The Sunrise of Orihara Izaya

by PenPalAiryn

Summary

Izaya and Shizuo are left traumatized after the final fight, trying to cope and become happy - something they both acknowledged they never really were. When Izaya returns to Tokyo after almost three years what will happen when they meet again? Maybe they'll lose all the progress they made so far...Or maybe they'll make even more progress together. It's up to them. ;)

Slow-Built so be prepared! (^v^)

Notes

Hello everyone!
that is my first attempt of writing and posting anything but I finally decided it was time to give it a go!
I am planning for a one shot originally just to test the waters (the one-shot being that first chapter) but I ended up with a multi-chapter fic instead! :P
I am a huge Drrr fan both in canon and non-canon, however i have to admit that I had no access to the novels so my writing is only based on the anime and whatever canon material I find online, so please keep that in mind when reading!
I do believe that everyone -even someone as twisted as canon-Izaya, has the capacity of becoming a better person even a little after experiencing a traumatic event and this js my main
reason for starting this story.
I Izaya to find support in his life, grow as a person and finally be happy because I believe that
canon Izaya is anything but happy and it makes me a bit sad to know that in the Sunset novel
he continues to spiral down.
Also English is not my first language so please bear with me. :P
Finally, I hope you'll get to enjoy my fic!
See ya! :)

Edit: I just realized I never put a Disclaimer so here it goes: I do NOT own Durarara or the
characters in this story in any way, shape or form (unfortunately :P) since my name is not
Ryogo Narita. If I did Shizaya would be cannon since Volume 1! :P

What I do own though is the plot AND most importantly my two precious supporting OCs:
Kato-san and Mayumi-chan that hopefully you'll get to know and love if you decide to stick
around with me! (^_^)

Also I appreciate any form of constrictive criticism you can offer me and I love hearing your
thoughts and chatting with you so please don't hesitate to leave me a message if you want to
ask me something or discuss the story with me!! :) 
Also thank you very much for your kudos!! When I started writing I never thought I'd reach
100! (^w^)
Chapter 1

He was watching from his window as the lights from the nearby buildings were being turned on one after the other as the sun was setting.

There, imprisoned on his wheelchair by non-other than his own self, in a quiet, spacious apartment in one of the skyscrapers somewhere in Tamagawa, Osaka.

He knew that if he looked down he could watch tiny human-dots wandering aimlessly on the roads.

Going home to their families possibly? Meeting with friends for a drink after work perhaps? Meeting with their lovers probably? Doing some last-minute shopping maybe? Who knew? Who cared?

He did not.

Not anymore anyways.

He refused to turn his head down to look towards what should have been his worshippers; because once upon a time, he should have been their god.

No. He would only focus on the illuminated buildings. For buildings were inanimate objects. And inanimate objects could not cause him harm.

Well… unless they were crumbled and thrown towards his direction. Crashing him like the disgusting lonely insect that he was…that he still is.

'Stop it!'

He refused to go there again. His fragile mind could not handle drifting to the past anymore, as it could not handle the stress and pain that such thoughts were most often than not accompanied with.

No. He would only focus on the illuminated buildings.

Today was going to be a good day. He felt it on his bones…literally, ridiculous as it sounded. His leg muscles felt stiff as always from the lack of proper usage but other than that he was relatively pain-free. He supposed it was because the weather would be warm outside, if the bright sunlight entering his bedroom window was any indication.

He laughed- a hollow sound reverberating at his ears; his head moving softly from side to side, slightly overgrown bangs falling gently in front of his eyes.

“Ahh... like an old man I’ve become, ne?”

He asked softly no one in particular, hearing his voice echoing on the empty walls of his bedroom.

He had voted to himself a while ago that for once he would try to create a homey atmosphere to his living space, rather than recreating the unfriendly and sterile environment of his former apartment in Shinjuku.

Hhang a few photographs here and there maybe.
He knew he was kidding himself with such thoughts; he knew that he had nothing of sort. No family pictures nor ones with the bespectacled lovestruck doctor who used to be his one and only friend, nor any other kind of memorabilia.

Hopefully he would create something good for himself this time. Because this was his second chance in life and despite the complications he had to learn to leave with he was not wasting it!

