is a wonderful child! And so are Mairu and Kururi! You aren’t even a decent parent!”

The mother sighed with mock sympathy, looking over at Namiko with a dry smile. “Now I definitely see why you’re such a deluded soul.” She said sadly. “Mairu and Kururi are both failures. Utter disasters that should never have been born. If you had even half an ounce of wit, you could see that. Your opinion shall remain invalid. Clearly you don’t know what you’re talking about at all.” She turned to scoff at the twins, her eyes filling with disgust as she sneered at them. “Failures. Abhorrent little beasts.” She muttered, and both girls whimpered in fright as they hid behind Izaya, tucking their faces into his back as their bodies shook. Shizuo could see the way their shoulders shook more than anything else, jumping periodically beside small sniffling sounds that were coming from the two figures. They were crying.

But before he or anyone else in the room could scream at the damned woman for what she said, Izaya’s voice cut through the air. “Mother, the twins are perfectly wonderful.” He said in a blank, expressionless tone, his eyes locking with hers unflinchingly. “I am sorry that they do not meet with your approval. However, forgive my frankness, they don’t need it.”

The mother looked a little shocked by Izaya’s bold reply, then she walked over to his hospital bed, looming over him like some demon from hell. “You don’t have a right to give me your opinion, brat.” She said sweetly, the words still coming out like the hiss of a snake. “You have the right to do what I tell you, respond how I want you to, and nothing else.” She pointed harshly at the whimpering twins, disgust radiating from her entire being as she said, “Unlike these cretins, you came out as a success, and I would rather you stay that way. Understand?”

Shizuo was two seconds away. Two seconds away from jumping up and snapping this woman’s neck right where she stood. She was within arm reach, too. It would be easy. When he looked over at Izaya’s father, the man was on his phone, scrolling through something that looked like a chart of numbers and calculations. Something involving business no doubt. His wife was bashing on their children’s existence, and he was just looking at business numbers.

How messed up could two parents get?

“Yes, Mother. I understand.” Izaya’s blank voice came back, snapping Shizuo’s attention back over to the witch standing by his boyfriend and the horrible things she was saying to him.

“No! You don’t need to understand!” Namiko yelled, storming over to Izaya’s mother and forcibly pulling her away from Izaya, glaring at the shocked woman’s face with pure fury. “You don’t need to understand because this…this woman is a despicable human being with absolutely no respect for human life who couldn’t care less whether you were going home right now for this party or you were already dead on the operating table.”

“That’s right.” Kichirou agreed, standing up and walking beside him wife with a glare shot at Izaya’s mother, wrapping his arm around her shoulders and standing protectively in between Izaya and the icy woman. “Don’t listen to a single thing she says, Izaya. You don’t need to hear any of it.”

“Excuse me, but which ones of us are his actual parents?” Izaya’s mother asked coldly, her
composure already back in place as she straightened out her slightly wrinkled blouse, dusting off the sleeves and looking Shizuo’s parents up and down in disdain. “As far as I can see, you two are just some ragtag helicopter parents who seem to think it’s your life mission to take in a child that was raised to take care of himself.”

“Raised?!” Namiko practically shrieked. “You think you raised him?!”

“Not only that, but we raised him to perfection.” Izaya’s mother responded immediately, a smirk on her face as she crossed her arms and looked defiantly at Namiko. “He does exactly what we want, when we want it, how we want it, no questions asked. He is respectful and polite, he always gets top grades, he never gets in fights, and he never complains. Adding onto this what a smart and beautiful product he is and Izaya has come out perfectly. We’ve done well with him.”

“You’ve done nothing with him.” Kichirou snapped, taking a step forward with his eyes narrowed like he wanted to punch the woman. “You aren’t even a part of his life.”

“Oh, and I suppose you are?” Izaya’s mother asked coolly, flicking a strand of perfect hair behind her shoulder with a short, harsh laugh. “Yes. Two random people who waltzed into my son’s life and tried to monopolize his unnecessary care are clearly such integral parts of his existence.”

Namiko and Kichirou stepped back a little bit, shock and guilt traveling across their features as her harsh words struck them, freezing them in place like some kind of spell.

Izaya’s mother looked past them, right at her son, who was still watching her with the same blank, doll-like mannerisms as he had been for the past few minutes. “Izaya, darling, these people don’t want you.” She said bluntly, and the room froze in shock.

“Ex…excuse me?” Namiko asked softly, her whole body beginning to quiver. “What did you just say?”

“They don’t want you at all.” Izaya’s mother continued, ignoring her entirely. “They want a child, Izaya. You aren’t a child. You’re a machine. A product. A doll. A tool. You could never be a child, even if you wanted to, and you know it. You’re too far gone.”

Izaya watched her like before, a sort of horrible regret and sorrow beginning to fill the ruby eyes as she spoke. It was like he was taking her words for truth. Like just because she’d said it, suddenly he was being reverted from a human who could be loved into a tool meant to be used.

No. No, this was beyond bad parenting. This was evil.

“An emotionless doll like you was never meant to be raised by scruffy outsiders like this.” Izaya’s mother continued, sighing in disappointment and shaking her head. “I can’t believe you actually allowed yourself to indulge in the fantasy that you could belong in a family for so long. Pathetic, darling. I’m disappointed in you.”

“Shut up!” Shizuo growled, jumping to his feet and holding out a fist threateningly in the air as his golden eyes glared fiercely at the businesswoman. “Izaya can be whatever he wants, and he is not an emotionless doll! You don’t know what the hell you’re saying because you don’t even know your own son!”

Izaya mother’s laughed when she saw Shizuo, a sharp and mocking laugh that seemed to degrade Shizuo’s whole existence with just its sound, making him want to shrivel back into his seat like he’d done something wrong.

“And this obnoxious, overly passionate boy seems to care an awful lot about you, doesn’t he?” She
continued in a haughty voice, each tone of her words driving shame into Shizuo’s body and revealing all his flaws for the world to see. Bringing all of his insecurities to the surface.

She smirked at him, the very sight of the hostile smile shining a light on all of his worst fears. “This dumb, useless brute who thinks he knows you so well.” She said, amusement bubbling just beyond her hurtful words. “Let me guess: he’s your boyfriend? Don’t make me laugh, Izaya! Forget the already disgusting fact that he’s a male, which make you some putrid faggot, but do you really think you deserve a living, breathing, flesh and blood human that will love you?”

Her eyes locked with Shizuo’s, seeing right into his soul. “And do you think you deserve to love a perfect creation like Izaya?” She inquired, her words slamming into his heart. “You look like a monster. A beast. I can see the bullet wounds in your legs that you’re ignoring as easily as if they were bruises. What a freak of nature you are. Something like you shouldn’t even be breathing the same air as my delicate little flower. You could hurt him at any minute. Snap and attack him like the brute you know you are. Aren’t you afraid of that?” She raised one perfect eyebrow, her smirk widening just the tiniest bit. “Or perhaps you don’t even care if you hurt him? That must be it if you’re forcing yourself into his life. You’re a monster who wants to be loved, and you aren’t afraid to hurt everyone around you to steal the love you don’t deserve.”

Shizuo stumbled backwards, his heart beating loudly in his chest as the cruel words reverberated inside his skull. How? How was this horrible woman able to see through him like that? See through him and tear him apart like he was some jigsaw puzzle and not a human being? How could she say all those horrible things and leave him feeling guilty of his own presence in that room? Guilty of the fact that he was even standing beside Izaya like he deserved a place at the raven’s side? How…

Izaya’s mother turned to look at the twins next, shaking her head like there was almost nothing she could say about them. “And you, Mairu and Kururi…you little brats ought to have been aborted in the womb.” She said casually, like it was something any mother would say to their toddlers. “Hiding behind your brother. You ought to be hiding! The two of you are pathetic. At your age, Izaya was already quoting Shakespeare and writing poetry. He was cleaning the house and attending business conventions. He knew how to dress properly in a suit and tie and he could carry on conversations about the international markets.” She sniffed in disdain at the two sobbing girls, shaking her head again. “I can’t even look at you filthy brats.” She muttered, turning away from them and looking back at Izaya. “Now then. Get out of that hospital bed and get back home. Do what you’re supposed to do.” She said sharply.

The words almost seemed to work like a spell on the human doll. Robotically, he removed the blanket from his legs, gently prying off the little toddler fingers clutching to his hospital gown, and slid his legs off the bed like he was getting ready to stand up, his eyes glassy and far-away the entire time.

But he never managed to actually stand, because a single hand planted itself on his chest, stopping him from moving.

“That’s enough.” A calm voice said into the hospital room. “I think this little charade is over.”

Shizuo and the other occupants of the hospital room all looked over in surprise at Shichi, who’d remained completely silent up to this point, just listening in on the horrid insults Izaya’s mother had been throwing at them all. Now he was standing up from his chair, having set all the hospital paperwork on a small bedside table next to Izaya’s heart monitor, and was staring coldly at the businesswoman in front of him with his icy Russian eyes.
“You can leave now.” He said calmly to her. “I think you’ve spouted all the bullshit you can think of at this point.”

Izaya’s mother raised an eyebrow again, turning to look at Shichi with a glare. “And I suppose you also have some “connection” to my son that you think entitles you to talking back to me?” She asked coldly. “Let’s hear it then. What are you, foreigner?”

“I’m his math teacher.” Shichi said simply, leaning over and moving Izaya’s legs gently back onto the hospital bed, tucking the doll underneath the covers and pushing him down so that he was laying back against the pillows with his glassy eyes staring up at the ceiling. He smiled kindly at Mairu and Kururi and gestured towards Izaya, making the little girls’ eyes tear up with gratitude as they clutched again to their brother’s gown, burying themselves under the covers next to him and sobbing into his arms.

“His math teacher?” Izaya’s mother asked incredulously, her eyes wide as they looked at him. “A silly teacher thinks he can talk back to a parent? Where did you receive your education license?”

“From the Russian mafia.” Shichi shrugged casually like it was the truth, tucking the twins in beside their brother before turning to look at Izaya’s mother with the same calm gaze as before. “But that doesn’t really matter now, does it? What matters is why you’re still here.”

“I’m here to take my son back home.” The woman smiled stiffly, her eyes flashing at Shichi. “And you seem to be obstructing my way. As Izaya’s precious “math teacher”, what exactly gives you the right to do that?” She laughed at him, crossing her arms and shaking her head like Shichi was the most ridiculous person of all the failures standing in the room. “Please tell me. What gives you the right when you know even less about me than anyone else here?”

“Oh, I know you.” Shichi said harshly, his eyes finally narrowing at Izaya’s mother as anger finally glimmered throughout them. “I’ve known you all my life.”

All heads in the room slowly turned to look at Shichi, confusion filling their expressions at his words. Even Izaya’s glassy eyes took on some life as he stared at Shichi, uncomprehending of what the math teacher was talking about.

“You were the mother who never came to parent-teacher conferences.” Shichi continued, looking right at the woman in front of him. “You were the older sister I couldn’t play with because you thought I was the mistake of the household and didn’t want anything to do with me.” He took a step towards the shocked businesswoman, his voice remaining at exactly the same level even as his words somehow seemed to get louder. “You were the rich girl who wouldn’t talk to me because I wasn’t on the same status level as you. You were the father who told me I was a failure at everything I did if I didn’t do it perfectly. You were the mother who didn’t even call when I ran away from home.”

Izaya was slowly sitting up in bed, Mairu and Kururi sitting up with him, and all three of the siblings watched Shichi with wide, teary eyes, listening to what he was saying in total shock.

Namiko and Kichirou had stepped aside a little to allow Shichi to come closer to Izaya’s mother, the two of them also watching him with wide, shocked eyes. And Shizuo? Shizuo was standing beside Izaya’s hospital bed, watching his math teacher speak, and beginning to realize the depth of the “connection” that Izaya had always said he’d felt with Shichi, right from day one.

“You were the family that left me to take care of myself when I was just a kid.” Shichi was still saying, walking closer and closer to Izaya’s mother, forcing her to begin taking steps back towards her motionless husband. “You were the unfair trade I got from the universe when the only family member who cared about me died and I was left with all the others who hated me. You were the
hundreds of mothers, fathers, sisters, brothers, aunts, and uncles that I see on TV going to jail for child neglect.”

Izaya’s mother bumped into her husband, both businesspeople staring at Shichi with wide eyes as he stopped in front of them, icy blue tearing right into their souls like the black orbs of Izaya’s mother had done to everyone else earlier.

“But right now, Orihara Kyouko,” Shichi said softly, staring right down at her without a shred of pity in his icy eyes. “You’re the woman who gave birth to three wonderful children, and treated them like machines. You want your machines back, but you won’t get them. Because now they know they’re children. They know they’re human beings who deserve love and affection, thanks to all these people who you insulted just a few minutes ago.” He waved a hand at the Heiwajimas standing around Izaya’s hospital bed, each of them covering an opening on it and forming something of a protective circle around Izaya and the twins, unconsciously getting ready to fight anyone away if they came near.

“Thanks to them, your machines are now children. And they won’t ever belong to you again because the only thing you can care for are machines. Well I’m sorry, but you don’t have machines anymore.” Shichi looked up at Izaya’s father, down at his mother, and then pointed a finger out the door. “So leave.” He said simply. “Before they show you what an actual family is supposed to be like.”

There was silence throughout the entire room as the Orihara parents stared at Shichi and Shichi stared right back at them without flinching.

Shizuo was practically holding his breath, his hand creeping out and grabbing hold of Izaya’s smaller one almost instinctively while he waited for what would happen next. Izaya’s little hand squeezed his back, just as tense and anxious to see the result of Shichi’s speech, and there was not a single shred of movement from anyone in the room beyond that.

They were all standing and waiting to see what the Orihara parents were going to do.

They didn’t seem to know what to do. They kept looking back at Izaya, then at Shichi, then at the Heiwajimas standing defensively around their three children. They seemed at a total loss for words, and eventually, Kichirou supplied the words for them.

“If you don’t leave now,” Shizuo’s father said quietly. “Then I can promise you that me and my wife will track you from here to the ends of the earth and make you pay for every year of life that you hurt these children.” He looked right at them as he said, “And we’ll take our “freak of nature” with us to really make you sorry for what you’ve done.”

The parents now looked at Shizuo, and with those cowardly expressions of fear on the faces of the people who’d tried to tear him and his family apart just a few minutes ago, Shizuo felt his rage flare up like it had back in the warehouse. He snarled like an animal, vision filling with the red color of pure anger, and took a threatening step towards the hated figures that he could see through the red haze. The only thing that stopped him from outright attacking them right then and there was the firm hand of Izaya clutching tightly to his own hand, anchoring him to his humanity just like he had before.

Izaya was the only thing that saved his parents’ lives that day.

Through the red haze, Shizuo could see the figures leave and hear some distorted voices no doubt sending biting insults even as the demons left the room, and it wasn’t until several seconds after they were completely gone that the fury boiling in his veins faded away, and Shizuo’s vision cleared up enough to see Shichi smiling gratefully at him.
“Thanks, Shizuo.” The math teacher was saying. “If you hadn’t scared them off like that, I don’t know what your parents would have done to them.”

“Something that would’ve gotten us thrown in jail for sure.” Namiko growled, punching one fist into the palm of her hand with fury flashing in her eyes. “Those people made me absolutely furious! How dare they even come in here and look at our babies?!”

“But you have to admit that that Kyouko woman is one tough customer.” Kichirou said with a shudder. “Her words…they just cut right through your defenses. I… I froze in place. It was like I couldn’t do anything at all. I felt so helpless in front of her.” He glanced over at Shichi, with a look of awe on his face. “How did you stand up to that, Shichi?”

Shichi shrugged, a dry smile on his lips as he looked at Shizuo’s father. “Like I said before.” The Russian said flatly. “I’ve known her all my life.”

“I never knew…” A soft voice said, and everyone looked over to see Izaya, watching Shichi with teary red eyes, his body shaking as he stared at the math teacher. “I never knew that…someone else knew her.” He whispered shakily, fists clenching the hospital blanket tightly. “That someone else understood just how powerful she is. Just how much her words hurt.” He bit his lip, swallowing down a lump in his throat as he looked at Shichi. “My father wasn’t really the enemy out of the two of them.” He admitted. “He just…he just helped her in whatever she wanted. He ran away from me. He left me all the time because he didn’t know what else to do besides follow her.”

“That doesn’t mean you can forgive him.” Shichi said flatly, walking back over to Izaya and placing a gentle hand on his shoulder. “And truth be told, I really want to put together a war party of me, Kichirou, Namiko, and Shizuo and chase them down right now to beat them both into oblivion.”

“Hear hear!” Kichirou cried in agreement, slapping Shichi on the back and nodding his head firmly. “That sounds like a great idea!”

“Except…we can’t.” Namiko said bitterly, hatred flashing through her warm eyes at just the thought of the Orihara parents. “Because that would be illegal, and those people would no doubt take us to court for it.”

“They’re the ones who should be going to court!” Kichirou yelled angrily, fists tightening at his sides. “They should be in jail for child neglect! And Izaya and the girls should be adopted by actual, decent parents.”

“We don’t have anything to prove what horrible parents they are, though.” Shizuo muttered, looking down at Izaya with guilt crushing his heart. “We can’t…prove anything.”

Izaya looked so small on that hospital bed, all tangled up in wires and machines, and his little sisters looked even tinier as they clutched to him, all three of them lost and alone in this fight against their parents. Why couldn’t Shizuo do anything to help them?

Izaya looked up at Shizuo and smiled brightly, squeezing his boyfriend’s hand with a reassuring smile. “It’s okay, Shizu-chan.” He promised. “I’ve been living with them for a while now. It won’t be long before I can move out and take the girls with me. I just need to hold on until I’m 20.”

“That’s in three years!” Shizuo yelled, gripping Izaya’s hand in both of his and glaring down at his boyfriend fiercely. “Three years of living with those maniacs in your life and three years that me and my parents have to refrain from killing them!”

“And I really don’t want to slip back into old habits when I’ve been doing so well.” Shichi sighed,
and everyone looked over at him slowly, wondering what “old habits” he was referring to. That Russian mafia thing hadn’t been true…right?

Well, even if it was true, that didn’t change the current problem at hand. “We need some kind of proof to show what bad parents they are and to take you away from them.” Shizuo growled, squeezing Izaya’s hand and looking down at him in determination. “We need proof…and we just don’t have it.”

“If you want proof,” A low voice said from the doorway as a new figure slowly entered the room. “Then I can just give you this.”

The figure’s hand held out a recorder, with a single audio file on it time-stamped for the last several minutes. It no doubt contained every bit of Kyouko’s evil speech about how useless her children were and how they were meant to be used as tools. It was a gold mine for a custody battle, and the fact that it was there, being presented freely to them, was incredible enough. But even more incredible than that, was the identity of the person who was offering this salvation to them.

“Ha…Hajime?” Izaya asked in shock, staring at his ex-boyfriend with wide eyes.

Chapter End Notes

Ha...HAJIME?! HAJIME IS BACK?! OH MY GOODNESS, IS THIS A BAD THING OR A GOOD THING?! I CAN’T TELL YET!

He seems like he's offering help BUT IS HE REALLY?! No one knows! Until the next chapter that is. ₃(´embros)＞

Despite the sort of slow pace of this chapter (and lack of beatings which both you all and I wanted to see so badly), I hope you liked it! Until next time! See you then! <3
Hey guys! Sorry this is going up a little later than my usual Sunday updates. I didn't get a chance to finish up this chapter yesterday because it was my prom night. So I didn't get home until a little past 11 and I was too tired to write at that point. ( ^ v ^ ) Anyway, I finished it all up this morning and here it is!

What are Hajime's motives? What does he want? What the heck is wrong with him? My dear readers, all of these questions will be answered!

Forewarning: this chapter is a little sad, and it deals with childhood trauma and ensuing mental illness. Welcome to Hajime's past everybody!

See you at the end of the chapter! <3

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Hajime had only been a boy when his world had changed forever.

He could still remember every detail about that with perfect clarity, just like it had happened yesterday.

He’d been playing in the living room with a few of his newest toys – a model train and a mini airplane – when his father came home from work.

His father coming back without Hajime’s mother was normal. It was a part of the daily schedule. The two of them didn’t work together, and Hajime’s mother worked a job with longer hours. She didn’t tend to come home until much later at night, after Hajime went to bed. This meant that the only time Hajime really saw his own mother was in the morning when she drove him to school. That was the beginning of his daily schedule. After that, he spent most of the day at school, doing whatever they had planned over there, and then came home on his own, using the trains to get back. Then he would do all of his homework, and wait in the living room until his father came home so he could talk about his day. After they both finished talking, they ate dinner. And after dinner, Hajime took a bath and went promptly to bed so he could successfully repeat the schedule the next day.

But that day, Hajime’s father broke the daily schedule.

He arrived a few minutes later than usual, which worried the structured little Hajime a little bit. He had only ever known the man to arrive at exactly 5:45. Not a minute before or afterwards. For a child so used to precise scheduling, one where every minute of his life was planned to perfection, and not a thing ever happened off-course, the fact that his father wasn’t present at the correct time was worrying.

“Where’s Daddy?” Hajime wondered, staring at the clock now reading 5:57 with fear. “Is Daddy okay?”

The little boy’s stomach was all in knots. He was trying very hard not to bite his nails or chew on his lip because he knew it made his parents angry, but he needed to know where his father was. Why
wasn’t he back yet? And how could Hajime find out if something was wrong?

The little five year old was just mulling over picking up the house phone and calling his father’s workplace when the front door to his house opened.

“Daddy!” A happy little voice exclaimed, and Hajime came running around the corner with a big grin plastered all over his face and his arms outstretched to hug his absent father…when every single one of his muscles froze. His smile became stuck on his face. His arms were frozen as they hung in the air. And his feet wouldn’t move from the place they had stopped. What was going on?

Hajime stared at the incomprehensible sight in front of him, without a single clue of what to do.

His father was there, yes, with his electric blue eyes that matched Hajime’s to perfection and which always let him find the man in a crowd no matter what, and he was taking off his suit jacket like usual to hang on their coat rack. He had already slipped off his shined shoes, and loosened his tie just the barest amount, which was all a part of the daily schedule for when he came home.

What was not a part of the daily schedule was the lady standing next to him.

She was tall, with long blonde hair that reached down to her waist, and a large chest that made Hajime wonder if she was about to fall over. Her feet were in the same sort of shoes that his mother always wore – high heels – but the blonde lady’s shoes were much higher and they sparkled a lot in the light of their house. Her dress was tight and short, and Hajime was fairly certain that he could see the outline of her panties through them, as well as the fact that she had no bra. Her whole figure made the little boy very uncomfortable, and he wished he knew why his father was bringing such a strange person into their house.

“Sugo-chan.” The woman giggled, laying painted nails atop his father’s arms and batting her eyelashes at him seductively. “You’re being a little forward today, don’t you think?”

“They know each other?” Hajime wondered, still frozen in place as he stared at his father and the woman he was with. “How do they know each other?”

Maybe they worked together. Yes, that was it. Maybe this lady was a co-worker of his father’s and he was late because he had been working late tonight on some big project with her.

His father huffed a little and smiled at the woman, trailing one hand in a gentle caress down the side of her face. “Darling, I think it’s about time we get a little forward.” He purred, leaning over and…and…and…

Hajime’s electric blue eyes widened in shock and his heart began to pound wildly in his chest. What was his father doing? He was only supposed to do that with mother. Why was he…why was he kissing this lady?! Why was he kissing her when Mommy wasn’t around?!

“Daddy!” Hajime cried out again, his voice not excited this time but horrified and confused as he continued his run up to his father, grabbing onto the suit-clothed leg with a small sob and burying his face in it. “Daddy, what are you doing? Who’s this lady? Where’s Mommy?”

“Ah, what a cute little boy…” The strange lady crooned, and Hajime could feel her hand gently stroking his hair like his mother sometimes did. The feeling made Hajime yelp and run around his father’s leg, hiding behind it from the lady and peering out in fear at her as she chuckled. “A little shy, isn’t he?” She asked, giving Hajime a little wink before looking up at his father.

His father mimicked the lady’s chuckle and patted the top of Hajime’s head comfortingly, but it didn’t do a single thing to ease Hajime’s confusion and fear over this lady’s presence in his house.
“Yes, but he’ll warm up to you.” The man promised, smiling right at her. “After all, he’ll be seeing a lot more of you now.”

The woman gasped, her hands moving over her heart as she stared at Hajime’s father. “Oh, Sugochan.” She breathed, fluttering her eyelashes and smiling at him. “Are you…asking me to move in with you?”

His father leaned over and kissed the woman again, causing Hajime to whimper and hide even further back behind the leg, wishing he could make everything stop right now. “Not yet, my love.” His father finally said when he pulled away. “The place still isn’t ready for a woman’s touch.”

Hajime was confused by that statement. What about Mommy? She touched things here all the time.

“But Mommy-” He started to say, and his father easily clamped a hand over his mouth, dashing smile still directed at the strange lady the entire time.

“He still misses my ex-wife.” His father explained smoothly, and Hajime’s eyes widened even further. “Still calls her Mommy even though she left us years ago. It’s a sad thing.” The man sighed and shook his head, sadness filling his electric blue eyes to the point where Hajime thought he was about to cry.

“Aw. The poor dear.” The woman clucked her tongue and shot Hajime a sympathetic look, bending down so she was eye-level with him and holding out a hand with a warm smile. “I can be your new mother, dear.” She said kindly. “Don’t worry. You don’t have to be alone anymore.”

Hajime stared at the lady, wondering if she was off her rocker. He had a Mommy! She was gone at work right now! She and Daddy were still married! He was going to see her tomorrow morning when she took him to school and they talked about his day and she kissed him goodbye at the gate! What was this lady talking about?

And why wasn’t Daddy correcting her?

Hajime’s father smiled gratefully at the woman, those almost-tears still threatening to fall from his eyes as he said, “Thank you, Nori-chan. I…I can’t tell you how much it means to me for my little Haji to finally have a woman in his life.”

The woman giggled and kissed Hajime’s father on the lips, the two of them staying like that for a good long while as Hajime whimpered in fear underneath them. He didn’t understand. He didn’t understand. He didn’t understand!

Eventually, Hajime flung himself off his father’s leg and ran off into the house, trying not to let his tears stream down his cheeks like they wanted to. He knew Daddy wouldn’t want him to be crying, but he

Hajime stayed in his room for hours after that, unable to even go down and grab his new toys to bring them up as his father and “Nori-chan” moved around the lower part of the house, the former giving something of a tour to the latter as they went. They brought up Hajime a few times, and spoke as if Nori-chan was going to be Hajime’s new mother. Hajime didn’t like it. He didn’t like her. He liked his own mother. He wanted her back now!

A few times, their voices passed right by his door and Hajime hid under his blankets, hoping they wouldn’t open it and try to look for him. He knew Daddy wouldn’t want him to be crying, but he
was crying right now and he couldn’t stop the tears. It would only make things worse if his Daddy saw him like this.

But Hajime’s father and Nori-chan never actually entered his room, only talked in hushed, pitying voices about the “poor child” and how excited Nori-chan was to “show him a true mother’s love”.

It was horrible.

After what seemed like far too long, Nori-chan was finally escorted back to the front of the house, and told to leave. Hajime listened at the door to see what his father said. Maybe it had all been some kind of cruel joke. Maybe now he was going to tell her not to come back because their game was over and he was going to explain everything to Hajime. The lady wasn’t going to be his new mother. The lady wasn’t coming back.

But he could hear them kiss at the door instead, and Hajime’s father told Nori-chan that he couldn’t wait to see her in a few days, and this time to just come straight to his house.

“I had a special key made just for you.” His father purred, and Hajime could hear the man hand something over to Nori-chan that jingled a little.

“Oh, Sugo-chan!” The woman giggled, and Hajime heard them kiss once more before Nori-chan slipped out of the house and disappeared into the night.

He waited by his door for a few more heart-pounding seconds, more out of shock making him freeze in place than a need to keep eavesdropping on a finished conversation. But that frozen inability to move away from the door was what ended up being the little boy’s downfall.

Not even a minute after Nori-chan had left, the door to Hajime’s room flew open and his father strode in, making the little boy stumble back and fall down in fright, staring up at his father with wide electric blue eyes.

“D-Daddy.” Hajime whimpered, flinching away from the harsh glare in his father’s eyes. “W-W-Who was that lady? W-Why didn’t you tell her about Mommy? Why-”

“Your mother doesn’t need to know about Noriko.” Hajime’s father said abruptly, cutting him off with a fierce glare. “In fact, she will never know about Noriko, or any of the other nice ladies you’ll meet soon. And none of them will know about each other. Do you understand?”

Hajime shook his head no, and then immediately regretted it.

Hajime’s father growled and hauled the little boy to his feet, making him yelp in fear and stare at his father with wide, scared eyes. “It means that you are not allowed to tell any of the women you see from now on, be it your mother or a new lady, that you’ve also met other women.” The tall man growled, his fist tight and unyielding in Hajime’s school shirt. “If they find out about each other, Daddy is going to be very angry with you. You’re a useless little boy and all I need you to do is keep quiet and say hi to any woman you meet. That’s your whole purpose. Smile and look cute. Got it?”

Hajime whimpered in fright, wriggling a little in his father’s grasp and trying to understand what was going on. “B-But I thought… I thought I…I thought me and Mommy and you were… family.” He sobbed, squeezing his eyes shut as listened to his father’s angry intake of breath.

“We aren’t family.” The blue-eyed man said coldly. “Your mother and I are partners. Business partners in a mutually beneficial relationship. You are our offspring. We could make many more of you whenever we wanted, so you really aren’t that necessary to us. In a family, members stick together and love each other. In this relationship, your mother and I tolerate each other and you are
Hajime’s eyes snapped open and he looked up at his father in shock. “D-Disposable?” He whispered, and his father simply nodded at him. “Of course.” He said casually. “You could be abandoned at any time, Hajime. Your mother and I could leave you and make new children. So you better be a good child to us so that doesn’t happen.”

Hajime never thought his father could be like this. His father was supposed to love him. He said that he loved him. He said that he loved Hajime all the time. And he said that he loved Mommy. He said that he loved Nori-chan, too. Did his father actually love any of them? And were they all disposable to him?

“I don’t wanna be abandoned.” Hajime whimpered, his eyes filling with tears at the thought of being left alone.

A satisfied smirk crossed his father’s face and the tall man nodded in approval, slowly letting Hajime’s shirt go. “Excellent.” He purred. “So then…what are you going to do when Mommy comes home and you see her tomorrow morning?”

“T-Talk to her?” Hajime said in a shaky voice, gulping at the hard look that crossed his father’s face.

“Talk to her about what?” His father asked harshly, eyes narrowed.

“About everything that happened today.” Hajime replied automatically, just an instinctual reaction since he’d always done that every day up to this point. It was the daily schedule. But that was the wrong thing to say.

And that was the first time Hajime’s father had ever beaten him.

That first beating lasted for fifteen minutes, and by the end of it, Hajime’s head was bleeding from where it had been thrown against the wall, his stomach was hurting from the harsh kicks delivered to it, one of his eyes was swollen from a single punch, and he was choking on his own tears and garbled apologies.

“I’m sorry Daddy!” Hajime wailed, clutching his head and curling in on himself as the tall man approached, glaring down at him. “I-I won’t tell her anything! And I won’t tell Nori-chan anything either! Or the other ladies! I won’t say a word! I promise! I’m sorry!”

Hajime’s father looked down at him for a few more seconds, and then pulled Hajime to his feet, smiling kindly at the boy and kissing his tear-stained cheeks tenderly. “That’s my good boy.” He said softly, brushing Hajime’s hair out of his face and kissing his forehead. “Such a good boy. So you understand now, Hajime?”

Hajime nodded, scared to say anything else in case it was wrong, and his father chuckled, kissing him once more before grabbing his hand and leading him slowly out of his room. “Now let’s get something to eat, okay?” The man asked with a smile, and Hajime nodded slowly, beginning to understand.

His father was happy now that Hajime was doing what he wanted. He wasn’t going to be abandoned if he just kept the secret. If he just didn’t let anyone know what was going on, then everything would be okay. If he understood that love wasn’t a true factor in relationships…then he wouldn’t expect anything else, and he would be fine.

“Make sure that you never let yourself think someone loves you, Hajime.” His father said as they walked to the dinner table. “If someone says that, either they’re lying to you, or you’ve fooled them
into thinking so. And once you fool someone into loving you,” He looked down to grin evilly at his son. “You can do anything you want to that person.”

Hajime nodded again, sitting down in his chair and trying not to wince at the bruises and blood coating his body. The blood made his head feel a little dizzy, and he was pretty sure he should tell his father about it, but he didn’t want to. Not when they were getting along again. Not when he wasn’t going to be abandoned.

Because more than anything, Hajime was scared of being alone. Of being on his own, with no one to support him. Of being all by himself…forever.

Which was why he loved Orihara Izaya.

The raven haired boy, a beautiful boy, who had been on his own for years. Who had felt that awful loneliness and took care of himself since the age that Hajime began doing everything he could not to let that happen. When Hajime was five, he became the person his father always wanted him to be so that he would never be abandoned. When Izaya was five, he became an adult who made his own decisions in the absence of parents who had already abandoned him long ago. They were so different, so horribly different, that they just fit together.

Hajime was astonished by the inner strength that Izaya had. He was amazed by the fact that this tiny boy, nowhere near as physically strong as himself and lacking any kind of support in his life at all, had survived on his own for years, and taken care of two sisters to boot. Izaya was beautiful, intelligent, funny, spirited, talented, and incredible. Hajime was drawn to him like a moth to a flame. Drawn to the image of perfection that had risen from Hajime’s greatest fears.

Izaya soothed those fears within Hajime. He made Hajime feel like it was okay to be alone. He made Hajime feel like it was crazy to be so panicked about being left behind. He made Hajime feel normal.

But…Hajime wasn’t normal. He hadn’t been normal since that day when he’d seen Nori-chan. And Nori-chan wasn’t the only woman that his father brought home. No…his father seemed to bring home a new woman every week, going through the same routine of showing her around the house, introducing her to Hajime, making them fall for the idea of being his mother, and convincing each one that he was completely exclusive to them. He taught Hajime to do the same thing, and to consistently move through relationships so that no one could hurt him.

But Hajime, even though he tried to be like his father in his ability to move on, balance women, and easily float through the life of a womanizer, knew he was different. After he got his own girlfriends to love him, and left them as his father instructed, he couldn’t help but hold on to them. Some of their things that they had left in his house. A song that they’d told him they liked. Their favorite books or movies. Foods, make-up, clothes, really anything that they’d interacted with, he found himself unable to let go of. He was afraid of being abandoned, even by the memories of those he himself left behind. He found that keeping all the pictures of them helped ease this anxiety. This fear. But it didn’t relieve the emptiness. It couldn’t fill the hole that the threat of abandonment left within him.

But…sex did. Only for a short time, of course. Just those few moments while he was actually with a partner. He felt whole and complete, connected to them in a way that meant they surely couldn’t leave him at all. His fear disappeared, and his whole mentality was replaced with pleasure. And the more wild or controlling the sex, the better. He liked having utter control over his partner, tying them down to be certain that they couldn’t leave, forcing them to do whatever he wanted, making sure that through either pain or pleasure that they belonged to him. He was controlling, possessive, erratic in his moods and behaviors. He felt fear drive many of his actions, and this fear often converted itself into other emotions that made him seem practically bi-polar.
He would go from being angry and hostile one second, to kind and tender the next, just like his father had that day. His emotions were all over the place, and his desires and commands were as well. His relationships were unstable, which increased his fear of abandonment, and thus increased the need he had for sex and pictures. He began to balance multiple women at once, just like his father, in order to have one to be with in public and one to soothe his fears in the bedroom. Sometimes, he even needed multiple women to soothe his fears. But thankfully, his father taught him how to handle all of that quite well. And he hid everything from his oblivious mother, just like his father, for years and years.

Until Izaya. It was like Izaya was the one force that ended up changing everything in his life, and his thoughts always circled back to the raven. Izaya, the one who soothed his fears even without sex. Izaya, the one who laughed at his mood swings and called them adorable. Izaya, the one who clung to him without fear. Izaya, the one who wanted nothing more from Hajime than companionship and love. Never once did Izaya ask for money, even though Hajime knew he needed it. Never once did he push for sex, even though every single other girl Hajime had been with had. Never once was Izaya like anyone else.

But Hajime couldn’t stop controlling him. He needed that control, even if Izaya understood him more than anyone else, calmed him more than anyone else, got rid of those fears and behaviors better than anyone else. He needed to own Izaya, he needed the pictures, he needed the sex—even if he didn’t need it at all. And when Izaya told him that he loved Hajime, the instinctual reaction of cutting the raven out of his life kicked in. Hajime didn’t want to cut Izaya out. He wanted to keep Izaya with him. To love the raven like a proper person should, and to let the raven love him.

But he couldn’t. He moved on to the next phase of the break-up. He tried to rape Izaya. And that was when things really went downhill. Every feeling of safety he’d had with the raven, every fear soothed and every mood swing tempered, crumbled into the darkness of Hajime’s mind. It still felt like a blur to the blue-eyed boy, even now, but...he’d said so many horrible things. Made so many threats. His fear of seeing Izaya actually leave increased to the point where he brought in someone to have sex with, to alleviate those fears when he couldn’t count on Izaya to do it...and that killed everything.

Izaya saw it. Izaya left him. Hajime threatened his sisters. Izaya beat him. Yes, it was all truly a blur for the boy.

And then, months later, Hajime had seen Izaya with that blonde. That blonde boy, Shizuo. The monster of the school. It seemed appropriate. Izaya had gone from a monster of the mind to a monster of the body. From one who was mentally ill, to one who was physically inhuman.

Hajime couldn’t allow that. All his own feelings for Izaya bubbled up. His need to control the boy. His need to own him. His need to stop Izaya from leaving him and to bring him back to his side all returned. He needed to get rid of Shizuo and bring Izaya back to him. It became his one desire for so long. Another blur. Yes, another blur in Hajime’s disturbed mind. A blur that involved attacking someone in a daycare. Stealing the information of toddlers then stealing the toddlers themselves. Being reminded of the day his father had beat his toddler self and recreating that beating in the two little girls while he waited for Izaya. Izaya showing up. His fears vanishing for a few exquisite seconds when he thought Izaya had come back to him. Then Shizuo appearing and fighting him alongside Izaya. A fight of fists and jabs and punches and kicks and throws and slams and pain. A fight that ended in his utter loss.

His loss of the girls who were him. His loss of Izaya who’d made him feel safe. His loss to the monster who was more human than him. His loss. His loss. Everything was lost. Hajime hadn’t known what to do after that fight. He’d laid in that room, bleeding and injured, until
his father had eventually found him and taken him to the doctor’s office. It was when he woke up in a hospital bed, staring at a white ceiling, that feeling of loss and true abandonment ricocheting throughout him, that he made his decision.

He asked his father to get a psychologist to examine him, pretending it was because he wanted to check if his head injuries had done anything to his brain.

He asked the psychologist to diagnose his mental illness. He knew he had one. He wanted to know what it was.

He got the name of the disease and asked for therapy pathways. And Hajime finally began to treat the issues that had been plaguing his mind since he was five years old. Because of Izaya and Shizuo, Hajime was finally fixing himself, instead of filling himself up.

Borderline Personality Disorder. A disease characterized by impulsive and risky behavior, such as having unsafe sex, gambling or binge eating, an unstable or fragile self image, unstable and intense relationships, up and down moods or mood swings, suicidal behavior, intense fear of being alone or abandoned, ongoing feelings of emptiness, frequent and intense displays of anger, and stress-related paranoia that comes and goes. BPD. Hajime’s curse.

There were a few rumors that it was incurable, but the psychologist assured him that that was all they were. Hajime could be treated. He could take small therapy sessions with the hospital’s therapist to help him learn to cope with his fears, and to help him with all of his other symptoms as well. All he had to do was be perfectly honest with everything he told the therapist.

And with the fight with Izaya and Shizuo still fresh in his mind, a reminder of how love had defeated his curse so completely, why should Hajime hide anything? If he could free himself of his curse and find that love, why would he hold on to anything? It was because of Izaya and Shizuo that Hajime was about to escape his curse. It was because of them. He had never been more grateful to anyone in all of his life.

Which was why, when he was leaving the hospital after his most recent therapy appointment, and he saw Izaya’s parents enter one of the hospital rooms, Hajime had instantly stopped in place. Hajime knew that Izaya’s parents weren’t the kind to go to general hospitals. They had private physicians like his father, and would be caught dead actually using a hospital as generic as Ikebukuro General Hospital. So there must be something else bringing them here.

When Hajime stopped by the door to listen, he heard Izaya’s mother Kyouko berating her son like the evil witch she was. Her harsh words, her cold statements of how useless Izaya’s sisters were and how all of the Orihara children were meant to be tools, reminded him so painfully of his father that he nearly choked in the hallway. And when he peeked cautiously into the room and saw Izaya, laying there like a doll on the bed, all of the life and light just sucked right out of his eyes, Hajime knew he had to do something.

Attacking them would do nothing for Izaya’s situation at all. It would only postpone the horrible presence of his parents in his life for a little while longer, and may lead to even more trouble involving the courts and custody. He had to do something that would get Izaya’s parents away from the Orihara children permanently. It was what he owed to Izaya. A curse for a curse.

Just as Hajime’s illness had been his own curse, Izaya’s parents were his.

Hajime still had the recorder that his therapist made him use sometimes during their sessions to record small things about it and listen to them later at home. He made a split-second decision in that moment, and wiped the recorder clean, then began to record Kyouko’s words from inside the hospital room. He got nearly all of it on tape, nearly every word of that degrading speech which
would ruin her for sure, and stepped easily out of the way when she and her husband left in a rage.

They’d be back. He could tell that much from the determined set of their shoulders, and the harsh words, promises and threats Kyouko was muttering under her breath. All the more reason to give the recording over as soon as possible. He let it record a few of the threats by holding it out after the two parents as they marched off for a bit, and then ended it, holding it to his chest and attempting to gather the courage to enter the room.

He knew he wouldn’t exactly be welcomed after the things that he did, but he needed to thank Izaya and Shizuo somehow. Thank them for fixing him when no one else could. He wasn’t completely better right now, not by a long shot, and he wasn’t even close to normal or the ability to love someone, but he was on the right path. And that was all that mattered.

Even if they didn’t trust him…he had to try helping them.

And so Hajime stepped into the hospital room to hand over his gift.

But would they accept it?

Chapter End Notes

That IS the question, isn't it Hajime? Are they going to trust you after everything you've done? It's not like they just got this...lovely...chapter about your past and your father. And is it just me, or do you guys suddenly think Hajime's dad and Izaya's mom would be great for each other?

In any case, this chapter is told from the mindset of Hajime as he copes with his illness, and so that's why it seems chaotic and strangely paced. It's all told from his point of view as he reflects on his life. And this is where I say to all of you who thought (or in some cases wished) that Hajime had a mental illness: you were correct! He has BPD, and a pretty extreme case of it at that. But now he's recovering, thanks to Izaya and Shizuo!

But is it enough to get them to trust him and take this recording?

I guess we'll just have to wait and see what happens in the next chapter! I'll see you all then! And don't worry: we'll get back into the main storyline next time! And hopefully, there may even be some fluff for once since I seem to be avoiding it like the plague for these last few chapters. 8( ˘̀ ᗑ ˘́ )> We shall see. Until next time! <3
Hey guys! Hurray for another early update because of that weird testing schedule! ₃( ´商用车 ♥

Now we're onto the part of the story where we reveal the great answer to the question...DO THEY TRUST HAJIME OR NOT?! It's time to figure out what's going to happen! Are you ready?

Let's get to it! <3

Izaya couldn’t believe that Hajime was the one standing right there in the doorway, offering them salvation. The same person who’d tried to rape him. Who’d kidnapped his sisters. Who’d beat them to the point where they had injuries that they were still recovering from. Who’d done everything in his power to hurt Izaya but was now…offering to help him? It just didn’t add up.

“What the hell are you doing here?!” Shizuo snarled, stepping in front of Izaya’s bed protectively and glaring viciously at Hajime with eyes that flashed with rage.

“Yeah, what do you want?” Kichirou growled next, him and Namiko both shooting Hajime deadly glares that showed they were about two seconds away from going over there and beating the boy up.

Kururi and Mairu whimpered in terror and buried themselves underneath Izaya’s hospital covers, clutching his legs tightly as they hid.

Izaya felt his heart squeeze at the terrified actions from his little sisters, but he couldn’t say he blamed them. This boy fueled their nightmares and the things they saw in the shadows around them. He was the source of all their most constant fears. He was a monster to them. Izaya would be hiding too if he didn’t have Shizuo right there in front of him.

“What’s this guy?” A final voice asked, and Izaya glanced over to see Shichi, finally finished with his paperwork now that all the excitement with Kyouko and Shirou had died away, staring at Hajime in confusion. “He someone I should know about?” The math teacher asked, frowning as he cocked his head at Izaya.

That was yet another thing Izaya was now grateful to Shichi for. The man wasn’t forcing anyone to spill their guts about just what Hajime had done in the past to deserve all this anger as well as the twins’ fear. He was asking if it was it was something he ought to know about, something he had the right to hear. Considering the fact that he’d just fended off Kyouko for Izaya and the twins’ sake (and finished that monstrous stack of paperwork to boot), Izaya felt Shichi was entitled to know who this phantom from his past was.

“This boy’s name is Shishizaki Hajime.” Izaya informed Shichi, and the Russian frowned as he looked back over at Hajime, his gaze moving up and down the boy slowly, like he was analyzing him.
“He’s my ex-boyfriend.” Izaya told Shichi next, and now Shichi seemed to be getting at least some of the picture.

“I see. So he’s not exactly wanted here right now.” The math teacher said with a nod, his analytical gaze becoming a little more hostile as he met Hajime’s electric blue eyes.

“Hell no he isn’t!” Shizuo snapped, taking a step forward towards Hajime in pure rage. “Not after all the things he’s done to you and what he just did to the twins! You know they’re still recovering, Asshole?”

Shichi sucked in a breath at this, and his gaze went from hostile to straight-up pissed as he glared at the boy in the doorway. “You mean…you’re the one who’s responsible for all those injuries on Mairu and Kururi?” He asked in a voice that was gentle enough, but was underlined so sharply, Izaya felt like he could cut someone with it if he wasn’t careful.

Hajime shuffled in place uncomfortably at the question, and to be honest, that motion kind of threw Izaya off a bit. He’d never seen Hajime look uncomfortable before. The guy was always 100% confident with everything he did. Even if he made a mistake, he was 100% confident in the way he handled it. This new, uncertain Hajime was…different.

But that still didn’t lower Izaya’s rage at all when he felt the twins sniffling against his legs and clutching at him like he was their teddy bear in a thunderstorm. They were frightened beyond belief right now, because of this asshole. He didn’t have a right to be uncomfortable. He had a right to be groveling on the floor to Izaya’s precious babies!

“I…” Hajime said, beginning to answer Shichi’s question as he stared at the floor, hand still clutching the recorder. Then he took a deep breath and looked up at Shichi, staring him right in the eyes. “I am responsible for those injuries.” He admitted plainly. “I beat the twins after I kidnapped them. I…did a few other things to Izaya as well.”

Shizuo didn’t even wait a second longer after Hajime’s crimes were repeated from the boy’s lips. It was like he didn’t believe the fight they’d had earlier was enough punishment for the boy even though he’d nearly broken his limbs. The blonde stormed right up to the tall boy and punched him square in the face, sending him crashing loudly into the wall.

Izaya couldn’t stop the satisfaction that rose up in him upon seeing that, and if the grunts and nods of approval from Kichirou and Namiko were anything to go by, then the other occupants of the room felt the same way he did.

“You bastard!” Shizuo snarled, grabbing Hajime by the collar of his shirt and hauling him up to his feet. “How dare you come in here and even look at Izaya and the twins after what you’ve done. You’ve got some real nerve.”

“I…I didn’t come here to do anything horrible.” Hajime promised, wincing at the tight grip that only tightened further in his shirt, the knuckles pushing against his throat harshly as Shizuo pulled him close to his face and growled threateningly.

Hajime looked over at Izaya pleadingly, like he knew the raven was the only one who could control Shizuo. And after the way Izaya had stopped Shizuo from breaking Hajime’s bones, maybe he had some pretty good evidence for that.

“Please.” He gasped out, voice a little strangled due to the harsh force pressing on his throat. “Just let me talk for a few seconds.”

Izaya stared at Hajime, wondering if he should. He didn’t want to. He wanted to let his Shizu-chan
beat up Hajime to the point where the perfect-looking boy was completely unrecognizable. His anger at what Hajime had done still hadn’t gone away fully with that one fight they’d had in Hajime’s secret room. Especially after seeing the state his sisters had been in once they’d taken them to the hospital.

But Hajime did have a recording that would help seal a compelling case for Izaya and his sisters to be released from their parents’ custody in court. So logic said that he should listen to the boy.

But…but he didn’t want to!

Izaya’s fists clenched the hospital bed sheet tightly, his red eyes locked with Hajime’s blue ones as he gritted his teeth and tried to decide what to do. He couldn’t get past his emotions. He just couldn’t.

“Izaya.” A soft voice said, and Izaya’s head snapped over in shock to look at Shichi, still seated by Izaya’s bed where he’d gone after Kyouko and Shirou left, looking over at Izaya seriously. The fact that he hadn’t used Izaya’s nickname, more than anything else, was what was getting Izaya to pay so much attention to him right now even while Hajime was standing over there being threatened by Shizuo.

“Yes?” The raven asked in a shaky voice, eyes wide as he stared at his math teacher.

Shichi sighed and ran a hand through his hair, glancing over at Hajime fiercely and then shaking his head and looking over at Izaya again.

“In Russia,” He said softly. “We often had to put aside our feelings in conflict in order to achieve a greater goal. It was difficult, but often necessary and even the only possible course of action sometimes.”

Here he paused for a few seconds, and then added, “Семь раз отмерь — один отрежь(Sem’ raz otmer’ — odin otrezh’ /Measure seven times, cut once).”

Another Russian proverb. Be careful before you do something that cannot be changed.

He was telling Izaya to think carefully about his decision, and do the thing that would be best. To think logically instead of emotionally so that he didn’t make a mistake which he couldn’t fix.

Izaya looked back over at Hajime, still clutching those sheets just as tightly as before as Shizuo began to press Hajime into the wall, crushing his neck between the wall and Shizuo’s knuckles. It was a bad position for the boy to be in, and Izaya could see his face turning slightly red as he began to sputter and choke, looking over desperately at Izaya.

Izaya closed his eyes and thought about Shichi’s words. He knew Shichi cared about him. He knew Shichi was looking out for Izaya’s best interests. He knew Shichi was capable of thinking logically and coming up with the best solution, even in a moment like this. Ultimately, the decision was still Izaya’s but…but he knew what he needed to do.

“Shizu-chan.” Izaya said gently, and the blonde looked back at Izaya instantly, all his attention locked on the raven. Izaya nodded at Hajime, his hands still fist ed tightly in the bed sheet as he stared at his boyfriend. “Put Hajime down.” He told Shizuo softly. “And let him talk.”

Shizuo looked surprised by the order, but he scowled and glared at Hajime, giving him one final fierce glare before dropping the gasping boy onto his feet and marching back over to Izaya’s side.

“I’ll trust what you’re doing.” The blonde muttered to Izaya as he reached his bedside, bending over to give Izaya a gentle hug. “But if he tries anything, I’ll flatten him.”
Izaya smiled at the small threat, hugging Shizuo back with a nod, closing his eyes and reveling in his boyfriend’s comforting warmth before turning to look at Hajime with a glare.

“Alright. What do you want?” Izaya asked coldly, trying to follow Shichi’s advice, but still not quite able to fully hide his contempt.

Hajime sucked in a few more breaths, trying to steady himself on the ground and shaking his head to clear the dizziness before pushing himself back onto his feet and looking over hesitantly at Izaya.

“I…” He began, but his voice sounded groggy and raspy from the pressure that had been against it for the last few seconds. He cleared his throat harshly, shaking his head once more, before trying again.

“I came here to help you guys.” Hajime told them, and Namiko snorted skeptically at the statement, glaring fiercely at the boy. “After hurting our babies you want us to believe that you’re here to help?” She demanded, folding her arms. “That’s doubtful, Hajime.”

Hajime nodded guiltily, scratching at his head and looking over at Izaya. “I know it is.” He admitted. “But it’s the truth. After our fight, see…” He took a deep breath, shuffling in place nervously like he wasn’t sure exactly how to put it. “Well, I had a bit of a realization. An epiphany, if you will.”

“That life is precious so you should stop screwing up other people’s before someone takes yours?” Shizuo asked in a growl, and Izaya placed a calming hand on his arm, kissing his cheek softly to further relax the angry boy before nodding at Hajime for him to go on.

Hajime nodded back in thanks and looked over at Shizuo this time. “No, although that’s true as well.” He said. “I realized…that I should really begin to seek help.”

Izaya frowned at this, unsure of where Hajime was going. “Seek help?” He repeated. “What do you mean?”

“You’re getting more people to help you beat our kids up?” Kichirou snarled, holding up a fist. “Is that it?”

“No! No!” Hajime insisted, shaking his head wildly.

“You got some kind of sickness?” Shichi asked quietly, and everyone looked over at him next. Shichi was watching Hajime carefully. “A mental illness of some kind?” He elaborated, folding his arms and peering at Hajime. “Do you have one?”

Hajime was silent for a bit, but nodded, staring at the floor. “I…don’t want to tell you about it, but I do have one.” He admitted softly. “And I realized after our fight that I should get therapy for it. Help free myself from its grasp and become…well, as good a person as someone like me is capable of becoming.”

He looked up and switched his gaze between Shizuo and Izaya, like he was addressing them both. “You two helped me realize that.” He told them. “And I wanted to thank you somehow for that. I wanted to help you back.”

“You expect us to believe that crap?” Shizuo demanded, holding up a fist at Hajime, just like his father. “I don’t think so.”

Hajime chuckled weakly at the statement, shaking his head from side to side. “No…I didn’t expect you to.” He said with a smile. “Not with the way you’re so close to each other. No doubt, Shizuo, you want some kind of revenge for what I’ve done to Izaya and the twins. And Izaya, you want revenge for the twins and maybe even for the things I’ve said to Shizuo.” He looked up at them, that
same smile still on his face. “You two…you’re truly made for each other.” He told them. “I don’t
think anything could ever come between you. You’re an odd couple. A very unorthodox one. You
both have problems, and I’m not sure if all of them can ever be solved. But…” He laughed a bit and
his blue eyes sparkled just the smallest amount. “You two are definitely meant to be together. For
however long you’re on this earth.”

Izaya was shocked. Actually, that simple sentence was an understatement for just how shocked he
was. He felt like that very earth was rocking underneath his feet. Hajime wasn’t only admitting that
he and Izaya shouldn’t be together, he wasn’t coming after Izaya anymore, but he was saying that
Izaya and Shizuo were made for each other. He was acknowledging their relationship.

“What is with you?” Izaya couldn’t stop himself from asking. “You aren’t at all like the Hajime I’ve
come to know.”

Hajime laughed at that, guilt filling his eyes despite the smile on his face. “I know.” He said. “But I
swear that this isn’t a trick. I’m…I’m honestly trying to change. And I want to help you two.”

He walked over slowly to Izaya’s bed, wary of the growling Kichirou and Namiko that he passed,
and even more wary of the snarling Shizuo that he was coming closer to, setting the recorder gently
at the foot of Izaya’s bed.

“I know you probably won’t ever forgive me.” Hajime said quietly as the set the recorder down, his
eyes falling down to the little lumps underneath the covers that were Mairu and Kururi. True regret
entered those blue orbs as he stared at those lumps for a few seconds, his hand shaking in the air over
the recorder, before he closed his eyes and pulled his hand away. “But I hope you at least take this
and trust me, even just the slightest bit.”

And with that, he turned and left the room.

Izaya watched Hajime go, watched him all the way to the doorway, watched the way he turned right
and left the area, watched the way that all of his movements somehow seemed different than before.

His gaze dropped to the recorder at the foot of his bed, and he wondered if he could really trust what
was on it, and trust the person who’d given it to him.

“Should I smash it?” Shizuo growled, picking up the recorder and looking over at Izaya imploringly.
“Just say the word and I will.”

“I don’t think that’s a good idea.” Shichi cut in, finally standing up and looking hard at Shizuo. “At
least play the recording to see if what he has on there is what we need right now.”

Shizuo glared at Shichi for a few seconds, looking like he would willingly fight the Russian if what
he said went against Izaya’s wishes, but Izaya knew that Shichi was right.

“Play the recording please, Shizu-chan.” Izaya told Shizuo softly. “We need everything we can if me
and the girls are going to escape my parents.”