After that last fight he had accepted that eventually he was going to die, but he had also realized that he wasn’t ready for it, despite that one moment of pure hatred for the other which had persuaded him for the opposite.

He would try to remember who he used to be, how he used to be before turning into the vicious informant he was known for once upon a time. Of course, that past version of himself was also far from saint, but at least at that times he had managed to form that one and only connection with another human being that was not created by familial bonds. That one and only almost normal friendship.

Well, wallowing on these thoughts could potentially drop his slightly improved mood due to being mostly pain-free today so he was not going to let them weight him down. Besides flirting with depression was not in his list of things to do for the day. He had to stay strong so not to waste his chance!

With renewed spirit he grabbed his wheelchair and brought it closer to the bed. Slowly he moved his body towards the edge of the bed, slithering onto the seat of the wheelchair. After arranging his legs on the pedals, he rolled toward the bathroom for his morning routine.

Assisting to his daily needs was still a bit of a hustle, though now, a year and a half after the incident, he was getting better at it for he was no weakling, despite not possessing inhuman strength. His upper body was still strong and his arms were capable -they could still support his body to move it in the shower or on the toilet seat after all -in spite of them being scarred and ugly from the various surgeries he had undergone to fix the damage that had happened to them.

After he was done he quickly wore a simple white shirt and a pair of grey pants, draped his coat over his shoulders and called for a taxi to retrieve him. He did not want to be late to the office. Yes, punctuality would always remain a trait of his no matter how his behavior and personality were shaping under the current circumstances.

And yes, Orihara Izaya had been reduced to a plain mortal human, having a common and unexciting office job.

It was a very good development that these last few years it was getting easier for people with disabilities to get hired for various jobs in Japan.

While he was waiting he hurriedly made some black coffee and drank a cup, then rolled to the living room to take his keys and wallet from the coffee table and afterwards he exited his apartment. The taxi would be there in a couple of minutes.

As he was reaching the ground floor a few humans started entering the elevator all formally dressed up and ready to go to their jobs -office jobs he would have guess If he was really interested in them, which he wasn’t. He exchanged a few pleasantries with a few that he had made an acquaintance with but mostly ignored everyone else.

Humans had lost his interest a while ago. If he couldn’t even distinct a human from a monster
properly; if his love for humans was impure; if they would never be going to love him back, did he have any right at all to be interested in them anymore? Did they have any right at all to demand his interest with their half-felt pleasantries either?

No, love was not for him. Any kind of it. Real and pure. Fake and deceitful. He was never going to be loved anyways.

Besides it’s not as if anyone had put any actual effort to truly meet him or care for him in this new life he was creating for himself. To them he was an unfortunate young man who lost his mobility in some kind of accident. He could see it in their eyes; the sympathy, the pity. It annoyed him to no end.

Funny thing was that he was finally able to admit at least to himself that humans did annoy him. A lot. That’s why he was sadistically enjoying the situations he used to force upon them and not out of some false misconception of his regarding love. However, he knew that to those who had the misfortune to have met him, he was a parasite. And he was pretty sure that if anyone here actually put some effort to meet him they would end up to the exact same conclusion all the others have come and they would run away from him as fast as possible the moment they saw through him. And then that kind of betrayal would actually hurt him. He was not ready for it. Maybe he would never be.

He was lost to his thoughts again when he realized that he had reached the ground floor, the elevator’s doors were open and everyone was hurrying to continue with their lives. Rolling his wheelchair, he reached for the taxi parked by the exit of the condo.

“Orihara-san?” the driver asked to verify it was the indeed the client.

“Yes.” He replied and let the other assist him in the cab.

Work was good today. He had a couple articles to edit for this week’s edition of Asahi Shimbu, Osaka’s newspaper, mainly regarding the social column, but that was fairly easy task for someone with his intellectual strengths.

Moreover, his job did not require a lot of social interactions, did not evolve any kind physical exercise for he was seated the whole time and his tiny office was offering him the much-needed peace he needed. It did not pay that much but that was a small issue since the money he had saved from his work as an informant would last him for quite a while and in the job description a university degree was not needed; the important part was having the necessary intellect, which he obviously had.