Shizuo looked over at Izaya, watching him for a few seconds, but nodded and hit the play button on
the small device.

Instantly, the sound of Kyouko’s cold voice filled the room, driving into everyone’s ears and
replaying the horrible conversation they’d just lived through. Each and every occupant of the room
winced at the voice when it began to insult them, reliving the horrible feeling of having their
insecurities brought out in front of them and smashed.
Under the covers, Mairu and Kururi sniffled in fright again, just as scared of their mother’s voice as they were of Hajime, and Izaya soothingly stroked their hair, listening to Kyouko’s words with an emotionless expression. He couldn’t help it. He always slipped into that mode at the start of any speech Kyouko made. Her words had the ability to crush any spark of passion or life in front of her. She could make the kindest Samaritan in the world regret meeting every person they’d ever helped. She could convince someone to throw themselves off a cliff without a second thought. She was powerful and evil.

Unfortunately, Izaya’s ability to manipulate others took after hers quite well, and it was one thing that he didn’t like about himself at all. But that was besides the point right now. The point was that Kyouko’s horrid, soul-crushing voice was being caught on tape. And no amount of wheedling, sweet-talking, or manipulation from the cold woman could deny that.

“We need this.” Izaya said softly, staring at the tape as it played. “This will assure our freedom indefinitely.”

“But are you seriously going to trust Hajime?” Shizuo demanded, waving the recording in the air. “I mean, what if he comes back later and wants something from you? Huh? What then?”

“Did you see his face, Shizu-chan?” Izaya asked in response, looking down at the two lumps by his legs which were the twins. “He truly felt guilty about what he did. I’ve never known Hajime to feel guilty about anything. Anything at all. I really do think that he’s changing. As crazy or impossible as it might sound, I really do.”

“Hajime. Changing.” Kichirou muttered, shaking his head angrily. “I find that so hard to believe.”

“It’s hard to believe but I believe it.” Izaya said, staring at the recording. “I’m not saying I forgive him, or even fully trust him. But…But I think that we can trust this recording, if nothing else.”

Shizuo scowled at the device in his hand, glaring at it for a few more seconds like he was going to crush it with his eyes, but Izaya knew better. He’d never do anything to upset Izaya, unless he knew it was for Izaya’s own good. And in this case, he knew that Izaya was right.

Sure enough, Shizuo begrudgingly handed Izaya the recording, still glaring at it suspiciously like it might contain poisonous gas.

Izaya stared at the device, which had long since ended its recording, and wondered how to build a case against his parents. “We have everything we need but I’m not sure how to put it together effectively.” Izaya muttered aloud. “And my parents will no doubt either hire one really good lawyer or a whole dang team of them to go against us. And maybe not even because they care about keeping us in their custody but rather just making sure a scandal about how they treat their children doesn’t get out to the public and ruins their business ventures.”

“I have a friend who can help.” Shichi suddenly said, pulling their attention over to him.

He was scrolling through his phone and he’d stopped on a certain contact in his phone, opening it up and eyeing it with a frown. He looked up at Izaya, a determined look on his face. “He’s Russian, but he does speak enough Japanese to get by in a courtroom since he started learning it once I came to Japan.”

A bit of a sly grin crossed Shichi’s face as he added, “Plus he owes me a favor.”

Izaya smiled at his teacher, feeling gratitude for the man surge up once again. Shichi really was the best.
“Thank you.” He said sincerely, and Shichi nodded. “No problem.” He responded. “And even if your parents do hire a team of lawyers, we’ll have one lawyer, three testimonies of the actual children, at least four outside supporting testimonies, and a recording all proving them wrong. You guys should win this no problem.”

Izaya felt like the situation was almost unreal. He and the girls were on the brink of being freed from their parents’ control. They might be able to leave them behind forever. Cut ties and never see those horrid people again. It was an amazing thought. An incredible idea.

“How long do you think this will take?” Izaya asked next, and Shichi shrugged. “I’ll start texting my friend and ask him a few things about it.” He told Izaya. “But in the meantime, I would say get ready to never see your parents again.”

In most people’s cases, that sentence would sound like a threat or a horrible scenario to be feared. But to Izaya, the words were like beautiful music being played by a professional orchestra.

He couldn’t wait to never see them again. And he might even end up having Hajime to thank for it.

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Izaya wouldn’t be discharged from the hospital for a while. That was what the doctors and nurses said. He’d be kept there a while longer, and even after he was discharged, he would be under strict orders not to stress himself out or do anything too taxing on his body.

Shizuo sure as hell wasn’t going to let Izaya do anything like that anytime soon. Those doctors had nothing to fear. Izaya would be all but living in a bubble if Shizuo had his way with it.

Shizuo, who was already pretty much back to normal to the shock of the hospital staff, was sitting next to Izaya’s bed, holding his hand tightly as the small raven smiled at him.

The others had long since left the hospital, Shichi needing to go back to his house and fix it up so that his friend had a place to stay when he came over, Shizuo’s parents needing to go pick up Kasuka from his weekend acting club since he’d just called to let them know that the usual train he took home was down, and the twins going with them to see Kasu-nii.

It left only Shizuo and Izaya, but Shizuo was (admittedly) just fine with that. He was actually relieved to have some alone time with his boyfriend after everything that had happened, and it seemed like Izaya was just as happy for the opportunity.

For a while, they just sat there without speaking, enjoying each other’s company.

“You know,” The raven said softly, breaking the silence. “I haven’t tutored you on anything in a while.”

Shizuo laughed at the out of place statement, leaning over and placing a gentle kiss on Izaya’s forehead. “Don’t worry about it.” The blonde told him. “You’ve been a little busy.”

Now it was Izaya’s turn to laugh, and his red eyes sparkled as they looked at Shizuo, making Shizuo feel happier inside than whole roomfuls of free sweets and sugar ever could.

“That’s true.” Izaya acknowledging, tapping Shizuo’s nose affectionately. “But you won’t pass a single class without me helping you along.”

“We can’t have that can we.” Shizuo said with a smile. “We have to graduate together so that I can make sure you don’t go off and do something illegal while I’m still in school.”
Izaya hummed at that, turning to face the ceiling and closing his eyes. “I’ve been thinking about that actually.” Izaya said softly. “About what I’m going to do after graduation.”

Shizuo looked down at his boyfriend, wondering where this conversation was going. “Really?” He asked, brushing some raven hair out of his beautiful face. “And what has that big brain of yours been coming up with?”

Izaya chuckled a little at the compliment, a peaceful smile on his face as he lay on his bed, eyes still closed.

“Well…my original plan was to become a full-time info broker once I graduated.” The small boy admitted, his chest rising and falling softly with calm breaths. “So I could manage to support both myself and my sisters when I don’t have school giving me a place to be for most of the day and I need a full job. I thought about…working for the yakuza.”

“The yakuza?!” Shizuo repeated in shock, his jaw dropping as he gaped at Izaya. “Are you serious?! After what happened with just this small gang, you want to work for the yakuza?!”

“They would pay a lot more.” Izaya argued, his eyes still closed as he faced the ceiling. “It’s a pretty decent way to make a living. I’d probably be rich.”

“I don’t care if you’re rich.” Shizuo growled, shaking his head vigorously back and forth. “You could seriously hurt yourself doing some shady shit like that. I don’t want you to hurt yourself again.”

Izaya laughed gently, finally opening his eyes and looking over at Shizuo with a smile. “I thought you might say that.” He admitted. “And the biggest reason for me to still become a full-time info broker would be the fact that I need to support the twins and myself. But…if we win this court case…” He bit his lip, and then looked up at Shizuo. “Someone will have to adopt us.” He told the blonde, and Shizuo could see the hope filling those ruby orbs.

“Someone will take care of us. Someone else will support us where our parents didn’t…I won’t have to do anything illegal anymore. I… I could be a normal kid.” He said it like it was the most shocking thing in the world. To Izaya, it probably was.

“My family can’t adopt you.” Shizuo said aloud, realizing this with a pang. “If we did…then you and I couldn’t be together.”

Izaya nodded at this statement, looking back up at the ceiling again. “I know. I thought about that. And I was thinking…maybe…just maybe…” He looked back over at Shizuo, that same hope still burning strong. “Maybe Shichi would adopt us.” He said quietly, and Shizuo’s eyes widened at that.

The math teacher. The crazy Russian math teacher who understood Izaya so well. Who respected Izaya’s independence and rights. Who had helped all of them through this ordeal just like a real parent should’ve. Who’d already done a ton of paperwork for Izaya’s sake, probably about the same amount that it would require to adopt him and the twins. Who was getting them a lawyer right now so they could get away from their parents’ influence. Who truly seemed to care about the Orihara siblings in general.

Would he adopt them? It seemed…possible. It really did.

“Shichi…he might actually adopt you.” Shizuo said aloud, staring at Izaya in shock. “He might do that.”

Izaya’s hopeful face lit up with Shizuo’s agreement, and he beamed brightly at Shizuo with joy.
radiating from him like a beacon. “I hope so!” He said happily. “I really do! Because even if I don’t know him too well, I still feel like I know him. He’s supported me just like a father should, and he understands what I’ve been going through. Shizuo, I… I really want Shichi to be my d-dad.”

Shizuo didn’t miss the way Izaya stumbled over the word “dad”. Shizuo couldn’t blame him. It was probably something he didn’t say very often.

Izaya looked back over at the ceiling, smiling at it happily. “I used to want your parents to be my parents.” He admitted. “But I love you too much to let you go. And…and if we get a partnership certificate, then they’ll be my parents anyway! So…so it’s okay, right? They’ll still be there for us.”

He looked over at Shizuo nervously. “Right?” He repeated, like he honestly didn’t know.

Shizuo laughed and kissed Izaya gently, smiling at the boy when he pulled back. “Of course they will.” He promised. “They will be there, and so will I.” He chuckled a little and grinned at Izaya. “But didn’t you think you’re jumping a little far ahead with the marriage certificate? You haven’t even proposed yet.” He teased, and Izaya blushed red. “Oh, shut up!” He scowled, shoving at Shizuo with a huff. “That’s going to be your job anyway. I can’t afford a fancy ring.”

Shizuo laughed at Izaya’s logic there, wanting to bend over and kiss Izaya again, but knowing that he’d probably get slapped if he did. “Okay then.” Shizuo smiled, looking down at Izaya with love in his eyes. “The ring and the proposal are on me.”

Izaya nodded sharply, a bit of a blush still on his face as he huffed and looked the other way. “Good. Glad we’re on the same page.” He muttered.

Shizuo shook his head, smiling at the raven. “In any case,” He said gently, bringing the conversation back to an earlier topic. “You were talking about if Shichi adopts you and begins to support you and the twins. What changes about your life plans if that happens?”

Izaya looked back over at Shizuo, one of his fingers reaching up to twirl his hair in that nervous habit Shizuo hadn’t seen in a while.

“Well… I won’t have to do anything illegal to support my family.” Izaya told Shizuo, chewing on his lip a bit. “And so, I was thinking that if Shichi adopted me and I got away from my parents… then when I graduate high school… I might go to a university.”

Shizuo blinked in shock, staring down at his boyfriend in wonder. “Really?” He asked, golden eyes wide. “You’ll actually go?”

Izaya nodded, smiling up at Shizuo. “I could study psychology or sociology.” He told his boyfriend, eyes shining a bit when he brought it up. “Something involving the study of humans. I could do that for a living. Maybe even become a psychologist or a psychoanalyst!”

“What’s the difference?” Shizuo wondered aloud, baffled by all the words being spewed from his boyfriend’s mouth.

Izaya laughed, and patted Shizuo’s cheek fondly. “A psychologist studies normal and abnormal mental states from cognitive, emotional, and social processes and behavior by observing, interpreting, and recording how individuals relate to one another and to their environments.” He recited, almost like he’d gotten it straight from a textbook or the internet. “A psychoanalyst does pretty much the same thing, only their work is far more set on diagnosing the mental disorders and they offer way more comprehensive knowledge and analyses of those disorders.”
Shizuo’s brow furrowed as he thought about that. “I thought psychologists were like therapists who helped people get over their disorders.” He said with a frown, scratching his head in confusion.

“Some do.” Izaya admitted. “Actually, I think most do. But some just study the behaviors and try to come up with new techniques for analyzing them or new theories of how to treat them. They innovate the field of psychology! I think I’d want to do that.”

Shizuo laughed, just picturing Izaya in some lab coat, geeking out over X-rays of brains and charts that Shizuo could never understand in a million years. “So you want to find new ways to mess with people’s brains by observing them for a living?” He asked, just to make sure he got it right as he grinned at his boyfriend.

Izaya pouted and shoved at Shizuo’s head, glaring at him. “Yeah! There’s nothing wrong with that.” He said haughtily. “And I’d get paid a lot for doing it, too!”

Shizuo snickered at that, shaking his head. “Well, alright then. Would you teach psychology on the side, too?” He asked, smiling at the raven.

Izaya tapped his lips thoughtfully, his red eyes wide. “Maybe.” He said excitedly. “I’d have a doctorate degree so I’d be eligible to do that. I could teach a psychology course while I’m working on actual research for innovating the field and make double the money!”

“And kill yourself doing double the work.” Shizuo pointed out, smacking Izaya gently upside the head. “Take it easy, okay? I don’t want my future husband keeling over from studying brains too much.”

“Studying humans and their behavioral processes as well as their brains!” Izaya declared mightily, holding a finger up in the air like it was a very important distinction. To him, it probably was.

Shizuo smiled at him and leaned over to kiss Izaya’s forehead again, amazed yet again by how freakishly smart the raven was. “Well, I’m sure you’ll be great at it. Top student at the university.” Shizuo said, ruffling the raven’s hair fondly.

Izaya looked rather proud of himself at that statement and he beamed happily at Shizuo, clearly excited about the thought of following that pathway.

“So what will you do, Shizu-chan?” He asked curiously, cocking his head to the side and smiling at him. “You haven’t been going to cram school, so you might have difficulties with the entrance exams if you try to go to a university.”

Shizuo sighed, running a hand through his hair and thinking about that. “Yeah…but there’s a whole year left of high school after this one’s over and I can start going then. That’s when all the pressure on the entrance exams really picks up anyway, right?” He asked, looking at Izaya.

Izaya laughed and nodded, intertwining his fingers with Shizuo’s and locking their hands together on his lap. “Yep.” He said cheerfully. “We can go to cram school together to work on those entrance exams and I can tutor you afterwards in school subjects you need help with so you can pass.”

Shizuo thought about that for a bit. It actually sounded like a fairly decent plan.

“Okay then.” He said with a smile. “But if I don’t pass the entrance exams, then I’ll probably just get some job that doesn’t need a degree.”

Izaya giggled at that. “Like what? A garbage man?” He teased. “You can hardly make any money in a job without a degree.”
“I don’t need to make money, Mr. I’ll-work-two-fancy-jobs-at-once.” Shizuo said, smacking Izaya gently upside the head again. “You can be the big provider for our household.”
“What? You gotta pull your own weight, Shizu-chan!” Izaya whined, still grinning at Shizuo even as he poked the blonde’s cheek in complaint. “I can’t do everything for you! And I already know that I’m cooking all the food, too. Probably cleaning as well. You need to help out, sir.”

“I’ll clean.” Shizuo offered, and Izaya rolled his eyes. “Smashing our furniture so that we don’t have any doesn’t count as cleaning, darling.” He said flatly, and Shizuo scowled at him, shoving him back onto the bed playfully. “Oh shut up. I can actually clean if I try.” He grumbled, still unable to stop the smile from spreading over his face at the sight of Izaya giggling on the bed.

“Suuure you can.” Izaya taunted, pushing himself back up and grinning at Shizuo. “But seriously, what job will you get?”

Shizuo shrugged, having never really considered that before. “I dunno. Maybe I’ll work as a bartender or something.” He grumbled, crossing his arms and thinking about it.
“You’d look hot in a bartender suit.” Izaya agreed, and Shizuo blushed a fierce shade of red, shoving Izaya back down again as he sputtered indignantly. “I would not!” He protested, trying not to show how flustered he was at the comment and completely failing.

Izaya laughed, red eyes sparkling as he patted Shizuo’s flaming cheek. “Don’t worry, Shizu-chan. I’ll protect you from all the creeps who hit on you at the bar.” He promised, and Shizuo stuck his tongue out at his annoying boyfriend, still unable to stop his blush from coating his face.

Izaya stuck his own tongue out in response, laughing at the look on Shizuo’s face.

“But in any case,” The raven giggled, laying back on the bed and relaxing as he smiled at Shizuo. “We’ve got plans for after graduation. I’m pretty excited. But…it all starts with this court case.” He bit his lip, staring up at the ceiling with worry in his eyes. “I hope it all goes well.” He said softly.

“You heard Shichi.” Shizuo said gently, squeezing Izaya’s hand comfortably as he watched the raven. “We’re practically guaranteed to win.”

Izaya nodded, reaching one of his fingers up to twirl his hair. “I know but…well, I’m still nervous.” He sighed, looking over at Shizuo with a smile. “But I’m not as nervous as I would be without you at my side.” He said easily, and Shizuo struggled heroically to keep the blush from reappearing on his face.

He gave Izaya a bit of a nod, brushing his thumb smoothly over Izaya’s knuckles. “I’ll always be at your side.” He promised, meaning every word of it.

“I know.” Izaya responded. “And I’ll always be at yours.”

And Izaya meant every word of that statement, too.

Chapter End Notes

I'm so happy that I was able to finally bring back some fluff to this fic. So darn happy. (*/~\*~\*\*/) We managed to end it on a fluffy note! But how's this court case going to go? And is anyone else curious to meet Shichi's "lawyer" friend?
It looks like we'll just have to wait and see (per the usual) to get the answers to all those questions. I'm really grateful to all of you guys for sticking with me through this fic. Seriously, thank you all so much! (⁎^▽^⁎)

I'll see you on Sunday! <3
The Cats' Division and the Bear’s Friend (猫の部と熊の友人)

Chapter Notes

Hello, my friends! So I know many of you were looking forward to the court case, and I must tell you that this chapter is not the court case chapter. Yes! I know! It's horrible! But the timeline worked better with a slight chapter in between to set up the events leading to the court case. So here, we're going to have an intermission chapter of sorts. Sorry if it seems a little slow. It IS an exposition-ish chapter, after all.

But feel free to scream at Kyouko and her pure evil idiocy as much as you like, decide what you will about Shirou, and make some theories about Shichi's friend at the end if you want to. Don't worry: the legal battle is coming soon! We will get our action again and a court case in due time.

Okay! Enough from me: here's the chapter! <3

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

A court case. A lawsuit. He was honestly filing a lawsuit against them?

“Why that...that wretched boy!” Kyouko snarled, hurling the summons across the room and glaring at it like it was from the devil himself. “How dare he sue us? We who generously provide for his very wellbeing! That child wants for nothing because of us! He has one of the nicest houses in Japan, he has plenty of food, he can go to school and afford the tuition, and all of the bills are paid because of us!”

“In his defense, dear,” Shirou began, flipping calmly through the pages of his business magazine as his wife vented. “He does actually pay for most of those things himself.”

“He does not!” Kyouko snapped immediately, snarling and stomping over to the summons again, snatching it up with another vicious glare. “His livelihood is entirely dependent on us and here he is, throwing our care back in our faces! What sort of malfunctioning beast is he?”

“He isn’t a beast, nor is he malfunctioning.” Shirou sighed, examining a current stock market chart with interest. It looked like Mizuho Financial was taking a bit of a plunge. He might have to watch his share in that for the next few weeks to see if it was worth keeping anymore. “And contrary to your beliefs, Kyouko darling, Izaya holds some sort of job and pays for much of the bills and nearly all the food around the house.”

“A job?” Kyouko snorted skeptically. “And what sort of “job” does a child his age hold?”

Shirou shrugged, frowning at a different stock that was absolutely skyrocketing. He hadn’t invested in that one a few months ago because it had looked like it was going to crash. Now the prices for its shares were ridiculously high. Darn. A missed opportunity. “I’m not sure, dear.” He said, making a note of the stock on his phone in case their prices went down later and he could buy some shares. “It’s most likely not a legal or respectable one with the way his schedule works, but he has some source of income.”

“Oh my god.” Kyouko said in disgust, her nose wrinkling as her eyes flashed with distaste. “My son
is a stripper.”

Shirou paused and looked up at his wife in confusion. “I…never said that.” He said slowly, but it seemed she was taking the theory and running with it.

“A stripper! In my bloodline!” The businesswoman lamented, burying her face in her hands tragically. “What on earth have I done to deserve this hideous monstrosity?”

“Well, he wouldn’t be hideous even if he was a stripper.” Shirou muttered, shaking his head at his wife’s dramatic behavior. “In fact, I’d say he would be the most beautiful stripper in whichever club he worked at.”

“Oh, that’s even worse!” Kyouko wailed, not lifting her face even a little bit.

Shirou rolled his eyes, wondering what he had done to deserve his wife.

“Kyouko dear, I don’t believe that Izaya is a stripper.” The man sighed. “He’s far too conservative with his body for that sort of thing, and he’s smart enough to figure out something-”

“So he’s a prostitute then?!” Kyouko shrieked, cutting him off entirely with a look of horror on her face as she gaped at her husband. “A filthy, rotten whore?!”

“How in the world did you get that from “conservative with his body”? Shirou asked flatly, dumbfounded by the irrational suggestions coming out of his wife’s mouth.

“That slut!” Kyouko growled, glaring at the summons and clutching it tightly in her fist. “He dares to sue us? Legitimate, respectable businesspeople when he’s off showing his ass to whichever drunkard flashes the most yen? I bet he doesn’t even charge that much! Just gets on his knees and…and…I can’t even think that obscenely!”

“Oh, I’m sure you could if you put your mind to it, dear.” Shirou muttered, looking back down at his magazine. “And would you please stop jumping to conclusions about Izaya? I was going to say, before you interrupted me again, that Izaya is smart enough to figure out something to support himself and the twins that doesn’t involve selling his body in one way or another.”

“He’s a disgusting rat!” Kyouko yelled, turning her glare on her husband. “How could you be defending that little whore?”

“Because he isn’t a whore.” Shirou said sharply, glaring right back at his wife over his magazine. “I’d venture to say, beloved wife, that you’re more a whore than he is.”

Kyouko’s mouth dropped open in shock, her dark eyes locked on Shirou in pure astonishment like she couldn’t believe those words had just come out of her husband’s mouth.

“I’m not saying you’re a whore,” Shirou said smoothly before she could spout any threats of divorce. “I’m simply saying that Izaya probably hasn’t even had sex once in his life and, considering that facts of his existence and that of his sisters’, you can be said to have had sex at least a few times more than that, no?”

Kyouko still looked like she was trying to decide whether to be shocked or furious about the whore comment, and so Shirou decided to just change the subject rather than consoling his inconsolable wife.

“You’re missing the point at hand, in any rate.” He said, looking back down at his magazine and flipping the page. “We’re being sued by Izaya. Or at least he’s requesting the removal of himself and
“Unacceptable.” Kyouko said firmly, turning her back on her husband and returning to the matter of before. Thank goodness. Shirou was not in the mood for one of Kyouko’s marriage rants. “We are perfectly adequate parents. Neglect is hardly a big deal. And it isn’t neglect! We send babysitters to take care of him and the brats.”

“Sent.” Shirou corrected her. “We used to send babysitters for Izaya. Once he turned 5, we stopped. And we’ve never once paid for babysitters to watch the twins.”

“Besides the point!” Kyouko argued, waving her hand in the air dismissively. “We haven’t neglected him. There is no physical abuse involved. He’s turned out just fine mentally and emotionally. There is nothing wrong with him and thus no reason for him to be taken away.” She paused here for a few seconds and then added, “Of course they can take the little failures. I don’t want them at all. But Izaya stays.”

“Naturally, dear.” Shirou drawled, rolling his eyes again. “But you can’t really try to win this court case without pretending you want all of the children involved.”

“I don’t need to try to win anything.” Kyouko huffed. “There’s absolutely no grounds for a court case whatsoever!”

Shirou finished his business magazine and picked up the next one in the stack he had next to him. Ah. His monthly legal magazine. Lovely. And so appropriate for their current conversation.

“If the court has accepted his claim and sent us a summons, then there must be some kind of grounds. The Japanese legal system is quite overworked, after all.” Shirou said simply, opening to the table of contents to see if anything looked particularly interesting. “Our government limits the amount of lawyers and judges that can serve. I do believe that only 500 aspiring lawyers out of the tens of thousands that apply get into the law school which certifies them. And that makes for quite heavy workloads for the few lawyers and judges that work professionally. Trials get scheduled at about one per month. If your summons is coming so soon, they must have thought it was an important case.”

Here Shirou paused, considering what he would do if he were a judge and how he would select the cases which went on his docket. “Or an easy one that wouldn’t take a lot of effort or time to resolve.” He amended, nodding his head firmly. “Perhaps the judge thinks Izaya will easily win the case and thus placed him as the trial for this month.”

“Ridiculous!” Kyouko snapped, waving her hand at him madly. “We shall win this case, even if I have to hire all 500 lawyers in Japan to do it!”

Shirou closed his eyes, praying for patience from whatever otherworldly force oversaw such things.

“Dear, that’s just the number of students who are accepted into the Legal Training and Research Institute each year.” He sighed. “There are far more lawyers actually practicing.”

He glanced at a number listed on the top of his current magazine page. “There were 23,119 lawyers registered with the Japan Federation of Bar Associations as of last March.” He read aloud, looking up at his wife when he finished. “Are you really going to hire them all?”

Kyouko huffed again and turned her back on him, her attention returning to the summons still clenched tightly in her hands. “Well, I might not have to.” She muttered to herself, staring at the letter. “After all, could a dirty stripper really afford a legitimate lawyer?”

“Well, at least he’s not a whore anymore.” Shirou sighed, flipping through his magazine to get to the
And a so-called “child abuse” case?” Kyouko said aloud, glaring at the accusation listed in the summons. “I bet the court deals with far more pressing things throughout the year. It’ll brush this minor matter aside easily.”

“Oh, look at that.” Shirou muttered, pausing on a certain page and peering at the headline. “Reported child abuse in Japan exceeded 30,000 cases in the first half of last year. Seems like the government is trying to take more of an interest in the subject.”

“You’re not helping, Shirou!” Kyouko yelled, glaring fiercely at her husband. “Read a helpful statistic for once!”

“Well fine, your highness.” Shirou muttered, flicking his magazine and glaring at her briefly before scanning the page for a “helpful” statistic. It took him a few seconds, but he at least spotted something.

“It says the number of minors who suffered from psychological and verbal abuse accounted for 70.7 percent of the total at 21,406 cases.” He told his wife, glancing back up at her. “Maybe that’ll help soften the blow of all the verbal and psychological abuse you throw his way. Since so many other people do it, and all.”

“Oh second thought,” Kyouko scowled, clenching the summons in her fist and shooting a glare over her shoulder at Shirou. “I’ll just start consulting lawyers from my room. Alone.”

Shirou watched his wife storm out, slamming the door shut behind her, and heard her angry footsteps pounding away and towards the bedroom she was now deeming hers.

They always preferred renting small houses or condos instead of hotels while they were traveling, and even staying in Japan was no different. Kyouko didn’t like to return to her own house when it was full of disgusting failures like the twins, and she hadn’t actually slept there since their birth. Shirou wouldn’t mind staying there every once in a while, but Kyouko was his wife and business partner. He had to make her happy, which meant renting an entire house to stay in even when their actual house was just a few neighborhoods away.

Still…why did she have to claim the entire master bedroom as hers just because she was upset?

“Women.” Shirou sighed, shaking his head and looking back down at the legal magazine. He hoped Kyouko didn’t spend too much of their money hiring lawyers for the case. If Izaya was finally pushing against them, Shirou felt like he had substantial evidence to support his case and was confident in winning.

And being completely honest, Shirou was a little glad that Izaya was trying to get out of their custody. He knew that he wasn’t taking care of the boy like a proper father. He was no father. He was a businessman. If Izaya remained in Shirou’s care, he would be a mere machine. If he switched to the care of another, he might just learn to be a child.

Shirou would sign any papers he had to. Izaya didn’t belong in his custody, or in Kyouko’s. Neither did the twins. Shirou would like some visitation rights, he supposed. For when his business was over or he was back from trips. He’d like to see them in those moments he could spare to spend with his offspring. But someone else should be taking care of them full-time.

If it took a legal case for Kyouko to see that, then so be it. But Shirou certainly wasn’t going to deny anything if he was asked about it in court. He wanted those children to go to a better home than the
one he and his wife could provide.

“Please don’t let her spend too much money.” He prayed aloud this time, glancing at the figures for the estimated costs of lawyers this year. “I don’t want to deal with all that.”

***

Two days before…

It had been a week since that day in the hospital.

Since then, Izaya and the twins had all gone to stay with the Heiwajimas at their house (and Izaya really had no idea what his parents had done about their party – maybe they’d cancelled it or hired a proper venue) while Izaya recovered from his gunshot wounds.

He’d checked the Internet for news feeds about gangs right after he got to their house, and found that the biggest headline was about how the police had busted a notorious gang in possession of Devil’s Bliss. It was a huge breakthrough for the justice system in tracking down the horrid drug, and large quantities of it at that. The gang vehemently denied any knowledge of procuring Devil’s Bliss, and there were various statements from gang members about the drugs being planted by mysterious attackers the night before. However, the statements were too inconsistent to actually be considered by the police. Some said there was a group of twenty attackers who’d jumped them and left the drugs after they were rendered unconscious. Others claimed it had been operatives of a yakuza branch, huge and terrifying and so obviously out to get the gang moving in on their territory. A few others said that a vicious beast taking on the form of a man had struck in the middle of the night, led by a ghost (Humph. Izaya was not that pale.). And still others said it had been the work of two high-school aged boys, one blonde and one raven-haired, both very skilled fighters. Yep. There was just too much inconsistency to believe even one of the testimonies.

Ah, humans. They could always be trusted to create tall tales to make themselves sound tougher, even if it was in their best interest to tell the truth.

There were pictures of the bust all over the place, and Izaya saved a few of those, attaching them in an e-mail to Riku which he promptly sent, along with a note requesting the money to be sent in the form of credit to his card instead of cash, and a statement about withdrawing from the Cybers’ service. He was going to take the break from criminal activity that he’d promised Shizuo…at least with the Cybers.

There were a few other interesting gangs out there, new and fresh, looking for some help and information for any price. Izaya scrolled absently through a few of the sketchier online forums, making sure to pick out a few names to look into later, and then shut the computer down, taking a nice long nap.

And at the end of that nap, Izaya had been thrust into the schedule which he’d been following for the last week. It was a schedule that involved worry constantly being sent his way – from his sisters, the Heiwajima parents, Kasuka, and Shizuo – about nearly everything he did. It had some physical therapy exercises, meant to make sure that his muscles were healing properly from their wounds, but nothing too strenuous. It featured Izaya begging constantly to be allowed to go to school again, never mind the gunshot wounds peppering his sides and slight bruise still coating his cheek, and constantly being turned down by overprotective Heiwajimas on all sides. It involved Izaya finally resorting to planting an actual snake in Kichirou and Namiko’s bed (Just a little corn snake – nothing to worry about. They could be found in pet stores all over the place.) to show what kind of retaliation they would be facing if he wasn’t allowed to go to school.
After carefully returning the corn snake to the neighbors next door whom Izaya admitted to “borrowing” it from, Kichirou and Namiko finally relented in letting Izaya go to school again, ending the schedule of household arrest and worry, and beginning a schedule of everybody worrying about him at school.

It began with Shinra and Dotachin, of course, who had wanted to know exactly why Izaya had been out of school for nearly the entire week (it was Thursday by the time he’d convinced the Heiwajimas to let him go to school). Their question had been answered when Shichi came running in the door, demanding to know if Izaya’s injuries were healing up, if he was feeling dizzy at all, if he wanted Shichi to write him an excuse note to P.E., or if he thought he needed to go home.

Shinra, being the aspiring illegal doctor that he was, had taken the most natural course of action for any underground medical expert. He’d pinned Izaya to the nearest desk and yanked his school shirt up to reveal the stitches and remnants of the gunshot wounds that peppered his pale body, examining them with utter fascination and glee.

Shizuo had practically thrown the doctor off Izaya and shielded the slender body with his own, but the damage had been done. Two more people now knew Izaya had been shot. The raven intended to keep it at that number, and not a single digit higher. It didn’t make it easy when Dotachin started to worry about everything Izaya did just as much as Shizuo.

God forbid Izaya stub his toe on the door – he might start bleeding out and die! Oh my, if the electrical socket sparks, Izaya’s stitches might catch fire. Better keep him away from those. Did you see the horrible draft right by Izaya’s seat? Maybe he should switch places with someone else for the next few weeks or he might catch a cold.

You would think Izaya was either a newborn infant or pregnant from the way they were carrying on.

It was really only Shinra who treated him with any sense of normalcy, and that was because he was a doctor who knew Izaya was going to be just fine and didn’t need to be babied. But did that lesson compute with Shizuo and Dotachin? Of course not.

Which led to very awkward situations when other kids in the hallways asked why Shizuo and Kadota seemed so worried about him. The school had begun to accept that Shizuo and Izaya were dating, even if they still seemed freaked out by the whole concept, so they gave Shizuo a bit of a pass, but Kadota was still a mystery to them. Yes, he and Izaya were friends…sort of…but why was he so worried? And come to think of it, why had Izaya been out of school for so long? Were the two mysteries connected? Was Izaya in trouble? Why weren’t the teachers making him participate in P.E.? What was going on?

So many questions that Izaya did not have the time nor the energy to answer. And he hated the way Shizuo and Kadota were both being way too protective of him and making everything worse. He was so going to give them both a piece of his mind once the day was over. Which he had, but did it help?

No it didn’t. Not even a little.

Now it was Saturday, Izaya was trying again to convince Shizuo that he was well enough to play Mario Kart with him (seriously!) and Shichi was coming over with his friend who’d finally arrived from Russia after a nearly 10 hour flight from Moscow.

Namiko had spent the last few hours cleaning up the house to make it ready for their guest, and everything was ready.
Everyone was waiting with bated breath to see who would be fighting for Izaya and the twins’ freedom.

The doorbell finally rang, and Izaya’s head snapped away from the TV and over to the front door instantly. He didn’t care that his character suddenly took a plunge off the track he’d been racing on (Shizuo was winning, anyway). He just wanted to see who was behind that door.

“I’ll get it!” Izaya yelled, dropping his remote and running for the door as fast as he possibly could. He heard Shizuo pause the game behind him and then come running over just as fast. From elsewhere in the house, Kasuka stopped playing dolls with the twins and came running for the door with them in tow, and both Heiwajima parents left the kitchen with dinner still cooking to be the final members of the household all waiting at the door.

Izaya took a deep breath, gripping the handle tightly and slowly pulled the front door open.

When he saw his math teacher standing on the porch, Izaya resisted the urge to throw himself at the man and grab him in a hug. He was actually here. Shichi was actually, finally here. And he was bringing Izaya’s salvation with him. It was going to start. The long road to freedom from his parents that Izaya had always thought impossible was going to begin.

Shichi gestured at a tall man standing at his side, and Izaya’s red eyes flicked over to lock on the new figure that his math teacher had brought over.

“Everyone, I’d like you to meet my friend.” Shichi said, and Izaya couldn’t miss the way that a bit of a Russian accent had begun tingeing his Japanese. He’d probably been chatting with his friend in Russian before coming here.

But Izaya’s attention was still mainly focused on the tall person in front of him rather than Shichi’s slight accent. The man was unlike anyone he’d ever seen before.

He had the same icy blue eyes and pale blonde hair as Shichi, but his hair was streaked crazily with shades of black and purple. There were a few piercings that lined his ears, and Izaya could distinctly see a tattoo poking out from underneath one of the man’s long sleeves. He was tall and imposing, with a fairly broad set of shoulders and a long scar that ran down one side of his face, right over his cheek. But despite every single one of those off-putting and caution-inducing features, a massive grin cutting across the man’s terrifying face ruined the entire effect.

“This is Kazimir.” Shichi was saying, placing a hand on his friend’s shoulder with a grin. “Kazimir Borya Sokolov. My very best friend.”

Kazimir waved cheerfully at them all, that huge grin never leaving his equally huge face. “It is good to finally meet you.” The large man said in a deep voice, his Japanese slightly slow and weighed down by the heavy Russian accent that came with it. It was still Japanese, and it was still completely understandable, but this man could clearly be pinpointed as a foreigner whenever he spoke.

“It’s, ah, good to finally meet you as well.” Kichirou said next, breaking the short silence that had fallen, bowing to Kazimir deeply. “We can’t tell you how grateful we are that you’re here.”

“Yes, very grateful.” Namiko agreed, bowing just as deep as her husband to the tall Russian. “Thank you so much.”

“It is no problem.” Kazimir assured her, waving a hand to indicate that they didn’t have to bow.

His Japanese was a little rusty. He skipped a few words here and there, and that accent was just so
noticeable but…but he spoke Japanese and he was a lawyer. And he was here to help them. Izaya couldn’t ask for anything more than that.

“Still, thank you for coming.” The raven said next, smiling brightly at the tall man as happiness spread throughout his body. “You have no idea how much this means to me and my sisters.”

“Going to be fine.” Mairu chanted from her position clutching Kasuka’s hand, looking at the tall man with a confident grin. “Scary man make everything fine.”

“Iza-nii, Mairu, and Kururi all going to be free.” Kururi added softly as she clutched Kasuka’s other hand, giving Kazimir a toned down version of Mairu’s grin.

Kazimir’s face softened slightly when he saw the twins, and a bit of a fond smile took over his lips rather than the grin from before. “Yes.” He said in that thick accent. “Everything is going to be fine.”

“Are you really a lawyer?” Shizuo asked suspiciously, his golden eyes narrowed at the Russian who was…practically the same height as him. Izaya looked up at Shizuo in shock, realizing for the first time just how freakishly tall his boyfriend was.

Had Shizuo always been that tall? Had Izaya just never noticed because he was too busy being awestruck by Shizuo’s inhuman strength to see his equally inhuman height? Goodness. Maybe Izaya wasn’t as observant as he had once thought.

“You don’t look like a lawyer to me.” Shizuo continued despite Izaya’s new internal revelation, still glaring hard at the man. “You’ve got piercings and tattoos and dyed hair. Most lawyers look like businesspeople and they dress professionally so they can impress their clients. What sort of clients do you work for that you can dress like that and still call yourself a lawyer?”

Kazimir’s forehead wrinkled a little bit as his mind processed all the Japanese being thrown his way, but once he had processed it all, he looked a little stunned by the boldly phrased question from Shizuo. Then he began to laugh.

He laughed loudly and for a long time, holding his stomach as a few tears came to his eyes from the force of his laughter. “Oh my.” The Russian gasped, covering his eyes with one hand as he continued to laugh. “This boy has guts. I like him.”

Shichi laughed a little with his friend, scratching the back of his head almost sheepishly as he looked at the Heiwajima family. “Well, I suppose I forgot to tell you.” The math teacher said slowly, his eyes glancing at the man still cackling beside him.

Kazimir finally stopped laughing and stood up straight, the huge grin from before now back and even wider on his face as he looked at Shizuo with glittering icy eyes, delighted by how blunt the blonde was. And as Kazimir grinned at Shizuo, scar on his face being stretched to the point where it showed prominently on his cheekbones, a theory about what Shichi was going to say about Kazimir suddenly appeared in Izaya’s mind. And when Shichi spoke next, Izaya discovered that his theory was absolutely correct.

“Kazimir is the lawyer for the Russian mafia.” Shichi said casually, like he’d just announced the weather forecast. “Hope you guys don’t mind a criminal handling your lawsuit.”
So there's the start of our slow build-up to the court case! What do you think? Can a Russian mafia lawyer really help Izaya and the twins get away from Kyouko and Shirou? And how will the court case go? Will Shirou speak FOR Kyouko, or against her? Will Izaya and the twins be adopted by Shichi? Some of these answers are more obvious than others (XD) but we'll be finding them all out soon enough!

I hope you guys stick with me long enough to find out. Again, sorry for the kind of slow chapter! Hope you still enjoyed it! I'll see you on Wednesday with a chapter that will (hopefully) begin getting us back to the action! <3
The Cat’s Case (猫の場合)

Chapter Notes

Hey everyone! Sorry for the late update. My free time in the morning which I normally take to write up the chapter was cut off by a dentist appointment, and the day ran kind of long after that. In any case, here I am now, pushing off dinner a few minutes to get the chapter up! XD Sorry in advance for any typos: I didn't get the chance to edit it before posting.

Right! And an important notice about my next update will be placed in the lower notes! For now though, here's the chapter! Sorry it took so long! <3

See the end of the chapter for more notes

A lawyer for the Russian mafia. Why did that not surprise Shizuo at all? It should surprise him. He should be outraged at the betrayal, astonished by the connection to the Russian mafia, baffled by Shichi’s apparent connection to the Russian mafia, and so many other things. But right now, all he could feel was satisfaction at the fact that there was an explanation for why the guy looked so odd.

Now what did that say about Shizuo’s messed up life?

“Oh.” Shizuo said simply, nodding his head at the grinning man. “That explains a lot.”

“What my dearest son meant to say,” Shizuo’s dad sang, stepping in front of Shizuo with a charming smile directed right at Shichi. “Is…WHAT THE HELL, MAN?!” He grabbed Shichi by his shoulders and shook him violently back and forth, making the math teacher’s head bounce around like some kind of bobblehead. His neck would probably snap if Shizuo’s dad kept this up, but the brown-haired man didn’t seem to care.

“A member of the mafia?! Are you serious?!” He practically screeched, still shaking Shichi even as his eyes flicked over to look at Kazimir. “Why do you know a member of the mafia?! Were you a part of the mafia?! Did this guy used to help you kill people?! Why does the mafia have a lawyer?! These are things I need to know before you bring some huge tattooed maniac who could quite possibly kill us all over to my house for dinner!”

Shichi seemed to be trying to respond, but the way Kichirou was shaking the poor man made it impossible for any words to get past his throat. It was like they were getting crammed back down each time he tried to open his mouth. Eventually, Kichirou realized this and stopped shaking the man, giving him a firm glare instead while still refusing to let go of his shoulders.

Shichi took a few breaths to compose himself, looked Kichirou right in the eye, and said “You made us dinner?”

“Seriously?!” Kichirou yelled, slamming his hands over his eyes and yelling at the sky. “Of all the things I said, that is what you choose to focus on?!”

“Honey, they’re probably hungry.” Namiko said gently, her eyes glancing over nervously at Kazimir as he smiled at them all. “And…well, this conversation might be one that’s better to have inside, don’t you think?”
“I agree with Mother.” Kasuka said aloud, nodding his head and pulling the twins back inside by their hands. “Let’s have food and discuss whether we proceed with this trial or call the cops on Onii-san’s math teacher.”

Shizuo watched his brother walk off, wondering how he could say something that was essentially a threat to a member of the Russian mafia so casually, before turning to look back at Shichi and Kazimir.

“You better come inside.” He told them as Namiko began to usher her husband indoors, calming the fuming man down as they walked towards the kitchen. “Or they might retract their offer of dinner.”

“Ah, thanks Shizuo.” Shichi sighed, rubbing the back of his head and looking guiltily at Kazimir. He said something in Russian to his friend, and the tall man replied back, patting Shichi on the back like he was reassuring him about something.

Then a much higher voice joined the conversation that Shizuo didn’t understand one word of, and he saw Izaya walking over and patting Kazimir on the arm comfortingly, a big smile on his face as his neck craned up so he could meet the man’s eyes.

Kazimir looked shocked by Izaya’s usage of the Russian language, and his head snapped over to look at Shichi as if he needed confirmation that he wasn’t going crazy. Shichi laughed at the expression on his friend’s face and said something else in Russian, ruffling Izaya’s hair and smiling fondly at the small boy.

Izaya punched Shichi’s side in retaliation, huffing at the childish treatment and muttering something else in Russian before spinning on his heel and grabbing Shizuo’s hand, beginning to yank the confused blonde inside the house.

“Давай(Davay)!" The small raven snapped, stomping his feet as he pulled Shizuo along.

“Um…” Shizuo said ever so eloquently in response, staring at the back of his boyfriend’s head. “I… have no idea what you just said.”

Izaya glanced back at Shizuo in surprise, then seemed to remember that not everyone spoke a bajillion languages like he did. “I said come on.” Izaya muttered, tugging Shizuo again as his cheeks colored pink with embarrassment. “Any idiot could figure that out.”

“Well apparently not, because I’m an idiot and I had no clue what you were saying.” Shizuo responded easily, earning himself a lovely glare from his vicious little boyfriend as he was pulled all the way into the kitchen.

“Just shut up.” The raven huffed, releasing Shizuo’s hand and marching over to the food set up along the counter, ready for people to come by and grab. “It’s not my fault that you’re dumber than most idiots.”

Shizuo laughed at the disgruntled boy, shaking his head and just deciding to let Izaya have the argument as he grabbed a scoop and began to plop some rice onto his plate.

“What did Shichi even say about you that got you so riled up?” He asked curiously, getting some soy sauce to pour on it as he watched Izaya carefully select the pickled vegetables he wanted from the small pan they were in, chopsticks moving with the same precise speed that the raven always did everything with.

The raven was silent for a bit, almost pouting at the pans in front of him, and then he let out a big sigh. “It’s nothing really horrible.” He admitted. “He just said I was a talented little cat.”
Shizuo blinked at that and looked down at Izaya in confusion. “Cat?” He repeated. “Why would he say that?”

Izaya’s cheeks turned the slightest shade of red as he began to scoop his own rice, looking pointedly down at his plate the entire time. “Well in Russia, they often use the names of small animals in their diminutive forms to act as terms of endearment.” He said casually, clearly trying to remain aloof and seem unaffected despite the small blush still coating his cheeks. “He called me “ko’tenok”, which is basically kitten in Russian. It’s a term of endearment often used for cute children or your daughters and sons.”

Shizuo paused at that. A term of endearment…for sons. Was…was Shichi already thinking of Izaya like his own son?

When he looked over at Izaya again, the light red still staining his normally so pale cheeks, he knew that that was why the raven was so flustered. Izaya was wondering the exact same thing. Wondering if what he’d been hoping about Shichi was actually possible.

Izaya looked cautiously over at Shizuo, and their eyes met in a clash of red and gold, just staring at each other for a few seconds and nothing else. No words were spoken between the two of them, yet somehow Shizuo felt like they were conveying messages of understanding to each other that couldn’t be matched by any spoken words. Be it Russian, English, Japanese, or something else entirely. Not a single word of the human language could convey what they were feeling.

“I’m sure it’s the same.” Shizuo said aloud, breaking the silence finally as he looked at Izaya. “What the two of you feel for each other. I’m sure it’s the same.”

Izaya looked right at Shizuo and nodded slowly, a bit of a small smile stretching over his face. “I hope so.” He said softly. “I really do.”

Shizuo placed a hand on Izaya’s shoulder, squeezing it gently and reassuringly, before nodding at the living room where the rest of the family was gathered with the food they had already gotten for themselves. “Let’s go join them.” He said softly.

Izaya stood there with his head pressed into Shizuo’s chest, eventually taking a few small steps forward to bury his face in it, still not saying a word. His food was clutched in his hands, just a simple plate of rice and pickled vegetables, and the plate was pressing into Shizuo’s stomach as Izaya squished it between his body and Shizuo’s. But Shizuo didn’t mind. He could deal with a tiny plate digging into his stomach if it meant comforting Izaya. Hell, if it meant being there for Izaya in any way shape or form, Shizuo would gladly dig a thousand knives into his body a thousand times over.

He’d probably heal in about a week, but that was besides the point.

It was the thought that counted.

Izaya stood there with his head pressed into Shizuo’s chest, just breathing in his scent, until a sort of calm seemed to settle over his body and he pulled away with a sigh. “Thank you.” Izaya said quietly, his eyes avoiding Shizuo’s. “You’re always the one who’s here for me when I need you.”

“And I always will be.” Shizuo responded instantly, cupping Izaya’s cheek with one hand and gently tilting his face up to look at him. “No matter what happens in this court case, or if the Russian mafia get involved somehow, or your parents come back, or Shichi doesn’t adopt you. Whatever happens, I will be there.” He swore. “Got it?”

Izaya stared at Shizuo for a few seconds, and then a small laugh bubbled from between his lips. “The
way you say it, Shizu-chan.” Izaya laughed softly, shaking his head with a fond smile on his lips as he looked happily at the blonde. “It sounds like a threat!” He beamed, seeming almost delighted by the fact.

“Ah, shut up.” Shizuo muttered, smacking Izaya upside the head and snatching Izaya’s plate from his hands, stalking off towards the living room with both his and Izaya’s meals. “Just come on already! It’s only a matter of time before the Russians get here and need to get their food, too.”

“The Russians are coming soon! We better prepare!” Izaya sang, poking Shizuo in the side as he caught up to the blonde, the gentle teasing making Shizuo’s heart flutter just the tiniest bit. The tiniest bit. That was all.

But the nice warmth of the moment didn’t last long. Soon after he and Izaya sat down in the living room, Shizuo heard Shichi and Kazimir come in as well, each bearing their own plate of Japanese-style food. Shichi was explaining in Russian how to eat it as they came in, demonstrating with the chopsticks he had laying on his plate, and Kazimir was staring in bafflement at all like he couldn’t believe that food like this actually existed outside of TV shows.

It was pretty hard to believe that either of them were connected to the mafia as they sat down, Shichi laughing and teasing his friend as the tall man tried clumsily to pick up the tiny chopsticks in one huge hand, scowling and complaining about the task maybe two seconds later. They seemed just like normal people, like any person you could find walking down the street. Well, any person who spoke fluent Russian, Shizuo supposed. But he could still see the tattoos poking out from behind Kazimir’s clothing, a telltale reminder of the sort of abnormal guy they were dealing with. And now that Shizuo was looking at Shichi, he could also see a slight tattoo poking out above the V-neck line of his shirt which definitely didn’t belong on your average math teacher in Japan.

As normal as these guys seemed, Shizuo was inclined to believe they were anything but normal.

Finally, after Kazimir got the general gist of how chopsticks worked and began to eat his food (albeit kind of like how Shizuo did when he was two), Shichi turned to face the rest of the Heiwajima household who was watching him with careful eyes.

“So.” He started off, looking right at Kichirou. “I’ll start by saying that I’m an adopted child.”

How…was that relevant? Shizuo blinked a few times, trying to think of some way that this random statement corresponded with the bombshell about the Russian mafia. When he looked around the room at the other members of his family, though, they were all watching the man intently, clearly interested in seeing what he was going to do next.

So maybe it was just Shizuo who thought the comment was out of place. Or he just didn’t know about the completely normal aspect of adoption that apparently got you sent to the Russian mafia.

“My parents were Russian,” Shichi was saying, bringing Shizuo’s attention back to the present. “But they wanted to get me out of Russia before an epidemic hit, and so they brought me to Japan, where I was adopted and raised by a family called Suzuki.”

Izaya sucked in a breath at that, and Shizuo’s mind seemed to react to Izaya’s shock, instantly pulling up the memory of Izaya he had that was associated with that name.

“Hey…” Shizuo said slowly as the memory came to him, piece by piece. “Isn’t Suzuki some daycare nurse guy?”

Shichi raised an eyebrow, looking a little impressed as to how Shizuo knew that exact fact. “My elder brother Roku is a daycare nurse, yes.” He said slowly, his gaze moving over to Izaya. “In fact,
I believe he’s a nurse at the daycare you take your sisters to.”

Izaya nodded, looking over at the twins perched in Kasuka’s lap, currently too busy fighting for space on their idol’s lap to notice any conversations about them.

“He is.” Izaya responded to Shichi, looking back at his math teacher with a smile. “He’s a pretty good nurse as far as things go but…I dunno, he’s a little pushy.”

Shichi snorted at that, waving a hand in the air. “You think he’s only a little pushy?” He asked, rolling his eyes. “Clearly you don’t know about the way Roku called your ex-Hajime to try and get info on your family life.”

“He did what?!” Izaya shrieked, jumping to his feet while his eyes flashed with pure rage. “I’m gonna kill him! It’s his fault that all of that happened?! Are you serious?!”

Shichi raised a hand in the air, clearly trying to calm the furious raven down. “Relax. Roku is an idiot but there’s no reason to kill him.” The Russian promised. “He honestly thought he was doing the right thing…even if he seriously wasn’t.”

“How in the hell could calling up someone’s ex be the right thing?” Izaya demanded, crossing his arms and glaring at Shichi, not sitting down just yet.

Shichi blew out a sigh and ran his fingers through his hair, glancing over at Kazimir for a few seconds before looking back up at Izaya. “Because he’s a delusional buffoon.” The math teacher said bluntly. “He thinks that everything he does is correct even when it’s not. There’s no helping him. Believe me, I’ve tried.”

Shizuo had to admit that he liked how blunt Shichi was. The Russian didn’t sugarcoat anything. He told it like it was and that was something that Shizuo genuinely appreciated. He still found it pretty sketchy that the guy had some connections to the Russian mafia somehow, but he could at least appreciate some aspects of Shichi’s character.

“…Okay then.” Izaya finally muttered, sitting down beside Shizuo and huffing a little to show how he was still discontented with the answer. Hey, if Izaya wanted Shizuo to go over to that daycare and rough the nurse up, all he had to do was say the word.

Shizuo took Izaya’s hand and squeezed it gently, making sure that Izaya knew that, and when the raven relaxed a bit and squeezed back, he knew Izaya had gotten the message. Shichi saw this too and a bit of smirk crossed his face at the thought of Roku getting punched in the face by Shizuo. That would be something he would pay good money to see.

But the Russian couldn’t afford to indulge on that lovely fantasy for longer than a few seconds, and he quickly resumed his story.

“I never fit in too well with the Suzukis, and when I turned 17 I left Japan and went to Russia, looking for my birth parents.” The man continued, Shizuo’s gaze moving back over to him as the story resumed. “Long story short, I realized Russia was a big bigger than I thought and that I needed to get a job and support myself if I wanted to search for my parents. So I found work with the Russian mafia.”

“That is a funny story, actually.” Kazimir cut in, his Russian accent tinged with amusement as he chuckled at the thoughts running through his head. “You see, Shichi was wandering around one of our warehouses while the boss was inside taking a bath.”

“We don’t need to talk about that.” Shichi interrupted him, giving Kazimir a deadly glare. “Ever.”
Kazimir laughed at the expression on his friend’s face but made a zipping motion over his lips, throwing away the imaginary key for good measure.

Shichi gave a single, gruff nod and then turned to look back at his audience. “Right. So I got the job in the mafia. I did pretty well for myself, climbed up the ranks a bit, and kept looking for my parents.” He said briskly, clearly trying to rush past his backstory to get to the actual important part. “I found them after a few years. Well, what was left of them. Technically I found their gravesite and some documents…whatever. I found them and everything was great and then a little while after that, I got a call from my family in Japan saying that my adopted mother was sick and dying.”

Shichi sighed, shaking his head at the memory. “God, whenever I retell it, it sounds like some traditional sob story.” He muttered. “My parents died, then my other parents died. I was oh so young and on my own. Pity me.”

“Like we would.” Kazimir snorted, giving Shichi a cheerful grin when the math teacher’s head snapped up to glare at him. “What? It’s the mafia! You don’t get pity in the mafia!” Kazimir defended, holding his hands out in front of his body like he was protecting himself.

“I didn’t ask for pity! I don’t need it!” Shichi snarled, raising a fist in the air to punch his friend.

“Ahem.” Namiko said sweetly, drawing their attention back over to her. She smiled at Shichi, the warmth of her smile undermined somewhat by the threat in her eyes. “Continue.” She said simply, and Shichi paused for a few seconds before nodding, putting his hand back in his lap. “Yes ma’am.” He grumbled, still shooting the grinning Kazimir a glare out of the corner of his eyes.

Oh yeah. Shizuo could see the resemblance to Izaya. Fending for yourself without any kind of adult aid? Check. Doing illegal shit at a young age to survive? Check. Growing up way too fast? Check. Not needing/wanting any pity when a little bit of empathy and support would seriously help you out? Check. It was like seeing double, except one of them was an adult with blonde hair and blue eyes and the other was a young boy with ink black hair and red eyes. And one was from Russia and the other from Japan. Also one was a member of the mafia and the other was just screwing with gangs. And one was viciously sarcastic while the other was viciously sassy. But other than that, completely identical!

“I went back home to see my mother, she was nice to me for the first time in my life, and then she died.” Shichi said flatly, as though he was describing his morning routine. “After that, I couldn’t go back to Russia. I ended up staying in Japan. Since I didn’t want to start over from the bottom rung, I decided not to join the yakuza and I just became a math teacher.” He shrugged, glancing over at Izaya. “That’s the basic break-down of my history. And now you know that while I’m out of the mafia, I still have some connections to it.”