Time flew by fast today and before he realized it was time to go home. He would probably wheel between the crowds he decided, just to feel the sun on his skin. Maybe having lunch out today on the way home would be nice for a change. He would also be able to mingle with humanity for a while, but not enough to feel once again like a puzzle piece that just does not fit the puzzle.

“Izaya-kun, good job today.” his boss said passing by him to the hallway that led from the offices to the elevators.

The man stopped at his trucks, surprised that anyone would address him with that familiarity. His boss had never done it before in the past few months he was working here. Well, he was one of the most aspiring employees, so he supposed that would probably explain it.
“Thank you, Kato-san. Good job today” he replied to his elder accompanied by a small bow of his head and afterwards continued to his way. If he was correct the old man would stay for at least a couple of hours more. After all it was inappropriate for a boss to leave the office unless even the last employee was out of the door otherwise it would reflect badly to his image.

‘Pretentious boss-san’ the raven though as he was moving to the elevator, however he couldn’t suppress the tiny comfort of having someone, anyone address him by his given name.

As usually even this simple thought was chained to darker ones and before he knew it his mind had started wondering further. It was as if he couldn’t control what was happening in his own head anymore; depressive and self-loathing thoughts, regrets always calling to him from the dark corners of his fragile mind, him shutting down everything around him being lost in his head more often than he cared to admit.

Izaya-kun, Kato-san had called him…

Izaya-kun… Izaya-kuuun… I-zaaa-yaaa-kuuun!

He immediately snapped out of thoughts. He was never going back to thinking about these things again.

Izaya-kun.

How long has been since someone, anyone called him by his given name? Too long. Almost a bit more than a year.

And he hadn’t even bothered to change it ever since he fled from Tokyo!

It’s not that he was of any value to anyone to try and track him down anymore. He had betrayed, exploited, harmed or neglected everyone he knew that could potentially care enough to search for him. Shiki-san, Shina, his sisters. Besides he left everything on his apartment untouched -the only thing Kine left him at the hospital were his cards to be able to access his bank accounts. After that he left, Manami following him and neither of them contacted him again. All the precious information was holed up at his apartment for everyone daring enough to trespass his former ‘home’ and take it, so none had a reason to search for him. A few color gangs maybe but these piss-poor losers could not by any chance hire another informant to locate him since they’d never be able to afford one in the first place.

However, it was good having someone addressing him familiarly at last. He decided that for once he wouldn’t read too much into it searching for hidden motives and dark reasons. He would just linger on that tiny warmth inside his chest. That little, almost nonexistent hope that this was a sign that things would get better now that he had decided to put some effort to better himself.

He had not even realized it but he had already reached the city center by now. He would by some takoyaki maybe from one of the various stalls and eat and then he would head back home. Somewhere close to him he heard some insistent high-pitched barking. He stayed unmoving – he hated dogs after all and didn’t want the hairy creature to approach him. While seated on his chair he noticed of a frantic scruffy cat running in front of him and turning into an alley behind where he was standing, in what could only be compared to the speed of light. A tiny fluffy dog which had probably escaped his master if the leash flowing in the air behind it was any indication, was running after it a few feet away from it barking non-stop and chasing it straight to the alley.

Poor little fucker jumped on an open dumpster in the alley in an attempt to separate further from the tiny beast chasing after it and dived straight into the trash bags, with the dog stopping right in front of
it and continuing its irritating dog-threats.

He actually laughed aloud! An honest heartfelt laugh escaping his lips while watching the scene! It was a while since he was truly entertained by anything!

He couldn’t put his finger exactly on what it was, but the whole thing felt a tiny bit familiar. Maybe it was amusing because the outcome of the chase was kind of predictable he supposed, and predictability would always amuse him. It was like his love for punctuality, ever remaining unchanged.

A chubby oba-chan looking a bit disorientated emerged from the crowds a few seconds afterwards obviously looking for the fur-ball as if its annoying little voice wasn’t proof enough for its current location.

“In the alley.” The raven said still amuse on his voice, pointing towards the alley behind him with his thumb.

The lady moved her head down and looked at him as if she had not noticed him till that moment. She inspected him for a few seconds that felt way too long for his liking, with that piercing and almost invading gaze the elders have sometimes, which feels like they might try to analyze every particle of your body.