“Connections like me.” Kazimir chirped, pointing at himself almost happily. “And a few other friends here and there.”

Shichi shrugged, a faint smirk flickering over his lips. “What can I say? You make lifelong friends when you spend a few years shooting up targets alongside each other.” He said casually, although there was a definite hint of mischief in those blue eyes that reminded Shizuo eerily of the small boy sitting right next to him.

“When you say “targets”,” Kichirou finally cut in, looking suspiciously at Shichi. “Do you mean practice targets…or like human targets that you needed to hunt down?”

Shichi was silent for just a few seconds. “So anyway, Kazimir is a lawyer!” He said brightly, completely avoiding the question at hand. “And he agreed to help us out on this case. And I promise,
“You didn’t answer my question.” Kichirou pointed out, eyeing his Russian friend. “You’re avoiding the subject.”

Shichi raised a finger in the air. “Objection! I’m simply redirecting the focus of the conversation to what it was originally on.” He replied smoothly, turning to look at Namiko. “And that topic happened to be how Kazimir is going to help us win Izaya and the twins’ case.”

“Alright, but the new topic is getting pushed to the table for later discussion.” Kichirou said firmly, pointing two fingers at his eyes, then at Shichi, then back at himself again. He repeated the motion a few times before letting his hand drop to his side, apparently satisfied that Shichi had gotten the message.

“How can you promise that Kazimir is going to win the case?” Shizuo asked next, trying to ignore the way everyone’s head immediately turned to look at him. He hated being the center of attention. It made him even more worried about messing up than usual. With all the eyes firmly locked on him, and no one actually answering his question, the worry grew. “Well?!” He demanded in a snarl, voice getting gruff and angry as a result of his discomfort.

“Shizu-chan, relax.” Izaya said softly, running his fingers calmly through Shizuo’s hair. “I’m sure Kazimir was right about to answer you.” Here, the raven paused, giving the tall man a very harsh look. “Right?” He asked sweetly enough, but the meaning behind his words was clear.

Cough up an answer before I sick my boyfriend on you.

Kazimir blinked at the dangerous look in Izaya’s eyes, but then the same delight that had spread over his face at Shizuo’s boldness earlier came back, and the tall Russian laughed loudly. “Yes, I like this one too!” He said cheerfully, nodding in respect at Izaya. “Very well. I will answer the blonde’s question.” He promised, and Izaya gave a sharp nod back, still running his fingers through Shizuo’s hair soothingly.

Shizuo was suddenly reminded of those evil villains who kept evil fluffy cats in their laps and liked to stroke them maniacally during their scenes. He kinda felt like that was what he and Izaya looked like now, except for Shizuo was more of a gruff dog than a cat, and he certainly didn’t fit on Izaya’s lap. But the strokes from Izaya’s hand were keeping him pretty calm, no matter if he was a cat, dog, or human. Maybe in all those movies, the cats were just super vicious so the villains stroked them to keep them from attacking anybody. It would make sense.

Shizuo tried to get his mind off vicious cats and evil masterminds, focusing on Kazimir with a small growl to enunciate Izaya’s request.

The Russian man glanced at him and grinned. “I am the lawyer for the Russian mafia.” He said simply. “How much shit do you think I have dealt with and gotten people out of?”

Shizuo was a little startled by the direct response, but he figured he should just get used to that from Shichi and Kazimir. It seemed to be a Russian thing. And in any case, it was certainly a good answer to his question.

This guy was the legal counsel for a group that only did illegal things, and pretty high levels of illegal things at that. He was in charge of making sure no one could arrest them for things that a normal person might get beheaded for. He’d probably seen his fair share of difficult cases…and since he was still around to tell about them, he’d probably won them all.
“Kazimir is the best you can get when you want to get out of a difficult situation.” Shichi said firmly, patting his friend’s shoulder with a grin. “I know he may look a little rough, but he’ll win you guys this case. Don’t worry about it.”

“And I am even working for free.” Kazimir added, a bit of a sullen look crossing his face with that statement. “Which is absolutely horrible.” He muttered, glaring at Shichi.

“Hey, it’s not my fault that you wandered into a death trap and needed me to get you out of it.” The math teacher said breezily, smiling at his friend. “It’s just my good fortune.”

“Oh be quiet.” Kazimir growled, pushing at Shichi with a scowl. “Let’s just get on with the case. Who is the plaintiff?”

Everyone stared at Kazimir blankly, the legal term not even comprehending in their minds.

“Who is suing or attacking the other party?” Kazimir clarified, sighing at their lack of knowledge.

“That’s me and my sisters.” Izaya announced, shuffling on the couch a little bit until he was right across from Kazimir. “We’re trying to get out of our parents’ custody.”

“Why?” Kazimir asked next, pulling a pen out of his suit pocket along with a small notepad, icy blue eyes entirely focused on the small boy across from him.

“They’re grossly neglectful.” Izaya responded instantly, a bit of a dark look passing over his eyes. “We’re always alone.”

“Specifically how often are you alone?” Kazimir continued, scribbling down a few words on the notepad.

“Always.” Izaya responded sharply. “When I turned two, they stopped having direct contact with me aside from short visits every few months. Babysitters worked in shifts to raise me, and by the time I was five, they stopped hiring babysitters to do that so I was entirely on my own.”

Kazimir raised an eyebrow at that, humming as his pencil began to move with a bit more speed. “I see. That is some pretty gross neglect.” He glanced over at the two little girls, still playing on Kasuka’s lap without a care in the world. “How do they factor in? When did your sisters fall into the picture?” He asked, looking back over at Izaya.

“When I turned ten, my parents came home, dumped some babies in my arms, said they were my sisters, and left.” Izaya told the Russian lawyer. “I had to figure out how to raise them on my own. I gave them names. I was the only person they ever really saw.”

Kazimir hummed again, nodding as the pencil moved even faster.

Beside Izaya, Shizuo’s hands were tightening into fists, rage welling up inside of him like a monster. Just hearing the treatment Izaya and the twins received from their parents was enough to make Shizuo’s blood boil. He wished he could march up to those no-good businesspeople and punch them square in their faces. And then punch them again. And again. And again. And over and over until they reached Timbuktu, crashed in a fiery heap, and exploded far away from the Orihara siblings.

That was what they deserved.

“I can’t believe they did all that.” Shichi said softly, and Shizuo’s head snapped up to see the math teacher staring at the ground, fury burning through his icy gaze as he glared at the carpet. “Those…слизистый злыe ублюдki/ sлизistyy zlyye ublyudki!”
“What was that?” Shizuo asked, brow wrinkling in confusion.

“Slimy evil bastards.” Izaya, Kazimir, and Shichi all translated at the same time, not one of them looking even the slightest bit sorry about the words.

Oh good. He got the translation in surround sound.

“And beyond you having to raise yourself and your sisters,” Kazimir continued, drawing the conversation back into legal matters. “Did your parents put any unreasonable responsibilities on your shoulders?”

“Ha!” Shizuo barked loudly, getting ready to go on a full-blown rant on the subject.

Izaya placed a firm hand on his chest, pushing him back down into the couch. “I got this.” He told Shizuo softly, leaning over to kiss him reassuringly on the cheek. Then the raven turned to look at Kazimir, his red eyes hard.

“I have to pay the bills in the house.” He started. “I have to set-up any and all events they decide to hold when they get back. I have to buy food and water for myself and the girls. I have to take the girls to daycare and back again. I have to cook and clean everything. I have to pay for my own tuition at school as well as my uniform and textbooks. I have to buy my own train passes to get everywhere I need to go. I have to handle every financial problem that my parents are supposed to be taking care of. On top of this, they expect me to get perfect grades and if I don’t, then the amount of money they send me every now and then gets severely diminished.”

“Iza-nii works too hard.” Mairu cut in, finally paying attention to the conversation as she looked at her big brother with sad eyes. “Works way too hard for them.”


Kazimir stopped writing for a few seconds, just taking in all of the information surging towards him at once. “I…see.” He said once, closing his eyes and taking a few deep breaths. When he opened them again, he looked straight at Izaya, face entirely serious, and asked, “Do you want to sue for more cases of abuse, then?”

Izaya listened to this for a bit and then nodded, a bit of hope and maybe even a tinge of excitement entering his eyes. Well why wouldn’t he be excited? Izaya had a free kick-ass lawyer right here, ready to sue the Orihara parents for all they were worth on account of the suffering Izaya had been dealing with for seventeen years. He was probably thrilled to be able to get back at his parents for all the things they’d done to him.

“During the time when they had interaction with you,” Kazimir continued, adding some larger words to the margin of his paper as he spoke. “What sort of experiences did you have? As in, what were those moments of contact like?”
“Horrible.” Izaya replied. “Kyouko, my mother, is degrading and aggressive. She pokes at every insecurity I feel and exposes it right away, bashing at all my weak points until I can’t do anything but give in. It’s like her words just render me powerless. All I can do is listen to everything she says like a doll and pray I don’t make a mistake.”

Izaya nodded at the twins, a bit of sadness coming into his eyes. “And she’s even worse with the girls. She hates them. Calls them useless failures and all kinds of other things. She’s cold and cruel to all of us. She’s no mother at all.”

Kazimir’s hand paused as he wrote, the Russian taking enough time to flip to another page before asking, “And your father? What is he like?”

Izaya gave a small laugh at that question, shaking his head. “My father Shirou is…confusing.” He admitted softly. “He only cares about business, I know that much. Everything is a business transaction to him, or a product to be analyzed. I know that sometimes he argues with Kyouko about the way she treats us, and that he’ll defend my actions every now and then. But he mostly does whatever she says without a single fight. It’s like…” Izaya didn’t seem to have the words for it.

“He cares.” Mairu said suddenly, looking gravely at Kazimir. “But he doesn’t care at all.” Kururi finished, her own eyes still locked on the man from the last time she had spoken.

Kazimir looked between all three children, amazement passing through his eyes when he saw the strength and fierce independence just radiating from them.

“You children…” He said slowly. “You are so used to being on your own.”

“Was there ever another way for us to be raised?” Izaya asked harshly. “It was either loneliness with each other, or Child Services and separation. Believe me, the second option would have killed us.”

The twins nodded in agreement, finally slipping off Kasuka’s lap and running over to their older brother, clutching his legs tightly as if to emphasize the point.

Izaya immediately began to stroke their heads comfortingly, like an instinctual reaction to the little girls grabbing at him, his red eyes still on Kazimir the entire time.

Kazimir observed their interactions for a few seconds, nodding and then jotting a few more notes down. “Unreal.” He muttered, shaking his head and looking over at Shichi. “You told me it was bad but you didn’t say this bad.” He said to his friend.

Shichi’s fists were tight and his words were even tighter as he said, “I didn’t know it was this bad.” A biting glare cutting into the carpet like a knife.

Shizuo looked over at his own parents to see how they were faring. Both of them were gripping each other’s hands tightly, clearly keeping each other from jumping up in rage and storming out the door to track down the Orihara parents. Their eyes were burning with rage and their bodies were quivering with the effort of keeping still. Even Kasuka had a glare on his face, his own fists clenched tightly in his lap as he refrained from doing anything violent as well. Yeah, this room was full of nothing but hate for Kyouko and Shirou right now.

“We have proof.” Izaya said suddenly, a single voice piercing through the hatred. The raven reached into his pocket and pulled out the recorder from Hajime, holding it out to Kazimir with an imploring look on his face. “They visited me in the hospital about a week ago.” He said softly. “And…well, my ex-boyfriend caught the whole thing on audio. He gave us the tape after they left.”

Kazimir took the tape gingerly, examining it with careful icy eyes.
“In some countries, tape recordings cannot be used as evidence in court without the consent of both parties.” He said slowly, and Shizuo felt his heart drop into his stomach as a cold chill spread over his body. What was this guy saying? What was he saying?

“It is considered illegally obtained, and thus not permissible in court.” Kazimir continued, looking at the recorder with an unreadable expression.

He couldn’t be saying what Shizuo thought he was. Could they not use the recording after all? Did they only have the word of Izaya and the twins to back themselves up in court? Would that be enough evidence against people like Kyouko and Shirou?

Was it…all over?

Beside him, Izaya was squeezing Shizuo’s hand so tightly Shizuo thought he might lose circulation. The boy’s already pale face had gone even paler, and the hand that wasn’t gripping Shizuo’s was pulling both his sisters close against his legs, almost like he was protecting them from Kazimir’s words.

“Can…can we use the tape?” Izaya finally managed to ask, his voice shaky and tight.

Kazimir looked up at Izaya, saying nothing for a few seconds, and then set the tape down on his lap. “Yes.” He said in a low voice, shaking his head gravely at Izaya. “I’m afraid you can.”

The whole room paused for a few seconds, and then Shichi’s fist came flying out of nowhere, punching Kazimir right in the face.

“You asshole!” Shichi yelled, icy eyes burning with rage as the tall man started to laugh, rubbing the red mark forming on his cheek and holding up his hands in surrender. “Why the hell would you string us along like that?! You son of a-”

“There are children present!” Kazimir reminded him with a laugh, still looking a little wary of the way Shichi’s fist was raised in the air again, ready to fly straight at him.

“Yeah! And those children are the ones you’re screwing with!” Shichi yelled, feigning with the fist that was in the air so Kazimir would dodge to the left, then bringing up his other fist to smash right into the side of the tall man’s face, knocking him over again.

“Okay! Okay! I’m sorry!” Kazimir yelped, almost dropping the tape recording on the ground as he fell. “Now stop hitting me! You might break the recorder!”

“Which we can use in court?” Izaya asked next, his red eyes wide as he looked down at Kazimir, still needing confirmation.

“Yes.” Shichi sighed, scrubbing a hand over his face and looking over at Izaya apologetically. “Kazimir didn’t tell us very nicely but yes. We can use the recording in court.” He glared harshly at Kazimir one more time, drawing a flinch from the tall man who was clearly trying not to laugh. “He was just being a total ass about telling us!”

“I said I was sorry!” Kazimir protested, looking back over at Izaya with an apologetic grin. “It’s a force of habit. I love to screw with my clients.” He apologized, and Izaya breathed a sigh of relief, relaxing back into the couch. Shizuo knew the raven would probably get Kazimir for that later, but for now, Izaya was just relieved that they could use the tape.

Kazimir coughed when he got another glare from Shichi, returning to his notes and shuffling through them to get himself back on track. “Right! So anyway, beyond the verbal, psychological, and
neglectful abuse, is there anything else your parents do or have done?” He asked, looking back up at Izaya. “Have they ever hit you or sexually assaulted you?”

Izaya shook his head, holding the twins against his legs tightly. “No. Thank goodness.” He responded, looking down at the tops of their heads with soft eyes. “It’s only the psychologically abusive words and neglect.”

“You say “only” like it isn’t a big deal, but it still is.” Kazimir sighed, closing his notebook and slipping both it and the pen back into his suit pocket. “Well, if that’s all then I certainly have all I need to work with. Let me get in touch with some courts and see if I can get this started.”

Izaya looked shocked by how quickly Kazimir was moving on to that step. “A-Already?” He asked, red eyes wide. “But court cases in Japan take forever to get filed and approved for trial!”

Kazimir grinned at Izaya, the same mischief that had entered Shichi’s eyes earlier now entering his. “That may be so, but the government has been jumping at the court’s throats to start paying more attention to child abuse cases. Especially big ones which would involve high profile people such as your parents or high levels of abuse like what you’ve been suffering.” He told the raven, lifting a finger in the air and winking at him in delight. “You have a huge case, my friend. And I’m going to make sure you win it.” He grinned.

Just two days after that conversation, the case was approved and a trial date was set. Only one day after that, a court summons was sent to Kyouko and Shirou on account of child abuse, with the name Orihara Izaya written as the one suing them for removal of himself and his sisters from their custody. And just five more days after that, a courtroom was opened with a judge named Benjiro Takashi presiding over it, while eighteen people filed into it for the trial. On one side, there was Kyouko and Shirou and a team of seven lawyers. On the other, there was Kichirou, Namiko, Shizuo, Kasuka, Shichi, Kazimir, Kururi, Mairu, and Izaya.

The stage was set. The lawyers began to present their cases. And the show began.

Chapter End Notes

OOOOOOOHH BOY!!!! THE COURT CASE IS NEXT! THE COURT CASE IS NEXT! WHATEVER WILL HAPPEN?!?

Well...we won't be finding out until next Wednesday because unfortunately, my archery competition at state runs from Thursday to Saturday, and I don't know if I'm going to get back home by Sunday. So, just to be safe, I will not be promising to post the next chapter on Sunday. Sorry guys! But I should be releasing a one-shot to make up for it, so don't be too mad!

Alright! See you on Wednesday! <3
Alright! Hi everyone! I'm not going to talk very long because I know this is going up SUUUUUUPER late!! I'm really sorry! I'll explain at the bottom, if you care to hear! Also, Izaya's birthday one-shot (also very late, I know) will probably end up being posted tomorrow because I am just too tired to do it tonight. I'm sorry Izaya!!! It'll have to be even later!!!

Okay, and now to the court case! <3

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen.” Kazimir began, his speech smooth and eloquent as he turned to the jury. “My name is Sokolov Kazimir. I am representing the plaintiff, Orihara Izaya.”

Shizuo didn’t miss the way Izaya shifted in his seat as his name was called. His face was directed downwards, to stare at his hands as they lay folded on the desk in front of him, and he seemed to be even paler than usual. There were a few droplets of sweat forming on his temples and, if you looked at it closely enough, you could see the way his body was shaking. This case, this situation, was hard on him. He was so used to becoming an obedient doll in the mere presence of his parents that having to be in the same room as them, fighting against them, was tearing him apart.

His red eyes were wide as he stared at his hands, and the rapid breaths he was taking only added to his air of struggle.

Shizuo wished he could walk over and hold his boyfriend’s hand, pat his shoulder, give him a hug, do something to help him out. But he had to sit back in the benches along with the rest of his family, Shichi, and the twins, just watching the court case unfold. Only Izaya and Kazimir could be up there right now. Izaya was doing this, fighting his parents and everything they’d raised him to be, on his own.

Shizuo hated it.

“We are here today to decide if the defendants, Orihara Kyouko and Orihara Shirou, are suitable parents for the three children you see present at this trial.” Kazimir continued, looking right at the jurors as he gestured towards Izaya and in the twins’ general direction. “And to see if their custody of these children should be revoked on account of extreme child neglect, psychological abuse, and child endangerment.”

He patted a stack of papers and documents, including the notepad that he’d been writing on during his conversation with Izaya and the recorder with Kyouko’s words. “We will provide direct financial evidence of Orihara Izaya paying for the livelihood of himself and his younger sisters unaided, as well as taking on the burden of household bills and living expenses which are contractually given to his parents.” He started, every word confident and assured of itself. “We shall bring forth the compelling testimonies of the Orihara children themselves in full account of the abuse, torment, and neglect they suffer at the hands of their parents. In addition, we shall provide recorded evidence of the verbal abuse these children face and legal hospital reports on damages inflicted to all three Orihara siblings’ bodies as a result of dangerous situations they have been thrust into on account of
their parents’ neglect.”

Shizuo blinked at that last portion, leaning over to whisper in the ear of Shichi who was sitting beside him.

“What does he mean by legal hospital reports?” He asked softly, his eyes still locked on the shaking raven in front of him. “How does that connect to this abuse case?”

“I’m not sure.” Shichi muttered in response, his icy blue eyes trained on the same figure as Shizuo’s golden ones. “Kazimir is known for pulling out all kinds of crazy stops and turning events that seem completely random into compelling arguments to support his case. He might be using the facts that Izaya got shot and the twins were beaten to show how Kyouko and Shirou don’t protect their children.” Shichi glowered evily at the two cold businesspeople sitting right on the other side of the room. “After all,” He began harshly. “If they had actually provided for their children and given them the financial and emotional support they needed, Izaya would’ve most likely never even met Hajime and fallen for his lies, leading to that entire ordeal with the twins, and he never would’ve gotten shot trying to earn some money to get by.”

That made sense, in a way. It seemed to stray a little from the subject at hand, and it brought in a few more complicated aspects of the Orihara siblings’ life, but something told Shizuo that Kazimir was an expert at pulling together complicated aspects and keeping the criminal side of those aspects far away from the ears of the jurors. After all, he was the lawyer for the Russian mafia. No doubt a lot of his evidence came from shadier things than planting drugs on gangs, and he hadn’t ever gotten his clients into trouble for them.

They just needed to trust that Kazimir knew what he was doing.

Shizuo settled back in his seat and let his gaze drift slightly over to the Russian lawyer, his levels of anxiety seeming to creep higher and higher with each passing second.

“Ladies and gentlemen of the jury,” Kazimir was now saying, crossing his arms and giving the six people across from him a determined, confident look. “Orihara Izaya is a highly intelligent, resourceful, and determined young man who has been fighting for his own life and those of his sisters for far too long. At the conclusion of this trial, it is my hope that in the interests of justice and the peaceful, healthy life that these young children have been so blatantly denied that you find the defendants guilty of their abusive actions and favor the emancipation of the Orihara siblings. Thank you.”

Kazimir took his seat, immediately leaning over and whispering softly in Russian to the small boy beside him. Izaya muttered something back, his hand creeping over to grip the Russian’s in a tight, white-knuckled grip.

Shizuo could feel his own grip tightened around the armrests of the seat he was in. He needed to go to Izaya! He needed to be by his side!

“Shizuo, calm down.” Shichi said in a harsh voice, his hand latching onto one of Shizuo’s with surprising speed and strength. “I know you want to go to him but this is a legal setting. There’s nothing to protect Izaya from but the demons within himself, and that is a battle that he must win alone. He has to do this. He has to sit up there and get through this without your support. It’s the only way for him to truly be free of his parents.”

Shichi looked over at Shizuo with harsh eyes, the look inside of them freezing Shizuo right as he began to rise from the chair. Shizuo couldn’t help it. When he looked into those eyes, he saw hardship. He saw bitter loneliness. He saw a person who’d been forced to battle his own demons and free himself of the bonds he carried.
He saw that Shichi was right. Izaya needed to win this fight on his own. If Shizuo did something stupid in court, even if he was just trying to help Izaya and even if it didn’t cost them the case, Izaya would never really win. He wouldn’t win against his parents until he fought their hold on him himself.

“That’s…annoying.” Shizuo growled lowly, settling back into his seat and turning hate-filled eyes on the Orihara parents. “I hate this. I hate this whole thing.”

“I know.” Shichi responded instantly. “I’m fairly certain that we all do.”

Benjiro Takashi, the judge of their case, pushed his glasses up his nose and peered over at the Orihara parents’ team of lawyers. “Do the defendants’ attorneys have an opening statement prepared that they wish to give the jury as well?” He asked, his voice surprisingly low and melodious for a guy who looked so old and feeble.

One of the lawyers – it must be their main one – stood up.

“Ladies and gentlemen of the jury,” He said smoothly. “We are representing the defendants Orihara Kyouko and Orihara Shirou. We are here today to prove that both Orihara parents are indeed suitable guardians of their offspring, and that they have performed no such acts of abuse or neglect that would warrant a punishment so extreme as to remove their children from their custody.”

Shizuo could feel his blood begin pumping hotly through his veins at that sack of lies, a growl rising up in his throat while his golden eyes locked on the Orihara “parents” sitting on their side of the courtroom. There they were, calmly sitting in place like the perfect-faced slimeballs they were, Shirou watching their attorney speak for them with an unreadable gaze and Kyouko was staring hard at Izaya with a look that somehow managed to be one step above pitiful sympathy and one step below total disapproval. She was actually trying to make the face of a caring mother disappointed in the actions of her child. And it was a convincing face.

That witch!

“…our hope that the jury will find the Orihara parents, both of them respectable, honest, hard-working members of the society they live in, to be guiltless of the charges being placed against them by an emotional teenage boy.” The Oriharas’ lawyer was finishing up, bowing to the jury members respectfully. “Thank you very much.”

He took his seat right afterwards, and Shizuo realized that he’d just missed every inch of so-called “evidence” which the Orihara parents were going to present to help prove their side of the case. Well, none of it would probably help them anyway. They were god-awful parents and they were going down.

“Right then.” Judge Benjiro muttered, shifting his glasses on his face and nodding at lawyers sitting to his left. “The court will hear the prosecution first. Please begin, Sokolov-san.”

Kazimir nodded, squeezing Izaya’s hand once more before standing up again and facing the jury. “I will begin with the aforementioned financial evidence.” He said smoothly, grabbing a packet of paper stubs and holding it up in the air. “This is a compiled list of bills and receipts as procured by Orihara Izaya covering the last year.” He called out, the papers looking so innocent and harmless in his hands. “They are stamped with the date and time which they have been paid, and are clearly labeled for which bills they are. I have here various examples of property, internet, electric, and water bills, all paid on time.” He brought them over to the jury and calmly showed them the evidence, the nine people present glancing at the small paper stubs and taking a few notes on the notepads in front of them.
“He’s showing them bill receipts?” Shizuo muttered in confusion. “How do the bill receipts prove that Izaya pays for himself and the twins unaided?”

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“Just wait a little bit.” Shichi muttered back. “Kazimir will tell us all in a few seconds.”

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“Due to their business enterprises,” Kazimir began, pulling back the stubs and walking over to the desk again to set them all down. “The Orihara parents are unable to pay the bills on their Japanese household in person, let alone on time. Yet these bills have all clearly been paid in full, on time, and in person at the appropriate establishments. So how can this be?” Kazimir pointed sharply at Izaya, who shifted in his seat again and refused to look at his mother, choosing instead to lock his red gaze on the jury watching him.

“The answer is simple, ladies and gentlemen. Orihara Izaya pays for all of these bills himself. He is forced to do so, out of pocket, because his parents do not send back the money required to pay for all of these financial hardships. These bills!” He raised them up in the air again, his voice raising with them. “Contain a total sum of over 2,400,000 yen (over 22,000 dollars)! That is the yearly amount, not including food, clothing, and hygiene products, that Izaya pays for on his own. That is a gross example of financial neglect and burden being forced upon a helpless minor.”

The jury muttered to themselves and glanced over at Izaya as if to see if this was all true by looking at him, and Izaya looked right back at them without flinching, a sad, tired look coating his lovely face.

Damn. Izaya was playing the part of the victim just as good as Kyouko was playing the part of a caring mother.

“Objection, your honor.” One of the Orihara parents’ lawyers said, standing up. “Sokolov-san has failed to mention the financial support in monthly installments that Izaya’s parents do offer.”

“Sustained.” Judge Benjiro nodded, looking over at Kazimir harshly. “Please mention all the facts, Sokolov-san.”

“Understood, your honor.” Kazimir responded smoothly, shooting the smug lawyer an even more smug grin. “But I was actually getting to that portion of our financial evidence.” The smug looked suddenly wiped itself clean off the opposing lawyer’s face.

“Those ‘monthly installments’, as you call them,” Kazimir began confidently, walking slowly over to the Orihara parents’ lawyers like some kind of shark. “They don’t actually come in monthly, do they?”

The lawyer who’d spoken up turned a little pale, and began shuffling through the notes that he had in front of him. “They come in, admittedly not monthly, but in largely generous portions.” He said quickly, looking up at Kazimir quite coolly despite the anxiety exuding from him. “They are enough for a sustainable living.”

“Maybe for one working adult with no other responsibilities and a low-rent apartment without a shower or electricity.” Kazimir said flatly, shutting the guy down mercilessly. “But we’re talking about three minors, one of which is in the public school system and the other two which are still too young to even enter it. We’re talking kids who need to pay for school tuition, need plenty of healthy meals, need new clothing constantly since they’re still growing, and live in a full-sized house with all available amenities that comes with all available and full-sized bills.”

Kazimir thrust his stack of paper stubs down on top of the financial lawyer’s notes, stopping the frantic man in his tracks. He fixed the lawyer with an icy glare that Shizuo could feel all the way
from his seat on the other side of the courtroom. “The “monthly installments” that the Orihara parents send come in amounts no greater than 200,000 yen (a little under 2,000 dollars), isn’t that right?” He inquired, and the lawyer was forced to nod.

But before the man could open his mouth to speak, Kazimir asked, “And they don’t come in “monthly” at all, do they?”

The lawyer shook his head and tried to say something else, but again Kazimir cut him off. “And when they do come in, it’s typically been at least five months since the last received payment, correct?” The Russian demanded smoothly, staring right at the smaller man without a hint of backing down.

The lawyer gritted his teeth and glanced at his notes under the paper stubs before giving a begrudging nod.

“All right then.” Kazimir said easily, pulling away and spinning around. “Now we all know that the only financial support the Orihara parents give their children is about enough for a couple of McDonald’s meals for less than a month, given to them every five months or so. Thanks so much.”

The court room laughed at Kazimir’s burning statement as the Russian swept back over to his desk, shooting Izaya a confident smile before grabbing the next stack of papers and turning to face the jury once more.

When Shizuo looked over at Izaya, he saw that the raven’s shoulders had settled just the slightest bit, and that his shaking body had steadied. There was a little more color in the boy’s cheeks as he looked over at his parents for the first time, and the evil glare that Kyouko sent him only seemed to bring more back into them as he sent a small smile back.

He was gaining confidence.

Hell yes.

Shizuo gripped the edge of his seat, leaning forward and struggling to not leap up from his seat once more, although this time, he wanted to rush forward and congratulate his boyfriend. Maybe chuck a chair at Kyouko and Shirou on his way up. You never knew.

“Shizuo, chill.” His father said from beside him, the friendly man gripping his wife’s hand tightly as he watched the trial with just as tense a stare. “Let them all do their jobs. Just sit back. Let them all do their jobs. Just sit back…”

“You sound like you’re talking more to yourself than me.” Shizuo said flatly as his father continued the chant, gripping his mother’s hand without even looking at his son.

“Either way, it’s still a good idea.” Shichi sighed, pushing Shizuo back into his chair as he watched Kazimir woo the jury once more. “Just keep watching. He’s talking about bringing up the testimonies.”

“…Izaya has prepared a written testimony for the jury to read, seeing as he – the prosecutor – is not allowed to speak in court.” Kazimir was saying, handing pieces of paper to each of the jury members, one copy of the testimony each. “As you go over those, and I’m sure it won’t take you long to get the full gist of the situation, I would like to call up Orihara Mairu and Kururi as one witness to the stand.”

“Scary man wants us to go up and help?” Mairu called loudly from her place on Namiko’s lap, cupping her hands around her mouth so the words would travel to Kazimir.
The court room laughed again and Kazimir shook his head, smiling fondly at the little girl who honestly didn’t know why everyone was laughing.

“Yes. Please come up here and help.” Kazimir called back to the twins, and then turned to look at the judge. “Provided of course, that this is fine with your honor.”

The judge hummed for a bit, looking at the two little girls sitting in the crowd, and then gave a short nod. “It’s all right with me.” He said. “As young as these girls are, they are still entitled to give statements as witnesses. They just don’t have to make an oath or present evidence of what they say.”

“Yippee! Get to talk!” Mairu cheered, hopping off Namiko’s lap and grabbing Kururi’s hand as they ran to the front of the court room.

“Hi, Iza-nii!” The little girl screeched as she ran by, waving frantically at her older brother as she dragged her older sister up to the witness stand. Kururi gave Izaya a small little wave and a smile as well, helplessly pulled along by her excited sister’s desire to talk in court.

Shizuo could see the jury’s faces melting with adoration over the cute little girls who were so obviously close to their older brother, a few of them awwing as Izaya waved back with a fond look in his red eyes. And Shizuo knew that that fond, loving look wasn’t faked at all.

Kazimir gently directed the little girls to stand at the witness podium, whispering something to them and winking conspirationally at the little girls as they giggled before clearing his throat and facing the jury. “Now you’ll hear me ask these young ladies (at this comment, Mairu snickered and whispered to her sister, “Scary man thinks we’re ladies!”) a few questions concerning their upbringing within the Orihara household.”

Kazimir turned to the little girls, a friendly smile on his face. “Now then,” He began. “Let’s start simple: who taught you girls how to speak?”

“Ooooh yes! Burn them to the ground!” Shichi cackled quietly in delight, shooting a nasty grin the Orihara parents’ way as the line of questioning began. Shizuo had to agree with Shichi on this one. After these basic questions that Kazimir was asking, those parents were going to be incinerated.

“Iza-nii!” Mairu chirped happily as she bounced in place on the pedestal. “Iza-nii taught us to speak!”

“Iza-nii.” Kururi affirmed, nodding her head with a big smile directed at her brother.

“I see.” Kazimir nodded, giving the jury a meaningful glance before turning back to the little girls. “And who, may I ask, taught you your table manners, how to hold chopsticks, and how to eat in general?”

“Iza-nii!” Mairu sang once more. “That was all Iza-nii.”

“Chopsticks hard. Took Iza-nii long time.” Kururi added softly, leaning forward towards the microphone so she could be heard.

Izaya’s cheeks blushed red as people began cooing at him and small comments about what a good big brother he was could be plainly heard from the trial-goers in the crowd. And seeing how it was a public trial that anyone could attend, there was a surprising amount of people who had turned up to watch it and were now slowly being swayed to Izaya’s favor. Including, Shizuo hoped, the jury.

“Yes, chopsticks are hard.” Kazimir agreed with a sigh, getting a few laughs from the crowd as he shook his head gravely. “Now, can you girls tell me who taught you to read and write before you
“Iza-nii again!” Mairu laughed, her brown eyes sparkling. “Scary man’s questions are silly! Iza-nii does everything!”

“Everything.” Kururi agreed with a nod. “Clothes us, feeds us, teaches us, takes us places, sings us to sleep, helps when we have nightmares, loves us. Iza-nii does everything alone.”

The whole room seemed to take in a deep breath at that, and Shizuo felt like he could feel all the accusing glares being sent the Orihara parents’ way right now. They were not the most popular people in the room.

Yes, Kyouko and Shirou were looking at their lawyers rather pointedly, clearly wanting them to come up with something to refute these innocent statements that were killing their chances in the court case faster than Kyouko’s words killed souls.

“So are you saying,” Kazimir practically sang, a triumphant look in his icy eyes as he glanced over at the scrabbling lawyers. “That your big brother Izaya cares for you alone?”

“Yes.” Mairu said determinedly, giving her brother another happy wave after she said so.

“Yes.” Kururi agreed, copying the motion.

Izaya laughed softly and waved back, his eyes moving over to lock on his so-called parents with an almost smug smirk. His confidence was definitely resurfacing, and it was rearing its head right at those people who’d thought they controlled him.

“And do you mean that Izaya alone loves you?” Kazimir inquired, leaning casually against the podium and looking right at the jury as the twins responded, “Yes.” In complete unison.

The crowd broke out instantly into several loud murmurs, heads nodding and jurors’ pencils scribbling as the twins’ words brought out the true nature of the fuming businesspeople in the corner.

“Well!” Kazimir said breezily, smiling at the little girls. “I think those are all the questions I need to ask you.”

“Would the defendants’ attorneys like to ask Orihara Mairu and Kururi any questions?” Judge Benjiro asked, one eyebrow slightly raised as he watched them scramble through their notes.

The lawyers all looked up at each other helplessly, clearly trying to think of how to combat something as honest and cute as a toddler’s testimony, and one of them finally just stood up nervously, looking right at the little twins like they were going to destroy his career.

“A-At any point in time, did the Orihara parents provide you with substantial or at the very least exceedingly adequate care?” He asked quickly, and the twins both looked at him in confusion for several seconds.

Eventually, Mairu leaned forward towards the microphone and said, “Not understand what stupid man is saying. We’re going to go now.” In the flattest voice Shizuo had ever heard her talk in. Kururi gave a short nod and pulled her sister off the podium, the two of them walking back to their places amid the laughter from the court room.

The lawyer sat back down, mortified, and tried not to looks at his clients’ (particularly Kyouko’s) furious faces at the stupidity of his complicated wording.

“Well, it seems that the twins are done answering questions.” Benjiro chuckled, smiling fondly at the
little girls in the same way a grandfather might at his grandchildren before shifting his glasses and looking back down at the court case notes he had in front of him. “Now, Sokolov-san, you said that alongside the financial evidence and testimonies, you are going to provide recorded evidence of the Orihara parents’ verbal abuse. May we now see that?”

“Of course, your honor. All too happy to show you.” Kazimir said smoothly, walking back over to the desk and winking at Izaya before grabbing the recorder and lifting it up into the air.

“What is that?” Kyouko snapped from the other side of the room, her eyes flashing with fury as she stood up at the defendant desk. “Can you even use that here? That’s a recording! That’s not valid evidence!”

“Please sit down, Orihara-san.” One of her lawyers begged, pulling her back into her seat with a worried glance at the jury. “It’s perfectly fine for them to-”

“Illegal recordings are against the law!” Kyouko argued, glaring fiercely at Kazimir as she stood up again. “You can’t use that in court!”

“Orihara-san, when you go to law school for nine years straight and practice in five different countries, win over five hundred cases and lose barely two over a seven year career, then you can come talk to me about what evidence can and can’t be used in court.” Kazimir said flatly, causing the woman’s mouth to drop open in shock.

Someone in the court room whistled in appreciation, and there was a little bit of applause as the stunned Kyouko was finally pulled back down into her seat.

Kazimir grinned at the courtroom crowd like he was an actor and they were his audience, completely captivating the whole courtroom to his viewpoint effortlessly. He looked quickly back over at Kyouko though and added, “I say that with the highest possible respect, of course.”

“What?!” The woman cried, clearly looking like she wanted to argue, but Kazimir cut her off and held the recording up in the air.

“I’m going to play just a short selected segment from this recording, taken by an eye-witness to an event of Orihara Kyouko’s verbal abuse to her own children not very long ago.” He announced, hitting the button before Kyouko could say another word.

Instantly, her cold voice rattled through the speakers, filling the courtroom in the same way it had filled the hospital room just a week before. Although this time, all the power and hurt behind the words were only affecting Kyouko.

“They don’t want you at all.” Kyouko’s voice was saying, hissing out through the speakers like the words of a snake. “They want a child, Izaya. You aren’t a child. You’re a machine. A product. A doll. A tool. You could never be a child, even if you wanted to, and you know it. You’re too far gone.”

The jury was staring at the recording in shock, their eyes slowly going to look at the woman whose voice they had just heard aloud which matched perfectly with the one in the recording. Kyouko stuttered and stammered, looking at the recording like she wanted to deny everything it was saying, but unable to think of a reason to do so.

Good. Because there was no way anyone could ever be able to escape from the truth behind these cutting words. Orihara Kyouko was no mother. She never was one, and she never would be one.

“An emotionless doll like you was never meant to be raised by scruffy outsiders like this.” The sound
of a disappointed sigh was plainly heard through the tiny speakers. “I can’t believe you actually allowed yourself to indulge in the fantasy that you could belong in a family for so long. Pathetic, darling. I’m disappointed in you.”

“Shut up!” An angry voice growled, and Shizuo blinked as he recognized his own voice, a sound like someone jumping to their feet ringing out clearly from the small device. Wow…that was trippy. He looked down in embarrassment as Izaya turned back to look at him, a gentle smile on his face, as everyone listened to the way Shizuo defended Izaya.

“Izaya can be whatever he wants, and he is not an emotionless doll!” Shizuo’s voice continued angrily. “You don’t know what the hell you’re saying because you don’t even know your own son!”

The sharp mocking laugh that seemed to tear right into your soul was heard next, and Kyouko seemed to shrink back in her seat as each and every piece of evidence against her piled up right before everyone’s ears.

“And this obnoxious, overly passionate boy seems to care an awful lot about you, doesn’t he?” Her voice said haughtily, leading into the next degrading spiel. “This dumb, useless brute who thinks he knows you so well. Let me guess: he’s your boyfriend? Don’t make me laugh, Izaya! Forget the already disgusting fact that he’s a male, which make you some putrid faggot, but do you really think you deserve a living, breathing, flesh and blood human that will love you?”

“Holy shit.” One of the jurors said, his eyes wide as he looked at the practically cowering woman across the room. “You call yourself a mother?”

Kazimir pressed the fast forward button on the recorder, counting a few seconds to himself before releasing it and hitting play again, letting the whole room hear the next portion of Kyouko’s degrading speech.

“Looks like he’s skipping the portion where she talks to you and mentions you walking around with bullet wounds in your legs.” Shichi muttered to Shizuo, snickering a little. “He’s so damn good at turning shady shit into something legal.”

Shizuo wasn’t sure how to respond to that exact comment…so he just chose to ignore it and focus on the next part of the recording.

“And you, Mairu and Kururi…” Kyouko’s evil voice was saying. “You little brats ought to have been aborted in the womb.”

“Okay, that’s demonic!” One of the few female jurors cried, standing up and shooting Kyouko an enraged glare. “How could you say that to your own children?!”

“Well-” Kyouko tried to say, but funnily enough, she cut herself off.

“Hiding behind your brother. You ought to be hiding!” The cruel voice declared. “The two of you are pathetic. At your age, Izaya was already quoting Shakespeare and writing poetry. He was cleaning the house and attending business conventions. He knew how to dress properly in a suit and tie and he could carry on conversations about the international markets.” A disdainful sniff filled the air as Kyouko wrapped up whatever horrible thoughts she was thinking. “I can’t even look at you filthy brats.” The voice muttered. “Now then. Get out of that hospital bed and get back home. Do what you’re supposed to do.”

Kazimir hit the stop button on the recorder, taking it back over to the desk and setting it down besides Izaya’s hand.
“Which leads me into my next piece of evidence.” The Russian lawyer said smoothly in the shocked silence that had fallen over the room. “Unless my opponents would like to miraculously refute that entire conversation?”

There was dead silence from the side of the Orihara parents. Their lawyers were in just as much shock as the rest of the room, and a few of them clearly looked like they were regretting taking this case on.

Shizuo didn’t blame them. Thanks to that recording, there was absolutely no way the Orihara parents were going to win. Whatever came next was just the icing on the cake.

“It seems that they have nothing to say.” Judge Benjiro remarked, settling back in his chair and nodding at Kazimir. “You may proceed, Sokolov-san.”

Kazimir nodded his head and lifted up the final stack of papers from his desk. “These are legal hospital reports, released by Ikebukuro General Hospital with the signature of the adults who were present during a major surgery underwent by Orihara Izaya just one week ago.” Kazimir declared, waving the papers around slightly in the air. “They report, in the simplest terms possible, that Izaya was shot eight times with 9 mm bullets and nearly died on the operating table because of those wounds.”

That raised an outcry like no other in the courtroom.

People surged to their feet, yelling insults at the Orihara parents and demanding to know how they could let such a thing happen to their only son. Others just flat-out yelled insults and curse words of every kind imaginable. Still others seemed shocked by the fact that a young boy had gotten himself shot because of his parents, and poor Judge Benjiro was frantically banging his gavel in front of him, trying to get everyone’s attention.

“Order!” He yelled, his voice booming out over them all. “Order in the court! Settle down! All of you!”

After several seconds, everyone had seated themselves again and the angry murmurs of the crowd died down enough to where Benjiro could talk in a normal voice again.

The old man sighed and gestured to Kazimir. “Please continue, Sokolov-san.” He said tiredly. “How is this…unfortunate incident connected to the Orihara parents?”

“Simple, your honor.” Kazimir said easily. “Izaya is forced into many unsavory activities, none of them explicitly illegal although all of them highly dangerous, in order to make enough money to pay all those bills I showed you at the start of this court case.”

“You make your kid do things like that?!” One man demanded from the crowd.

“What kind of sick parents are you?” Another agreed, and the shouts began to rise up once more.

“Order!” Benjiro roared, slamming the gavel down harshly. “Any further outbursts will have the perpetrators convicted for contempt of court.”

That settled people down into silence, although the harsh glares being thrown Kyouko and Shirou’s way didn’t decrease one bit.

Kazimir waited for a few seconds, just letting the anger stew, before continuing. “Yes, Izaya has to make large sums of money as a minor, which is practically impossible through moral methods. He works around his neighborhood and does favors for his neighbors to earn some pocket cash, but he
must also perform a few more unsavory favors for more unsavory individuals in order to actually survive. And, unfortunately,” Kazimir gestured towards Izaya, who was doing his best to appear like a tired, weak, sad, lonely boy instead of the smug little asshole he was probably feeling like as he realized where the court case was going. “It resulted in Izaya being caught in the crosshairs of the Purple Dragons gang fight that we’ve all been hearing about on the news, and getting shot.” Kazimir finished, throwing the papers back down on the desk with a nod.

Shizuo was seriously impressed. Kazimir had not only managed to bring in the hospital records of Izaya being shot without making it sound like he was involved in anything that could have him going to a juvenile detention center, but he’d also created a pitiable image of a boy being accidentally caught in a gang war and injured, tied it to the neglect of his parents, and brought back the reminder of the financial burdens Izaya was facing.

“I told you.” Shichi grinned smugly from beside Shizuo, crossing his arms and nodding his head. “Kazimir is the best damn lawyer in Russia.”

“No kidding.” Shizuo said in reply, shaking his head in awe at the triumphant man smirking at the seven lawyers whose argument he’d just smashed to dust within fifteen minutes. “He’s amazing!”

“And that,” Shichi purred. “Is why he’s the lawyer for the Russian mafia.”

A few minutes followed after that where the Orihara parents’ lawyers admitted that they had nothing to say in response, Kazimir gave a powerful closing statement imploring the jurors to think hard on their decision and choose what was best for the innocent children involved, and the judge and jury disappeared for deliberation.

The deliberation itself took less than a minute.

Shizuo half-suspected it was just one of them going to the bathroom, because everyone was pretty certain of what the verdict was going to be.

Judge Benjiro and the jury members filed back into the courtroom, the judge took his place at the head of the room, looked out over everyone, and said, “The jury finds Orihara Kyouko and Orihara Shirou guilty of extreme child neglect and abuse.”

Kyouko looked stunned by the fact that she was losing the case, and she sat back in shock as the judge continued, her eyes directed at the desk in front of her. Shirou was, surprisingly, calm as he watched the judge deliver his verdict.

“Orihara Izaya, Kururi, and Mairu shall all be removed completely from your custody and turned over to a new guardian, as per the request within their case.” Benjiro said, his eyes harsh and trained right on Kyouko and Shirou. “This guardian is to be wholly decided upon by Izaya himself, as he has proven himself capable of understanding what is best for himself and his sisters, and he will be required to submit a formal request for his specified guardian to this court within three weeks. From there, we will arrange meetings between you and the new guardian over total transfer of your rights as parents to him or her.”

Judge Benjiro’s eyes flashed angrily and his tone was sharp as he said, “From this moment on, you are no longer the parents of Orihara Izaya, Mairu, and Kururi. They have been removed from your custody.”

The courtroom cheered so loudly that Shizuo almost didn’t hear the judge add, “You will pay a 2,500,000 yen stipend to Orihara Izaya as an example of the financial burden you’ve given him, to be spent as he sees fit! Case dismissed! Court is adjourned!”
And with that single whack of the gavel, Shizuo knew that Izaya’s new life was ready to begin.

Chapter End Notes

Okay first of all, I had to research so much law in order to get all this down. I combed through all kinds of websites, study resources for lawyers in training, articles on law in Japan, and the freaking law articles OF Japan in order to get everything as accurate as I possibly could! I hope it came out sounding at least slightly realistic, and not too dry.

Second, I am sorry for any errors that you find in this thing or if it seems a little rushed or choppy! I had to get it all done in one go, and I didn't get the chance to go over it for mistakes. Sorry about that!

Third, the reason that this is so late is because I had double-blocked AP testing today during the time that I normally come home to finish writing and editing the chapter for the day. I did nothing but tests from 8 am to 3 pm, and then when I came home, I started writing as quickly as I could, but I had to leave for a pre-graduation ceremony that started at 6 and went to 8. Did not get home til about 8:30, then I finished the whole chapter, put it up here, and pleaded with whatever gods what over AO3 that you guys won't hate me for the super late update. I promise I didn't forget about this update!

My friends said that I should've just pushed the update to tomorrow, but I already skipped the Sunday update because of my competition...wait...wait, I was supposed to tell you guys how that went, too. OHMYGOODNESSIMDYINGINSIDE!! Okay real quickly (if you guys care to know) my team got 8th overall out of about 23 other teams at state, with over 250 people doing archery that made up the other teams. Woohoo! Top 10! Okay, so as I was saying before my memory interrupted me, I really didn't want to miss this update (as late as it is) because I've already made you guys wait for it! So here it is, I hope it was okay, and I will see you next time! <3

P.S. Tomorrow, I will more than likely post Izaya's birthday one-shot since that one is all written out. See you! <3
The Family (家族)

Chapter Notes

Hey everybody! How are you all doing? We've finally finished the court case so do you know what this means?

....

It means....
Something that I will tell you at the end of the chapter! Woohoo! Can't wait to hear that, right? Something for you to think about as you read.

Oh, and just so you guys know, there was a new ship that was created within this story that I think is amazing: Kazichi! That's Kazimir and Shichi, in case you didn't know! I like it. I kinda ship it. What do you guys think?

Okay, that's enough from me! Enjoy the chapter of fluff and calm after the storm! <3

Choosing his own guardian. Never had Izaya had a tougher decision in his life. Well, it was tough and also easy. Easy because he knew exactly who he wanted to ask. But tough because Izaya had absolutely no idea what the guy would say.

Izaya waited outside his teacher’s classroom after the final school bell rung, fidgeting in place and twisting his fingers nervously. All of the other students had long since left, making Izaya the only one who was anywhere in the near vicinity.

As he stared at the door, trying to get up enough courage to just open it and walk back in, he could feel his heart pounding in his chest.

Expressing emotion had never really been one of his strong suits. He wasn’t good at conveying how he felt, or conveying what he wanted from other people. He was good at manipulating people into doing what he wanted, but not so much at asking them nicely. And he didn’t exactly want to manipulate Shichi into becoming his new father. He wanted Shichi to do it of his own accord, because he cared about Izaya and the twins. Izaya had seen it! He had seen the softness in Shichi’s eyes whenever he looked at the twins, and Shichi had been there with him the whole time while he was having surgery in the hospital. Heck, he’d even filled out the darn paperwork to get Izaya released and given medical consent to the doctors so that they could begin operating! And let’s not forget calling in a favor from a kick-ass lawyer from Russia so that Izaya and the twins could be in this situation, free of their parents, after so many years of neglect and entrapment.

Shichi had done so much for Izaya and the twins. He’d done so much more than anyone else aside from Shizuo and the Heiwajimas.

Izaya couldn’t pick the Heiwajimas to be his family because incest was totally illegal in Japan, and if they became his adopted family, he and Shizuo couldn’t be together any longer. And even if they couldn’t get officially married, if he and Shizuo got a partnership certificate, then they would be a symbolic couple in the eyes of Japan. A symbolically married couple with all the social graces of any straight pairing. And they could always leave the country and go somewhere else that allowed gay marriage, get married and earn their legal rights, then come back. The partnership certificate would
allow them to keep any legal rights they gained elsewhere. If that happened, then Namiko and Kichirow would become Izaya and the twins’ mother and father-in-law, and Kasuka would be their brother-in-law. They would become a family already.

And if Izaya was being totally honest, even with his reservations about love, he knew Shizuo would never leave him. He knew Shizuo loved him. They weren’t going to break up, even if they had a million fights in the future and destroyed an entire city. They would be together. Izaya knew that. Which meant that a family with the Heiwajimas was guaranteed.

It was Shichi that Izaya couldn’t be certain with.

“Oh man.” The raven muttered, his fists clenching at his sides as he stared at the door. “I…Okay, I just need to do this!”

He reached out and gripped the handle before he could change his mind, yanking the door open wide and charging inside.

Shichi was still sitting as his desk when Izaya burst in, going through some papers for the day, and he looked up in shock when Izaya came in.

“Fluffles!” The math teacher said in surprise, setting his papers down and peering at the raven curiously. “What is it? Do you need something?”

Izaya bit his lip and stared at the ground. “I…” He started, trailing off again almost instantly. His red eyes slowly lifted to meet Shichi’s icy ones, and the raven just looked at his teacher for a few seconds without saying a word.

“…Izaya?” Shichi asked softly, moving out from behind his desk and setting a gentle hand on Izaya’s shoulder. “Is there something you need to say?”

“Y-Yes.” Izaya said shakily, taking a deep breath and looking him hard in the eyes. “Shichi, I wanted to ask if…if…if…”

Why couldn’t he say it?! Why couldn’t he get the words out?! They were fairly simple words compared to all the things Izaya usually said. Why was it so hard to be honest with your feelings?!

“I…wanted to ask…” Izaya tried again, with no more success than before. His heart was pounding too fast. There was a bit of sweat forming on his hands and temples. He couldn’t handle the rejection if he got a response of “no” instead of “yes.” He was terrified of being rejected. Izaya hated to admit that he was terrified by anything, but this was definitely one of those things.

“Um…yes it is. Very nice.” Shichi said awkwardly in response, completely mystified by Izaya’s strange behavior. “I…liked all the birds that I saw today.”

“Yes! Birds are great!” Izaya said a bit too eagerly in response, nodding his head frantically like a broken bobblehead.

“Uh huh…” Shichi said slowly, looking Izaya up and down in concern as if wondering whether he was sick.

Right... because this wasn’t awkward at all. Izaya standing there like a broken toy while Shichi looked him up and down with fear for his mental health. Just how Izaya had always wanted this
scene to go.

After a few seconds of that awkward silence, Izaya realized he wasn’t able to do this. He wasn’t going to be able to do this now, or within the one-week timeframe he’d been given by the court to appoint a new guardian. He just knew it. Maybe if he was lucky, the court itself would appoint Shichi as his guardian and he wouldn’t have to do anything. And if not…well Izaya would probably hate himself and his stupid inability to tell the truth forever. Either way, he needed to get out of here now. There was no point staying when he couldn’t say what he’d come there for.

“Bye!” The raven said with unrealistic cheer, spinning sharply on his heel and marching for the door. He couldn’t do this. He just couldn’t.

“Wait, Izaya!” Shichi cried, running over and grabbing Izaya’s wrist just before his hand reached the door handle.

The raven looked back in surprise, his red eyes meeting Shichi’s icy ones as the math teacher pulled him gently away from the door.

“Did you…really only come to talk to me about the weather?” The Russian asked, his face skeptical of that statement even if his voice was soft and comforting. “Because I really don’t think you did. I think you came here to say something important.”

Shichi ruffled Izaya’s hair with a friendly smile. “And you should always complete the things that are important to you. Don’t back out of them halfway. That’s how all the best things in life happen, мой котенок (мои котенок/my kitten).”

Izaya could feel his heart race at the term of endearment and the fatherly advice that Shichi had just given him. It was like speaking to a father. It was like actually speaking to someone who cared about how you grew up and what you did in life. The twins needed that. Izaya needed that.

With those thoughts flowing through his mind, and the effect of Shichi’s words settling on him, Izaya could feel some courage rising up inside him. It didn’t matter how nervous he was about rejection! If he never took this chance and asked Shichi to be his father, then he would never use it again and he’d lose the man forever! He wouldn’t even have a shot of this guy being his dad. He had to ask now.

“Shichi, I wanted to ask you if…” Izaya took a deep breath, closing his eyes and deciding to just force the words out as quickly as possible. “If maybe you would be m-my guardian.” He stumbled a little at the end of his sentence, and a huge ball formed in his throat to choke off his speech, but the words were out there. They were out there in the open, and there was no taking them back. Everything that happened next…it would decide Izaya’s future as well as the future of his girls.

Shichi froze right where he stood, his eyes wide and locked on the raven in front of him. He didn’t move a single muscle as he stared at Izaya, his expression unreadable.

“You…you want me to be…your guardian?” He finally asked slowly, his voice low as though he couldn’t quite believe it.

This was it! This was the big moment of truth! Even if Izaya couldn’t speak very well, he had to show how badly he wanted this!

Izaya gulped and nodded his head fiercely, looking Shichi in the eye as determinedly as he could. Maybe if he didn’t show any weakness or fear, then someone like Shichi would accept him with open arms. He would do whatever it took. He’d join the yakuza or the mafia! Cut off his fingers! Get
a tattoo! Anything he needed to!

“Please.” Izaya forced out shakily, clenching his hands together and looking right at Shichi. “Please will you be mine and the girls’ guardian? Please?”

Shichi seemed shocked, too shocked to speak, his eyes locked on Izaya and not a word spilling out from between his lips.

“Please?” Izaya repeated, taking a step towards his teacher and trying his best not to grab Shichi’s shirt in desperation. That didn’t speak about strength or fortitude. He needed to prove to Shichi that he was the right kid for him! He needed to prove it!

“I-I’ve been on my own for a long time now.” The raven stammered, hoping he was choosing the right words. “I can take care of myself! I’ve dealt with all kinds of unsavory people! I’ve done a ton of highly immoral things, too! I can get away with stuff! I can do it!” Izaya bit his lip, trying not to let his eyes fill with tears as Shichi just kept watching him in shock. “I-I can be what you want me to be. I can be the child you want.” Izaya said quietly, his voice shaky and uncertain as he ducked his head.

Whatever Shichi wanted, Izaya would become it. If only the Russian would accept him as his own. Accept him and the twins. That was all Izaya wanted. He become anything Shichi ordered him to in order to get it. “I can do it.” The raven said again, squeezing his eyes suit. “I can be the perfect kid for you. Just give me a chance.”

“Wait what? No! Izaya, no!” Shichi cried, grabbing Izaya’s shoulders and making the small boy look up at him in shock.

Shichi laughed sheepishly, brushing some hair out of his face and smiling down at Izaya. “Look, I… I’m sorry I spaced out there.” The man apologized, ruffling Izaya’s hair. “I was just so surprised. In a good way, though!”

Shichi looked just as nervous as Izaya felt, rubbing the back of his head and laughing sheepishly. “I just…well, this isn’t something I’m used to.” He admitted, looking down at Izaya. “And I never thought…I never thought that you would choose me.”

“W-Well, who else would I choose?” Izaya asked, his voice unsteady as he finally let his hand grip the front of Shichi’s shirt like he wanted to. “Will you? Will you be my guardian?”

Shichi stood there for a few seconds, staring at Izaya, and then before the raven could think of anything else to say or do to convince him, the Russian grabbed Izaya in a tight hug, smashing him up against his chest.

“Yes!” The man breathed out quickly, pressing into him and holding him as tightly as possible. “Yes, Izaya! Yes, I’ll be your guardian! For you and Mairu and Kururi! All three of you!”

Izaya closed his eyes, letting the tears leak out slowly onto his cheeks and wrapping his arms around the Russian man. “D-Do you mean it?” He whimpered, needing to hear it once more. Needing to establish that this wasn’t a fantasy or a dream.

“No, he’s just messing with your emotions, waiting for the chance to crush your heart and soul.” A cheerful voice joked in answer to Izaya’s question, causing Izaya’s head to snap over to the doorway.

Kazimir was leaning up against the door, grinning at the two of them with sparkling eyes and a mischievous aura in general. “Right, Shichi dear?” Kazimir sang, giving his friend a jaunty salute. “Because you’re just so horrible like that.”
“Oh shut it, Kaz.” Shichi scowled, hugging Izaya close and running his fingers through the small boy’s raven hair comfortingly. “I’m taking you in, Izaya. You and the girls are gonna be my kids now. No matter what that idiot over there says.”

Izaya couldn’t stop the smile from spreading over his face, or the tears from streaming down his cheeks. He buried his face in Shichi’s chest, closing his eyes and just feeling the secure arms wrapped tightly around him. The heart beating in the chest of the man who was going to take care of him and his sisters now. The feeling of safety that he’d never gotten before.

“Shichi, you are such a softie.” He heard Kazimir chuckle, feeling Shichi’s body jolt as Kazimir no doubt pounded him on the back.

“Shut it.” Shichi growled in response. “Am not!”

“Sure.” Kazimir teased, and Shichi huffed petulantly in response. Izaya kept his face buried in Shichi’s chest the whole time, so he couldn’t see anything to be sure, but he was almost certain that he heard a sound like Kazimir kissing the top of Shichi’s head and Shichi smacking him away with a low mutter.

Hm…

Maybe being gay for tall idiots ran in the family.

Oh well. Kazimir would make a pretty cool dad, too if he and Shichi ever got together. Izaya was just glad that he had Shichi indefinitely. Now and forever.

***

“Happy Emancipation Day!” Namiko sang happily, grabbing Mairu and tossing the giggling girl up and down in the air gently. “It’s a glorious occasion indeed!” Kichirou cried, grabbing Kururi in much the same manner and swinging her around as the quiet girl laughed.

“Emancipation Day?” Izaya asked, his hand intertwined tightly with the hand of the new father he seemed to have no inclination to let go of anytime soon. “What the heck is that?”

Shichi chuckled at Izaya’s confusion, ruffling the top of his future son’s head and smiling at the scene in the Heiwajima household before them. “I guess it’s now the day that we celebrate you three being freed from your parents.”

“Do I get something special then?” Kazimir asked eagerly, poking his head out from behind the two of them and marching into the house without waiting for anyone to actually invite him in. “I mean, I am probably the sole reason you guys got such a sweet deal at the court case.”

Kichirou laughed at that and pounded the large Russian on the back, grinning up at him as he balanced Kururi on his hip at the same time. “Sure man, sure.” He said lightly, turning to Shichi with an even bigger grin. “But I think my dude Shichi here gets something special as well! He’s the one who called you here, after all. And it also seems like…”

He looked slyly at the way Izaya was tightly clutching Shichi’s hand, probably looking just like a toddler holding the hand of their parent.

“He’s also the new father of the Orihara kids.” Kichirou finished in a sing-song voice, winking jovially at the two of them. “Boy, do I hope my son doesn’t get jealous of the way you’re holding hands like that! Because if he does, then Shichi, you’re gonna get-”

“Izaya!” A deep voice cried, and a blur of blonde shot by the grinning man before he could say anything else, slamming into Izaya in a tight hug.
Shizuo (because who else could it be?) squeezed Izaya tightly, burying his face in the raven’s black hair in relief. “You’re here! And you picked a guardian!”

Shizuo looked over at Shichi, squinting as he looked the man up and down, scowling a bit and not-so-subtly detaching his hand from Izaya’s, replacing it with his own. “I guess he’s passable.” The blonde grunted, pulling his smiling boyfriend into the house with one more warning glare shot back at Shichi, who simply laughing in response.

“Gee thanks!” The Russian grinned as Shizuo pulled Izaya over to a huge cake in the middle of the room, letting Izaya gawk at the size of it and the detail of the pictures decorating it.

“Honestly, that went a lot better than I thought it would.” Shichi admitted, looking up at Kazimir with a grin. “I was expecting to be beaten to a pulp by Blondie!”

Kazimir laughed at that image, looking around the house appreciatively. There were balloons and streamers decorating the walls in shades of red and black (Izaya’s two favorite colors) and the way the balloons and streamers were arranged ever so perfectly to make the image of a black widow spider did not go unnoticed by the twins, who squealed in delight at the “pretty bug” on the wall. There was a general theme of black widows to the party, which apparently both Izaya and the twins liked, and the whole place was done up to look almost like a professional job.

Plus there was the massive cake with “Happy Emancipation Day Izaya, Kururi, and Mairu!” spelled out on it in beautiful handwriting. It looked delicious and gorgeous. This party was incredible.

“They really went all out with this.” Kazimir commented as Namiko cried for the celebration to begin and Kichirou began cutting up cake as all the kids laughed and took their slices. Kasuka came down from his room and handed the twins small present boxes, which they took with utter delight even over the cake, and refused to let go of his legs for the rest of the night.

Izaya and Shizuo held hands as they got their cake and sat down at the couch in the living room, both choosing to eat with only one hand so that their other ones could stay connected in the space between them.

Kichirou and Namiko had a brief fight over what movie to play for the group, and the fight paused when Namiko realized that Shichi and Kazimir hadn’t moved to get any cake.

“What are you doing?” She’d demanded, coming over to them and shoving both members of the Russian mafia towards the cake without a shred of fear in her eyes. “Get some cake, you useless imbeciles!”

The fight resumed quickly after that while both Russians selected their pre-cut pieces and found seats next to each other on the couch, watching the couple argue in amusement.

Finally, the Heiwajima parents agreed on a movie and Kichirou loaded it up, with detailed instruction from Izaya as to how to do it, of course.

Kazimir subtly moved his hand to rest on top of Shichi’s knee as the movie played, and Shichi let him do so with a sigh, making sure the blush that tried to form on his cheeks didn’t actually show. The big idiot. Shichi refused to give him any of the satisfaction of seeing him blush.

When Shichi glanced over at his son (his son!) and Shizuo, Shichi could truly see the happiness in Izaya’s eyes as he leaned against his boyfriend and nibbled on the specially bitter portion of cake that he’d received, content with absolutely everything in his life.

And as Shichi observed how happy the twins were beside a soft-eyed Kasuka stroking their heads, the cuteness of Namiko and Kichirou nuzzling up next to each other on the couch, the sweet image
of Izaya and Shizuo together, and felt Kazimir’s hand squeezing his knee playfully, Shichi had to admit that he was pretty content with life too. And it had been years since he felt that way.

It was all thanks to the red-eyed boy sitting next to his boyfriend on the couch. The one who had changed Shichi’s whole world forever.

And you know what?

Shichi was totally fine with that. He couldn’t be happier.

“You’re smiling, Shichi.” Kazimir whispered in his ear as the movie started up, and Shichi could practically hear the grin in the big dolt’s voice as he spoke. “You rarely smile.”

“Shut up. Maybe I’m gassy.” Shichi hissed back in response, staring pointedly at the movie screen.

“Mnmhm. Sure.” Kazimir teased softly, kissing the top of Shichi’s head. “You keep saying that. I’ll play along.”

“You better.” Shichi grumbled, shoving another bite of cake in his mouth almost fiercely. “Or I’m gonna slit your throat in your sleep.”

“Oooh, are you saying you’re going to visit my room in the middle of the night?” Kazimir teased, poking Shichi’s cheek playfully. “I can’t wait.”

“You have problems.” Shichi responded simply, taking another bite. “And your room is literally just two doors down from mine. It’s not like it’s a huge effort for me to just walk down the hall.”

“Either way, I’ll set up something nice, just for you.” Kazimir whispered back, and Shichi tried furiously to hide the blush again.

“Scratch that. I’m not slitting your throat. I’m throwing a grenade in your room so I don’t have to see you.” Shichi growled, slouching down in his seat with a huff.

Kazimir laughed softly, squeezing Shichi’s knee again as he looked back at the TV screen. “Sure.” The tall man said cheerfully. “Just like you did last time.”

“Be quiet. The movie is playing.” Shichi responded, refusing to acknowledge the truth in Kazimir’s words.

“So it is.” Kazimir said lightly. “But I think being next to you is more entertaining than any movie we could ever go see.”

Shichi didn’t respond to that comment. He just kept watching the movie, letting the warmth of the moment and the people around him surround him. Letting the feeling of being in a family wrap him up.

Yep. It was the best feeling in the world.

Chapter End Notes

Alright! Isn't that sweet? I definitely like the idea of Kazichi. It started coming out while I was writing and it's very subtle, but there's definitely something there.
And now for the little announcement that I mentioned in the top comment. Now that the court case is over, it means...

We're finally wrapping up the storyline! That's right! "Private Lessons" is finally going to begin coming to a close! I can't tell you exactly when yet, but this adventure is almost over! I'll save all my sappy comments about how awesome it's been for the very last chapter, but I felt like I should give you all a heads-up. Things are finally wrapping up!

And now I really do need to stop here before I begin all those sappy comments, so I'll leave you with that little thought until Wednesday. See you then! <3
Hello everyone! Sooo...this isn't the final chapter juuuust yet! After this little wrap-up with the adoption process, I'm going to include some more Shizaya (since that's what this whole fic is about) and then...wrap up the story itself.

°.(＞ thiệt ＜)°.

I really have to save all my sappy stuff for later so I'll just let you get to the chapter now! Hope you enjoy it even if it is a little slow. It's just a wrap-up for the adoption, after all. See you at the end! <3

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“This is ridiculous.”

“Calm down, Shichi.”

“But it’s the dumbest thing I’ve ever had to do!”

“It’s for the best, Shichi.”

“I can’t believe they even make us do this much paperwork! What are they trying to prove? What are they trying to find? Are they doing some kind of background check so I show up as a decent person to take care of the kids?”

“Yes that’s exactly what they’re doing, Shichi.”

“Well I guess that makes a little sense then.”

“Yes it does, Shichi.”

“...Would getting found out as an assassin nix my chances to be a parent?”

“Yes it would, Shichi.”

“Then this is still the dumbest thing ever.”

Kazimir rolled his eyes as his best friend angrily scribbled through the adoption paperwork forms required to adopt Izaya and the twins. The guy was more than willing to adopt all three kids. He would do it a thousand times over in a heartbeat, no questions asked, no matter what forces of good or evil tried to stop him. He wouldn’t even hesitate for a second. And all three of the kids knew it.

The problem came with the actual adoption process.

Even though everything had been settled by Judge Benjiro, and the man agreed to appoint Shichi as Izaya’s guardian so long as Izaya himself had chosen Shichi, there was still quite a lengthy process that stood in between the Orihara siblings and Shichi on their path to becoming a legal family.

First came this long packet of paperwork: one that essentially asked Shichi to provide a lot of
information about himself and the place that he lived, as well as the reasons he could, should, and wanted to adopt the Orihara siblings. It was too many pages long, and it asked some pretty uncomfortable questions involving Shichi’s place of birth and extra questions regarding his dual-citizenship for Russia and Japan. He felt like the papers were interrogating him more than any stupid social worker ever could. Each time it asked a darn question about his origins and Shichi put “yes”, it seemed like the next statement was “If you put yes above, then here’s a shit-ton more questions that you now have to answer as well”. It was excruciating.

And shortly after Shichi had started on that paperwork, the Family Court of Japan had called him to say that they’d run into a small problem with giving Izaya and the twins over. That small problem was that the three children weren’t in the care system anywhere at all. They weren’t orphans. They weren’t really set-up for adoption at any moment. They needed to be registered and filed with their biological parents’ begrudging help as adoptable children in the social industry so that Shichi could take them.

So Shichi had been asked to send the children over to meet their biological hellhounds…ah, parents, and kept working on his paperwork while his future children were filed under their own.

It was getting close to two hours now, two hours since Shichi had started this stupid paperwork, and he was finally finishing up the last question. If Kazimir hadn’t been there to keep egging him on and making sure he didn’t rage quit the whole process, Shichi was almost certain that he wouldn’t have been done as fast. In fact, he might have ripped up the packet itself and had to apply for a new set of adoption papers entirely.

And wouldn’t that have been a joy.

Thankfully, he had a Kazimir.

“Done!” Shichi practically yelled, throwing his pencil down and jumping up from the desk, glaring down at the stack of paperwork as he slammed his hands on either side of it. “So there, you stupid sheets of pointless drabble! I finished you! You are completed! How does that feel? How does it feel?”

“It feels wonderful that I’m finally completed, thank you so much for asking, Shichi.” Kazimir sang in a mocking voice from behind him, clearly trying to imitate the sound of a stack of paper talking. Shichi couldn’t be sure if he was passing or failing that task because…well, he’d never heard paper talk so he couldn’t be sure.

“Shut up, Kaz.” The Russian said simply in response, gathering up the papers and thinking about the quickest way to get the adoption application to the Family Court for review. He wanted this process to be done as quickly as possible.

Then again…his future kids were stuck with their despicable parents right now, trying their hardest to get themselves into the care system so that Shichi could take them away. They probably needed some kind of moral support. He should go to them first and then turn in the adoption application.

“Alright, where are we going next?” Kazimir asked cheerfully, his questions right on time with what Shichi was about to say as usual. It was like they had a sixth sense about each other. They could each tell when the other was going to speak and what they were going to talk about. Well, in most cases anyway. And this was one of those cases.

“We’re going to meet Izaya and the twins.” Shichi informed him, gathering up the paperwork into his arms and marching for the exit to his house.
“Hm? Shouldn’t we be dropping off the application now?” Kazimir wondered as he dutifully followed his friend out of the small building, locking the door behind them both and jogging to catch up with Shichi as the determined man marched towards the direction of the Tokyo Counseling Services office.

That was where the courts had decided to have the Orihara siblings meet their parents, under the direct supervision of the social workers running the whole operation. Any other place was considered too risky for the children, and the judge had ordered that the three of them would not be left alone with Kyouko and Shirou throughout the duration of the adoption process.

“We should be but supporting my kids is more important to me than dropping off some stupid paperwork.” Shichi growled in response to Kazimir’s question, catching sight of the train station and speeding up even more.

“I see.” Kazimir chuckled as he followed, his voice containing levels of amusement and mirth that Shichi did not appreciate. “You do realize that you just referred to them as your actual kids instead of your adopted ones, right?”

Shichi paused, rerunning his sentence in his head to see if Kazimir was right.

A scowl quickly slipped over his face as he realized that those had indeed been his words and he made sure that his back was turned to Kazimir as he responded, “Shut up. So what?”

Kazimir only chuckled again, saying nothing as he followed Shichi into the train station and onto the train that would take them to Setagaya where the counseling offices (and more importantly Izaya and the twins) were.

As the train pulled out of the station, speeding them off towards Setagaya, Shichi’s mind ran over the next portion of the process.

The siblings would probably come to live with him, but his house would need to be examined by the social care workers before they moved in and about a week afterwards to see if it was a suitable living environment for them to grow up in.

Shichi had already cleared out all the guns and other weapons from plain sight, renting a locker in one of the many storage units (better known as “trunk areas”) in the Saitama prefecture. He’d made it clear to the owner of the storage unit that the weapons would only be in there for a short period of time, about a week, and that if the man said a single thing to anyone about it, he would find himself face down in a ditch.

Shichi had been surprised when the man laughed at his threat, telling him that it was fine to keep weapons in the locker so long as he picked them up when he said he was going to, and that Shichi didn’t have to worry about a thing. Shichi had to wonder how many illegal things that guy had seen in his life to be so calm about storing guns and professional-grade knives. But he wasn’t one to look a gift horse in the mouth, so he’d simply thanked the man and went about his business.

With the weapons out of the picture, the utilities all paid for and in good shape, a lovely guest bedroom set up where the twins could easily sleep and an odd second master bedroom that Shichi had always had no idea what to do with ready for Izaya to claim, the Russian was fairly certain that he would pass the house inspection.

He just hoped the Orihara siblings would be happy with him.

As the train raced over the tracks, tall buildings and skyscrapers flashing by as it roared along,
Shichi’s mind began to wander.

He began to think of Russia and the time that he spent there all alone. He began to think of when he first joined the Russian mafia and how absolutely terrified he’d been despite the brave act he’d put on. He thought about the first time he saw Kazimir, and the awkward situation that involved him falling straight into the man’s naked lap as a teenage boy (don’t ask). He thought of working his way to the top of the food chain and of searching for his parents the whole time. He thought about those times when he was an orphan, supporting himself with only the criminal underground to turn to, with a neglectful family in the past behind him. He thought of everything, from the time he found out what happened to his biological parents to when he came back to Japan to meet his adoptive mother and ended up staying. Heck, he even began to think of those first days he spent as a math teacher and the first time he ever saw Izaya and Blondie.

Shichi thought of so many things on that train ride to Setagaya. So many things that had led him up to this moment, and this ability to help three amazing kids that he truly cared about. He closed his eyes and thought about the future next. The future that the Orihara siblings and him would have together. A future that maybe Kazimir, the big dolt that Shichi refused to acknowledge was sitting next to him with an arm slung casually around his shoulders, was going to share with them.

If he ever got the concept of courting through his thick skull of course. Stupid idiot.

But more than anything else, Shichi thought about one boy, one very special boy, who had been through so much and kept pushing on no matter what, kept trying no matter what, and never gave up on his god-awful life no matter what it threw at him. That special boy who was going to be his son. And those two incredible little girls who’d been battling every step of the way with him, and were about to become his daughters.

“I’m going to be such an overprotective father.” Shichi muttered to himself, eyes still closed as he leaned slightly into Kazimir’s shoulder. “Like, Izaya will be suffocated by all the questions I’ll ask about everything he does and the twins will never be allowed to date. Ever. At all.”

Kazimir laughed at that, his thumb brushing lazy circles over Shichi’s arm as they sat together, ignoring the odd looks they were getting from the people around them.

“Is that right? They won’t ever be able to date as long as they live?” Kazimir asked in delight, clearly loving the idea of Shichi chasing any and all boys away from the house.

“You’re right. That’s a bit harsh. They can date if they find someone who beats me in a hand-to-hand fight.” Shichi offered generously, and Kazimir only laughed again, shaking his head as the train sped along.

“You’re going to make a great father, Shichi.”

“...I hope so.”

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Izaya stared at his mother and father as they sat across the table from him, their businesslike attire contrasting harshly with the family-friendly environment of the room they were all sitting in. The laughing cats and puppies chasing each other throughout the bright and colorful wallpaper were the complete opposite of Kyouko’s sharp pencil skirt and elegant black blouse, although those two clothing articles complimented her cold glare well.

As for Izaya’s father, Shirou was dressed in his typical business suit with a blue tie perfectly tied
around his neck, his phone in hand, and a look of calm settled across his features. He didn’t seem overtly upset, nor happy by the situation that they were in. He was just taking it like another business transaction. Something else to be checked off the list for the day. This was contrasting sharply with the vengeful aura Kyouko was surrounded by that clearly marked her as wanting to destroy this entire adoption process and let it burn in hell with her soul.

He had one parent who didn’t care what they were doing or where they went, and another who wanted them to stay by her side because she was terrified of bad publicity and the hassle of losing her own private servants.

Izaya wasn’t actually sure which reaction he despised more.

“Please begin filling out the paperwork in front of you, Orihara-san.” The social worker said curtly, handing papers to both Kyouko and Shirou with a small bow. “We need you to give us all the information you can about your children so that their transition into Mikhailov-san’s care will be simple.”

“I see no reason why I should do this.” Kyouko said stiffly, glaring at the social worker who flinched back from the glare as though her eyes could shoot venom. “Izaya is clearly capable of handling everything in life himself.”

“Wow. She’s bitter.” Izaya thought in delight, still trying to school his expression into a flat and apathetic one that wouldn’t reveal anything about what he was actually thinking to the social worker beside him. He couldn’t look too gleeful or happy over the trouble he was causing his biological parents. That might make it harder for his real father to adopt him.

“Just do paperwork!” Mairu whined from her place at Izaya’s left, pounding on the table with a pout aimed directly at her mother. “Wanna go see Shi-Shi!”

“Shi-Shi fun. Shi-Shi be here soon?” Kururi asked Izaya quietly, looking up at him with big eyes.

“I don’t know, Kuru-chan.” Izaya responded softly, brushing some hair out of her eyes and smiling fondly down at the small girl. “Shi-Shi is doing some paperwork too, you know.”

“Too much paper. Killing trees.” Mairu huffed, slouching back in her seat with an evil glare directed right at the papers in front of her parents. “Should just smash hammer and be done.”

“I agree.” Izaya sighed, thinking about how simple that scenario would be. “It would be very nice if Judge Benjiro could just hit his gavel on the desk and declare us Shichi’s kids. But that can’t happen.”

Izaya looked harshly at his parents, pushing the stack of papers closer to the both of them. “Because these people need to fill out some information on us and sign a few forms to release parental rights of us.”

“I have to do no such thing!” Kyouko snapped in response, and the social worker cleared her throat, giving Kyouko one warning look.

“Orihara-san,” She began smoothly, handing the irate woman a pen. “By order of the court, you must fill out this paperwork on your child and sign a form releasing custody of him to Mikhailov-san. The judge ruled it as such.”

Kyouko scowled and refused to take the pen, choosing to glare at Izaya instead.

Shirou sighed and slipped his phone into his pocket, taking the pen with a gracious nod to the social worker and beginning on his own paperwork packet with a low hum.
“Shirou!” Kyouko cried in shock, smacking her husband on the shoulder as she gaped at him. “What are you doing?!”

“Filling out the paperwork, dear.” Shirou responded smoothly, the pen scribbling neatly away as he answered the questions laid out for him. “The judge did order us to, and I would rather not be held on trial again for defying the court.”

“How can you just give up like this?” Kyouko hissed in Shirou’s ear, glaring at Izaya as the raven tried not to gawk at his father. “We still have a shot if we take this trial to the court of appeal and get better lawyers.”

“It has nothing to do with the lawyers, dear.” Shirou sighed again, flipping the page and moving on to the next set of questions. “There is evidence against us and we can’t combat it. The same result would come out in a court of appeal. I guarantee it.”

“You just aren’t trying hard enough!” Kyouko snapped in response, her eyes boiling with ferocity as she practically snarled at her husband. “I can’t believe I married a wimp like you!”

“Being wimpy has nothing to do with it, dear.” Shirou told her, frowning as his pen ran out of ink and gesturing for a new one which the stunned social worker happily handed over. After Shirou scribbled experimentally on the corner of the page and deemed the pen to be good, he nodded and continued writing, speaking again at the same time. “We just aren’t meant to be parents. Let’s give our children over to someone who is.”

Kyouko sputtered in rage, clearly unable to think of something to say in response to her husband’s direct defiance.

But Izaya could think of something to say.

“Thank you.” He said coolly, as coolly as he possibly could while the shock of having one of his own biological parents support him was still running through his system.

Shirou paused in his writing and looked up to meet Izaya’s eyes, the two locking gazes for several seconds.

In his father’s eyes, Izaya could see the same calculating businesslike look that he always had, overshadowing nearly every other emotion in there, which was to be expected. But he could also see…guilt. Regret. A certain note to those black depths that told Izaya…this man wasn’t a father. But he knew that he wasn’t one. He knew he wasn’t ready and he was sorry for having Izaya and the twins when he’d known that.

“I’m not upset with you.” Izaya found himself saying. “If you hadn’t had me when you did, I would never have met Shizuo. I would never have met the love of my life and his amazing family. So…” Izaya paused, feeling almost trapped in that cold businesslike glare that he knew contained human emotion somewhere far beneath the surface. “So don’t feel bad for having me. Or the girls.” He managed to get out, looking right at Shirou the entire time as he said it. “Because even if I can never forgive you for how you treated us, you still allowed us to meet the greatest people on the planet at the perfect time.”

Izaya gave his father a short bow, still feeling those eyes on him, as well as the confused eyes of everyone else in the room.

“Thank you, father.” He said flatly, his own eyes closed. “Thank you for creating me and the twins. And thank you for letting us go.”
There was silence in the room for a long time after that. No one spoke, not even the twins. Everyone just sat still and waited to see what would happen next.

Just as Izaya was beginning to wonder if he’d misread the situation, Shirou spoke.

“You’re welcome, Izaya.” The businessman said, his voice practically echoing in the silent room. “And thank you for fighting back.”

Thank you for fighting back.
Thank you for freeing yourself.
Thank you for being yourself.

Izaya gripped his sisters’ hands and watched Shirou finish filling out the paperwork, page after page, as efficiently and neatly as he might have signed a deal with a business partner. Shirou turned to his wife once he was done with both packets (his and Kyouko’s) and half convinced-half forced her into signing over her parental rights.

Then he took the pen himself, pausing only briefly to ask Izaya if he could visit at some point in the future, and then signed over his own rights.

Shichi and Kazimir came in while the social worker was finalizing everything with the Orihara parents, and the twins immediately latched onto Shichi’s legs, chattering happily about how they couldn’t wait to go home with Shi-Shi, Iza-nii was just as excited as them, they wanted to meet the cat that Iza-nii was named after, and that he was their dad now, right?

Kazimir winked jauntily at Kyouko when she saw him come in, completely ignoring the livid woman in favor of helping the social worker get everything all situated over in the corner.

Shichi began talking with the twins, answering all their comments and questions as best as he could and letting them climb on top of his back, holding out his hand to Izaya with a smile.

The smile said “You’re coming with me.”
The smile said “I care about you.”
The smile said “Let’s go home.”

Izaya turned back to look at his biological father as the man calmly screwed the cap of his pen back onto it, slipping the pen itself into his suit pocket, and then stood up from the couch in one smooth motion. He looked over at Shichi, his eyes staying on the Russian for just the shortest period of time before they drifted back over to Izaya. Then he gave Izaya a short bow and turned to his wife, beginning the lengthy process of convincing her to leave without any arguments or fights.

He approved of Shichi. He saw Shichi as the parent that he could never be. Shichi was Izaya’s new father.

Izaya smiled at Shirou’s back, probably the first time he’d ever actually smiled at the man, and took his father’s hand, walking out of the counseling offices with a new feeling in his heart.

Oh, it would take a week or so for the Family Courts to find Shichi’s care suitable. They’d probably examine the house and ask if the Orihara siblings were happy where they were. They would look
into a bunch of other things that Izaya didn’t even know about. There would be a bit more time before everything was official and final.

But right now, as Kazimir let them know that he’d given Shichi’s adoption application to the social worker and that she was going to turn it in along with the children’s paperwork, and Shichi took them all home to his house, it already felt final to Izaya.

Chapter End Notes

Okay! Now the twins and Izaya are living with Shichi! WOOHOO! CONFETTI!! IT'S FINALLY HAPPENING!!!

And the end of this story should be finally happening as well. In fact, as my best guess, I would say that this next update on Sunday should be the last one. It'll be a fluffy, warm, fuzzy scene with Shizaya (that's the plan anyway) and I don't believe it'll stretch into two chapters. So I'm not changing the number of chapters from the ? just yet, but be warned that if you see 45/45 listed as the chapters for the next update...then that's it! We finished it, guys! We made it through!

...

And I'm seriously trying not to cry at the thought of that! ❄️ •̫ • (>д<) •̫ •̫

Okay, again, sorry if this chapter was slow. We're leading up to the resolution of the whole story! I'll see you guys next week with the next update and a special announcement that will go with it! Bye! <3
Hello everyone! This is the last update for "Private Lessons"!

I just want to say that it has been a total blast writing this story, and that I can't thank you guys enough for all the incredible comments you've left, all the support I've gotten, and in general this amazing community. I never thought I would ever post any of my writing to a website, and I was always super nervous to see what people would think of it, but you guys seriously encouraged me and you were always so amazingly supportive. And not just with my story either, but with all the things going on in my life while I wrote this thing! You supported my sister when she went through surgery, me through my archery competitions, me whenever I had a bad day or a lot that I needed to do. I mean, you guys were just great and I absolutely loved writing for you.

I'm going to keep writing for this great community, so don't worry about that if you wanted more of this crazy story! And as a matter of fact, thanks to a fabulous idea from Professor_Shwein, there will be another small story released accompanying this one detailing all of Shichi's Adventures in Russia! Including the story about how he joined the mafia that involves the bathouse, and how he met Kazimir and why he fell in his naked lap! So get ready for some young Shichi after this is over! Hope you're looking forward to that!

Here is the final chapter! It's for all of you who've been following me through all the twists and turns, all the crazy struggles these characters faced, all the fluff and angst, and all the wacky people who came into this fic. Thank you so much for sticking it out with me to the end. I love you all!

My special announcement is at the very end of it! I hope you enjoy the last update of "Private Lessons"! <3

“Girls, remember that we’re having company over tonight.” Shichi told his two daughters, looking over their chosen outfits for the evening with a fond smile. “Are you both going to wear those?”

“Yep!” Mairu said happily, planting her hands on her hips and displaying the brightly colored T-shirt proudly. “Daddy like?”

“Yes, Daddy likes it a lot.” Shichi laughed, reaching a hand out to fix the crooked collar. “He thinks it shows your personality.”

“Yay.” Kururi cheered quietly, spinning around in her own neon T-shirt, smiling widely at the Russian man. “Glad for Daddy.”

“Gah! Why are you two wearing those outfits?!?” A screech sounded from the living room.

Shichi and the twins looked over to see a horrified Izaya carrying an armful of the decorations that he was setting up around the living room, his gaze directed right at the twins. “You can’t wear neon
shirts and shorts that don’t match!” The frantic boy snapped, his eyes raking up and down his sisters’ bodies at lightning speed. “You look like neon watermelons! Go change!”

Mairu pouted in her neon pink T-shirt and neon green shorts, looking up at Shichi with big eyes. “Do we have to?” She asked, clearly hoping for him to say they didn’t.

Kururi copied the motion in her neon green T-shirt and neon pink shorts, not saying anything and just letting her sister and her big mournful eyes speak for her instead.

“Izaya, they’re toddlers.” Shichi chuckled, ruffling the twins’ hair and smiling at his son. “And this isn’t some big fancy party. No one cares what you all look like. They can wear these if they want.”

Izaya looked uncertain of that fact, but he also looked at least little pacified by the explanation. Shichi didn’t blame his hesitation. The boy was only used to huge fancy parties and events where tuxedos, suits, and ballgown dresses were the norm and where matching was a complete necessity. Small intimate gatherings between friends weren’t really up his alley of expertise.

Shichi planned to change that, of course. But it was a work in progress.

“If you say so.” The raven finally said, sighing and shaking his head in disapproval at the neon watermelons cheering happily in front of him. Then he gave Shichi a harsh look, his red eyes narrowed harshly at his father as he said, “But they better dress nicely when they start going to school.”

Shichi laughed and nodded reassuringly at his worrywart of a son, glancing down at the two dancing little girls in front of him briefly before gently grabbing their shoulders and directing them to look at their brother.

“Now you tell your big brother that you’re going to dress nicely whenever you go out in public.” He told them, icy blue eyes locking with their big brown ones. Once they were both looking at him, Shichi winked and added, “It’ll calm him down.”

The twins giggled at Shichi’s conspirational whisper, and then looked back over at their glaring brother. “We will dress nicely when we go outside.” Both chanted at the same time. “Не волнуйся (Не волнуюся/don’t worry)!”

Izaya huffed and rolled his eyes, disappearing back into the living room and continuing his set-up for the party. “Волков бояться, в лес не ходить (Volkóv boyát’ya, v les ne khodít/To be afraid of the wolves means to not go into the forest).” They heard him mutter grumpily as he started getting things pinned up to the walls.

Both twins frowned and looked at Shichi in confusion.

The Russian man grinned and ruffled their hair at the adorable looks on their faces as they stared at him, unable to believe how freaking cute all his children were. “He’s just saying that he’s paranoid.” Shichi told them, and both girls’ eyes widened in understanding, the two toddlers giggling and hugging Shichi’s legs tightly as a way of saying thanks for the translation.

Too freaking cute. Shichi was going to have so many problems telling them not to do stuff when they got older. They were going to be too adorable to resist without Izaya around, making sure they stayed in line.

Although it wasn’t like Izaya was going to go too far away. He’d picked the college he wanted already and had passed the entrance exams for it just a week ago. It was actually in the same prefecture and area as Shichi’s house, but Izaya wanted to live on the campus in the dorms so he
could see what it was like to live away from family. Shichi had no objections. He thought it was a fabulous idea for young people to live on their own for a while, even though he knew that in Izaya’s case it was more out of wanting to have some personal space for the first time in his life than needing to learn to be independent.

No matter the reason that Izaya was moving away, Shichi was happy for his son. The boy was finally going to be able to get the education that he wanted, and Shichi knew he would thrive in that psychology pathway he was taking. Izaya was really excited for college, and even though he tried to hide it, Shichi knew that Izaya was also dying to know what college his boyfriend was going to.

They’d both taken the entrance exams not too long ago, but Izaya hadn’t heard from Shizuo whether or not he’d gotten in, even though he always brought it up when they talked on the phone every day.

Shichi was figuring that either Shizuo hadn’t gotten in and that he was ashamed to tell Izaya that all that extra tutoring over the last year and a half hadn’t paid off, or that he was hiding some kind of big surprise from the raven which he was going to tell him at this party.

“A going away party!” Izaya sang happily from the living room, his spirits restored as he thought about the guests coming over. “A going away party for me and Shizu-chan! It’s going to be great! And now he definitely won’t be able to avoid my questions about college!”

Shichi laughed at the evil glee in Izaya’s voice as he talked about getting the information out of his boyfriend no matter what he needed to do, reminded of a Russian he’d once worked with in the mafia whose main job had been to interrogate all their captured enemies.

No one was able to keep information from that crazy man for long. Shichi suspected it would be the same with his crazy son.

“Just make sure you don’t do anything illegal!” Shichi called into the living room, returning to the kitchen where he and Izaya had been tag-teaming dinner.

“I won’t!” Izaya’s voice called back as Shichi began stirring the yakisoba noodles while they boiled. “Oh, Fluffles! There you are!”

Izaya’s attention was suddenly caught by the appearance of Shichi’s cat, which Shichi had discovered soon after bringing the twins and Izaya home absolutely adored the Orihara siblings. Fluffles had a special liking for Izaya, and the two had been practically inseparable since day one. They slept together, they went for morning runs together, Izaya studied with Fluffles either on his lap or his desk, Fluffles apparently offered advice on the outfits Izaya picked for dates with Shizuo (how the cat did this, Shichi had no idea), and sometimes Fluffles even accompanied Shichi when he went to pick Izaya up from school so that they could meet up even sooner.

Yes, those two were like best friends. A big fluffy black cat and a lovely fluffy-haired raven, together until the bitter end.

“Shichi!” Izaya came running into the kitchen right as Shichi began wondering if Fluffles would find a way to reincarnate into a new cat once his current body died just to keep following Izaya around, startling the Russian out of his musings about cats’ lives.

The blonde-haired man spun around, looking in shock at his son as the raven dashed over to him, latching onto his chest and hugging him tightly.

A black ball of fluff sauntered into the kitchen right after Izaya, rubbing up against the boy’s leg and purring.
Shichi rolled his eyes, praying that cats didn’t actually reincarnate because he wasn’t sure if he could handle Fluffles for more than one life. “Hello, Fluffles. Good to see you, too.” The teacher said obligingly, subtly pushing the cat away with his foot.

The disgruntled feline huffed at him, sitting back a few steps and glaring at the icy-eyed man, but refusing to leave the kitchen entirely until Izaya did so as well.

Inseparable. You just couldn’t have one Fluffles without the other.

“Right then.” Shichi turned his attention to his son, gently smoothing down the raven hair on the head that was buried in his chest. “Did something happen? What’s wrong, мой котенок (мой котенок/my kitten)?”

“Oh, nothing is wrong.” Izaya assured him, finally pulling out of Shichi’s chest to look up at him with a smile, arms still wrapped around Shichi’s body. “I just…I just wanted to thank you for everything you’ve done for me and the girls. Again.”

Shichi laughed and kissed Izaya’s forehead, wondering if the raven would ever grow out of this phase.

Maybe once a week, if not more, Izaya would randomly run up to Shichi, hug him tightly and bury his face in the Russian’s chest, and thank him for everything he’d done. It had been over a year since Shichi had adopted the Orihara siblings now. He hardly though there was anything Izaya needed to thank him for. They were his children.

“I love you three.” Shichi told him son, stroking his raven hair with a fond smile. “I’d do anything for you little ones. There’s no need to thank a father for helping his children.”

“Still.” Izaya shrugged, hugging Shichi tightly one last time. “Thank you.”

Shichi hugged Izaya back, closing his eyes and enjoying the sweet moment for just a few seconds. If he was being totally honest with himself, Shichi almost hoped Izaya didn’t grow out of this phase. It was nice to be appreciated and all, but what Shichi really liked about these moments was the closeness he felt with Izaya, and the love they still displayed for each other even though Izaya was growing up way too fast. He liked being close to his son. He liked that his son wasn’t embarrassed to hug him or be hugged back.

He was going to miss Izaya when he left for college.

“You’re welcome, Fluffles.” Shichi said softly, pressing a small kiss to the top of the boy’s head. They stood like that for a few more seconds, just holding onto each other as dinner sizzled gently in the air around them and the clock ticked closer to when the first of their guests would arrive.

Truthfully, Shichi wasn’t ready to let his son go when the raven pulled back, giving Shichi a big smile and a small kiss on the cheek before skipping off to the living room to finish his party preparations. Shichi was sure Fluffles the cat knew that because he gave Shichi one of those all-knowing, pointed cat stares before trotting after his best friend, meowing plaintively.

“Oh, Fluffles! I’m coming!” Izaya cried, the raven no doubt running back over to pick up the needy cat before trotting towards his work.

That cat was spoiled. Shichi was so going to sick the twins on him later and tell them to play dress-up with him.

The Russian shook his head and examined the few dinner dishes that were still cooking. Only the
yakisoba really had anything left to do on it, and that was mostly just stirring until it finished boiling in a few minutes. The cooked rice was finished and set aside in a nice serving dish. The pickled vegetables were all done and waiting in a large bowl on the counter. Izaya’s famous curry pot pies were sitting enticingly on their baking tray, making Shichi’s mouth water just by staring at them. And the fruit desserts were safely hidden in the fridge, away from the eyes of the twins and Shizuo (for when that sweet-toothed maniac arrived).

Yep. All Shichi had to do was wait for the yakisoba to be done, and dinner was complete.

“Izaya, how are the decorations coming along?” Shichi called, wanting to get a feel for what was left to do. He was pretty sure the living room was Izaya’s last stop in getting the house set up for the party, but he wanted to be sure.

“Almost done!” Izaya called back. “Me and Fluffles are putting up the last streamer now.”

“Yeah, somehow I don’t think Fluffles is actually doing anything, but whatever.” Shichi muttered, still smiling at the idea of Izaya holding the fat cat up in the air and trying to get him to hang up something with those thick paws.

“Daddy!” Mairu screeched, running into the kitchen with her sister following close behind.

Shichi looked down at the adorable neon watermelons that he called his daughters, noting the urgent looks on their faces with a single raised eyebrow.

“Yes?” He asked, waiting to see what the problem was.

“People are coming!” Mairu yelled, jumping up and down and waving her arms like a crazy person.

“Arrived early.” Kururi agreed, her face just as urgent even if her voice and actions weren’t.

“Say what?!” Shichi cried, dropping his spoon and running over to the nearest window to peer out at their driveway.

Indeed, it seemed like the Heiwajimas had arrived early, bearing gifts no less, and were now walking up to the front door with excited looks on their faces, ready to head inside.

Oh Mother Russia.

“Izaya, go upstairs and get changed! Your boyfriend’s here!” Shichi called in warning to his son, running over to answer the front door.

“What?!” The raven screeched, a blur of black whooshing by Shichi on his way to the door and dashing up the wooden stairs that led to his bedroom. “Why didn’t you give me an earlier warning?! I’m not even close to being ready! Gah! Stupid Shizu-chan! Why is he arriving early?!”

The raven continued his panicked rant even after the door to his room was yanked open and slammed shut, and all three of the other house occupants could hear his frantic words, switching between Japanese and Russian as he yanked some clothes on.

“Ah…teenagers.” Shichi sighed fondly, even though he knew it was really just Izaya.

He looked down at the two girls who were bouncing and dancing and laughing happily in front of the door, ready to see their other parents for the first time in about a month.

“Girls, could you stir the yakisoba and pour it out while I answer the door? Izaya’s been teaching
“You that, right?” He asked, looking between the two happy toddlers with a smile. Both girls stopped and saluted him with big grins, dashing off for the kitchen in delight without saying a word. They loved practicing their cooking skills whenever Shichi or Izaya gave them the chance to. It was one of their favorite past-times besides giving their brother heart attacks.

While the twins ran off, the doorbell rang, dragging Shichi’s attention back over to the front door and the arrival of his guests.

“Right! Hold up a moment!” He called, undoing the locks on the door and flinging it wide open with a grin. “Welcome to the party!”

***

Shizuo hadn’t seen Izaya in an eternity.

Well, it had really only been about a week, but it still felt like an eternity to the blonde. He loved his raven-haired angel more than anything else on the planet, and being apart from him was always one of the hardest parts of Shizuo’s day.

He couldn’t wait until they were both grown up with jobs and could buy a house together. He wanted to see the raven every day in the morning when he woke up and every night when they both got back from work. He wanted to hold Izaya if he needed support during the day and close to him when they cuddled at night. He wanted to kiss him and hug him and hold his hands and everything else that couples were supposed to do. He loved being with Izaya, and he couldn’t wait to see him again.

Truth be told, it was Shizuo’s fault that his family was so early to Shichi’s party today. He made sure every single one of his family members had been ready 30 minutes earlier than planned, rushed them out of the house the instant Kasuka had finished wrapping up the final present, and wouldn’t stop bouncing in the back seat to encourage his father to drive faster once they were actually in the car and heading over.

He couldn’t help it! He’d needed to see Izaya.

“One week, Shizu-chan!” The lovely voice was scolding him as they ate together on the couch, Kichirou and Shichi attempting to set up the going-away video that all the adults had prepared for their college-bound children. “We haven’t seen each other for one week! That’s not such a long time! Would an extra hour really have killed you?”

“I wanted to see you.” Shizuo protested, leaning over to plant a kiss on Izaya’s forehead. “Can you blame me for wanting to see my perfect boyfriend as soon as possible?”

“I’m not perfect. You just have low standards.” Izaya muttered, his cheeks blushing red as he refused to look at his boyfriend.

Shizuo chuckled at the reaction, his arm slung around the raven’s shoulders as they waited on their fathers.

“You two lovebirds look so cute together.” Hajime chuckled from his seat on the other side of the living room, his arm slung around his own date, a stoic-faced boy that Izaya had set him up with named Riku. Izaya told Shizuo that he knew Riku from an old business proposition, and the purple bandana around his arm gave Shizuo some pause as to what kind of proposition that was, but Riku actually seemed like a pretty nice guy. And more importantly, he seemed like the kind of hard-ass who could and would easily beat Hajime up if he stepped out of line. There was a certain dynamic to
that relationship which Shizuo appreciated.

“Hajime, you need to start eating.” Riku told his boyfriend, holding up a plate of food with that same stoic expression. “Before I start shoving it down your throat.”

“Alright, alright!” Hajime held his free hand up in the air in surrender, a happy look in his electric blue eyes nonetheless as he smiled at the tough-looking boy. “I'll start eating, my grumpy cyber bully.”

“Hush up. Stuff your face.” Riku said flatly, dropping the plate on Hajime’s lap and leaning onto his shoulder in the same motion.

Yeah. Definitely an interesting dynamic. But Shizuo had to admit that they made a great, if somewhat odd pair.

“Kasu-nii, you're gonna marry us, right?” Mairu demanded from over in the corner, sitting right on Kasuka’s lap and glaring at him pointedly. “You said you would. I remember.”

“I remember, too.” Kururi added, snuggled up into his side and clutching his arm tightly. “Kasu-nii gonna marry us both.”

“I only said it because you two asked me to say that to you for your birthday.” Kasuka told them flatly, looking between the two little girls with that expressionless face of his. “That was the only present you wanted from me.”

“Yeah! Cuz we want Kasu-nii to marry us!” Mairu said like it was obvious, knocking on Kasuka’s head to check if he was still in there. “Keep up!”


“Well girls, I’m going to marry Shizu-chan first so that might not work out.” Izaya told them, hugging Shizuo’s arm and practically purring as he rubbed against the tall blonde.

“What?” Mairu demanded, jumping to her feet in Kasuka’s lap and looking like she was getting ready to throw down. “We’re gonna marry Kasu-nii before you marry Shizu-nii!”

“Nuh uh!” Izaya argued, shaking his head and sticking his tongue out at her. “I love Shizu-chan more!”

“Do not!” Mairu argued back, stomping her little foot indignantly.

“Do so!” Izaya retorted, not giving in the slightest bit.

“Do not!” Mairu yelled.

“Do so!” Izaya sang.

“Okay, that’s enough!” Shichi said cheerfully, clapping his hands and smiling at them all, although the dangerous look in his icy eye undermined the cheer. “Get stop yapping and get into your assembled couple positions!”

“Right! Come here, my love!” Kazimir sang, patting on his lap and winking at Shichi playfully. “I saved you a seat.”

“Idiot.” Shichi huffed, glaring at his own lover with a small blush beginning to coat his cheeks.
Namiko laughed at the reaction, her warm eyes sparkling as her husband came and sat down beside her. “You two boys need to grow up.” She teased, snickering when Shichi turned his glare on her.

“Aw, just go and sit on your lover’s lap, my man.” Kichirou grinned, not even flinching when the icy look of rage moved to him next.

“Come on!” Kazimir whined, bouncing his knees and pouting. “I’ve been waiting patiently for like, five hours!”

“Fifteen minutes!” Shichi argued back, scrubbing a hand over his face in exasperation. “You’ve been waiting for fifteen minutes, Kazimir!”

“I think clinginess runs in the tall guy gene.” Izaya announced, giving Shizuo a pointed look.

Shizuo pretended to be very interested in his yaki soba, shoveling another bite into his mouth without looking up. “I don’t know what you’re talking about.” He said casually, still holding Izaya close to him without letting go.

“Mhm. Sure.” Izaya rolled his eyes, but there was still a smile on his face nonetheless.

As Shichi went over and forced Kazimir to scoot over in the chair so they could share it, Kichirou stood up and cleared his throat to make an announcement.

“Right!” He said with a grin, looking around the room at them all. “Our little pow-wow is all assembled, and so the very important announcement can be made!”

He gestured to Shizuo, and Shizuo tried not to shrink back when every eye in the room landed on him.

“I wasn’t ready for this.” The blonde muttered, wondering if he could hide behind his boyfriend before his father marched over to drag him to the front of the room.

“Go on up there! Tell us the announcement!” Said boyfriend ordered, grabbing Shizuo’s arm and yanking him off the couch, using one small but powerful foot to kick him over to his evil father.

So much for hiding.

Shizuo sighed in defeat and trudged over to his happy father, standing next to the grinning man sullenly.

“Now then son, tell them all about what college you’re going to!” Kichirou sang happily, sitting back down beside his wife and leaving Shizuo standing on his own in the middle of the room.

Shizuo shot him a brief glare for this act of betrayal, but when he saw the excited way that Izaya was leaning forward, desperate to hear what Shizuo was going to say next, and hanging on his every word, he just couldn’t detract from what he’d been hiding so far.

“Alright,” Shizuo took a deep breath, looking right at Izaya with a shy smile. “I got the results of my college entrance exams a little while ago, and you should know that I got into Ikebukuro Community College.”

“Good for you!” Shichi clapped his hands, nodding in approval at the news and smiling widely at the boy giving it. “That was the one your friend Kadota is going to, right?”

Shizuo nodded, rubbing the back of his head sheepishly as he looked over at his boyfriend.
Izaya was beaming happily at him, red eyes sparkling with joy at Shizuo’s achievement. “I’m so proud of you, Shizu-chan!” He said with a huge grin on his face. “All my tutoring you got you through high school and through college entrance exams!”

“Yeah well, that’s not the really big announcement.” Shizuo said with a nervous laugh, glancing over at his parents who nodded at him encouragingly.

Shizuo nodded back and then turned to look at Izaya again, smiling right at his small boyfriend. “What you didn’t know was that I also took the entrance exam for another university.” He told the raven, and Izaya’s eyes widened.

“Wait…what?” He asked, leaning forward in his seat, and staring intently at Shizuo.

Shizuo smiled at the raven and reached into his back pocket, pulling out the acceptance letter that he’d been hiding from Izaya ever since he’d gotten it.

“I got into Kyoto University.” Shizuo said simply, holding up the letter with the seal of the college on it. “Izaya…we’re going to the same college next year!”

Izaya’s hands instantly clapped over his mouth, his red eyes wide as he stared at Shizuo in shock.

Shizuo didn’t blame him. Kyoto University was tied as the top university in Japan with the University of Tokyo itself, and it was extremely hard to get into. Everyone knew that Izaya would make it no problem. He was the smartest kid in their entire school and (thanks to Shichi) he’d also been able to join a few clubs and sports teams in order to pad his resume in his final year of high school. His spot was practically guaranteed. But Shizuo? He knew for a fact that he would never have gotten in, heck, he would never have even applied, if not for his incredible boyfriend Izaya.

“I could never have passed that entrance exam without you.” Shizuo admitted, smiling right at Izaya. “But I did…and you and I are going to Kyoto University next year.”

Izaya stared at Shizuo in shock for a few more seconds, the smallest traces of tears entering his beautiful red eyes, before he leapt to his feet and charged at Shizuo, grabbing the larger boy in a tight hug and burying his face in his chest.

“We can live in the same dorm room!” The boy chanted happily, squeezing Shizuo as tight as he could. “We can arrange our schedules so that we can have lunch together every day! I can help you with your homework! We can go on walks around the campus! I can make us dinner and breakfast! We’ll see each other all the time!”

“Oh my god! This really is reason to celebrate!” Shichi laughed, jumping to his feet and clapping his hands excitedly. “I’m gonna break out the vodka!”

He paused and looked at his little girls, who were both watching him with confused expressions.

“What’s vodka?” Mairu asked, brow scrunched up as she tried to remember which Russian word that was.

“Uh…it’s adult juice.” Shichi said awkwardly, still edging towards the kitchen to grab the alcohol. “You can’t have any.”
“Aw!” Mairu pouted, crossing her arms and huffing indignantly. “But I’m a big adult, too!”

“Not this kind of adult, my dear.” Shichi muttered, the whole room laughing at the pout that spread over Mairu’s face at being denied a second time.

“Don’t worry about it, girls. I won’t drink any either.” Izaya promised, and this seemed to appease the young ones a bit as they nodded and went back to laying out their wedding plans to Kasuka.

Izaya shook his head at how quickly they moved on, then looked back up at Shizuo, that happy look still shining in his eyes.

“I can’t believe we’re going to the same college!” He said joyfully, stepping up on his tiptoes so he could plant a kiss on Shizuo’s lips.

Shizuo eagerly kissed his boyfriend back, reveling in the feeling of the soft lips against his own, and no longer caring about all the eyes fixed right on him. As long as he had Izaya, nothing else mattered.

As Shichi, Kazimir, Kichirou, Namiko, Hajime, and Riku (all of them adults of drinking age – Hajime and Riku both being 20 years old) argued over who was going to pour the vodka and how much each person was getting, and the twins continued to accost Kasuka, Izaya and Shizuo just kept their lips locked together and blocked the rest of the world out.

Finally, Izaya pulled away from Shizuo, still smiling brightly at his tall boyfriend, the two of them just holding onto each other and enjoying the other’s presence.

“You know,” Izaya said softly, his red eyes locked with Shizuo’s golden ones. “I just realized something very important.”

“That you love me?” Shizuo teased, kissing the top of his boyfriend’s head with a smile.

Izaya giggled and pushed him away, shaking his head firmly. “No. That’s already common knowledge.” He scolded his boyfriend, tapping at Shizuo’s nose with a smile of his own. “I’m talking about a very important revelation about the two of us and what we are.”

Shizuo cocked his head to the side, thinking about everything the two of them had been through and all the different revelations that Izaya could have had as a result of those events.

Crazy tutoring sessions and odd looks at school.

Interrogative friends and special bento boxes.

First dates and meeting families.

Possessive ex-boyfriends and kidnappings.

Fist fights and hospital trips.

Gang wars and near-fatal bullet wounds.

Horrible parents and law suits.

Adoptions processes and finishing school.

College entrance exams and going-away parties.
All of those things, so many things, that had happened in the short time they’d been together. Shizuo had realized many things about himself and about the wonderful raven in front of him in that time period. Realizations about who he was and what he was. Realizations about who he loved and what he would do for them. Realizations about how he couldn’t live without the person standing right here before him. In all that time, what could Izaya himself have realized about the two of them?

“Do you wanna hear my revelation?” Izaya sang, poking playfully at Shizuo’s nose with that same happy smile on his face.

“You know I wouldn’t want to hear anything else.” Shizuo said honestly, kissing his boyfriend on the forehead.

“Alright then. Here it is.” Izaya began, pulling back from Shizuo and looking around his home slowly, taking in the warm atmosphere of the place he belonged in, listening to the sounds of his father, friends, and family arguing in the kitchen, watching his little sisters happily play with a brother/future fiancé that they adored, and holding onto the waist of the boy who loved him more than anything else in the world.

He turned to look back at Shizuo with a happy smile, a small tear of joy rolling down his cheek as he said, “A cat is the same as a dog.”

The End

Chapter End Notes
So a few of you already know that I write original books and actually while I was writing "Private Lessons" and all the little one-shots that go with it, I was writing this original book of mine called "Dynamic"! This is actually going to be the book that I'm trying to get published! This is the cover art that I drew for it and this is the first draft of the cover, but "Dynamic" is going to be my first (hopefully published) original book! So while I begin on the other fanfictions to post here, I'm going to finish editing "Dynamic" and then begin sending out query letters to publishing agents to try and get it published!

I'm super excited for this, guys! I hope it all goes well and fingers crossed that it does!
But now you all know, and you have a small heads-up, that this is going to be my (again hopefully published) first book! Wish me luck that the process goes pretty well!

If I hadn't posted this fanfiction and gotten all the amazing support from you guys that I have, I probably would never have gotten up the gumption to finish and begin trying to publish one of my books. You guys have seriously encouraged me and my writing, and I love you all so much! I'm sad to see this fic go, but don't worry, others will be following it! As well as "Dynamic!"

Again, hopefully! XD Lots of hope there.

Well, I will see you guys next time, probably with Shichi's Adventures or some other short one-shots while I work up to another multi-chapter fanfiction and get this publishing process started. Again, massive thank-you to all of you! I love you so much! <3 <3 <3 <3

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**End Notes**

Let me know what you think in the comments below! I'd love to hear tips on improvement or ideas for later on down the line of the story! <3

Please [drop by the archive and comment](#) to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!