The male swallowed. He could feel himself getting uncomfortable under her stare and wiggled slightly on his seat. She was judging him in her mind right now, he knew it. He could already guess the possible results of said judgment. Either pity or disgust. Maybe both. Maybe he shouldn’t have said anything. Ignore her and her little unimportant problem like the others did around them and be on his way. Maybe he-

Her eyes shinned brightly after these couple of seconds and her flashed cheeks pulled up due to a big smile pushing them up to her face.

“oh! Arigato gozaimasu, son!” she replied to him, grabbing one of his hands which was resting on his lap with both of hers, relief and gratitude evident on her tone.

Izaya could feel his cheeks flash a little at her reaction.
He nodded stupidly at her while she released his hand and hurried to collect the small dog, repeatedly calling after it “Kawai-chaaan!” in a scolding manner.
Okay! That he had not expected!

It wasn’t that he did anything special for her to react like that. Yes, he knew that humans reacted strongly to certain situations when they felt appreciative and cared for, and he had experienced it in the past directed to him -Masaomi Kida-kun and his girlfriend Saki-chan being good examples at one point; but he had disregarded any feeling directed towards him that was associated with it, since they had been technically manipulated toward it, and he didn’t really care how humans felt about him back then.

He had never actually felt personally invested on any of them in the first place.

But… Maybe that was why he could also predict the human’s reactions.

Because he was never personally invested on them, never cared about them and staying detached from them or their problems, simply observing them like a scientist would with the mice he
experimented on was what granted him his ability to predict their behavior.

But just now he realized, when he had participated on the oba-chans little drama, unconsciously pointing to her the dog, it was not to witness her reaction to his actions, it was simply just because he felt like doing it.

Maybe that was why he really didn’t want to see her looking down or him, or pity him. Because he, dare say, willingly gave her something of his. His attention.

Just maybe.

Hmm that was something he had to think about a bit more though.

By the time he was laying on his bed to sleep that night he was certain of three things that he had learned about himself that day.

The first was that he could also be human sometimes, even though he didn’t always realize it, but at the times he did realize it he was no more in denial about it.

The second was that being human was certainly a lot more stressful than being a god if his reaction to the oba-chan’s gaze was any proof.

And the third was that animals could also be interesting sometimes!

Who knew maybe he’d have a fluffy annoying little ‘Kawai-chan’ also one day!

Maybe he’d also have pictures with other humans; nice memories to fill the empty walls of his apartment. That would be nice…

That was his last thought before drifting to sleep.
Hello! :) I’ve decided to continue with my fanfiction and have finally added the second chapter! I apologize for taking too long to do so, but there are a lot of summatives to do and deadlines to meet for my Master's which has been pretty stressful lately!

I would like to say that it will be a slow-paced fanfiction since I think that I need to focus on Izaya (and probably Shizuo too) separately for a while to properly try and solidify their post-Ketsu character development as I imagine it to be in my AU to make them feel as real as possible to any of the readers of this fanfiction and set the foundations for their relationship to change, so they will not meet each other any time soon probably.

Also I understand my writing style might be tiresome sometimes since it focuses mostly on inner thoughts, but that way it is easier for me to address Izaya’s character with more depth so I can turn him easier into a somewhat relatable human being (at least I hope I do :P) without having extended inner monologues in a first pov. Also, Izaya has no person close enough to him for him to open up to, not even to have a proper chat most of the times, so right now I feel it’s my best option.

Finally, the use of the secondary characters is to help Izaya through his observations and interactions with them to make realizations about himself. While this will be their only role, I also want to find a way to make them slightly more three-dimensional since I think that if they will merely act as plot devices so plainly even their minor presence might turn tiresome: P

Hope you will enjoy this chapter, see ya!

He was staring from his window at the lights again contemplating his new life.

His resolve from a few weeks back had crumbled once more since he couldn’t seem to be able to appreciate his new-found humanity. Sure, he had come to accept it; after all it was brutally forced upon him so what more could he do? However, it still seemed impossible for him to be content with it for a large part of him still longed to be a God.

It was easier to just stare human dots from above than being down to mortal-land and struggle to interact and create bonds with them.

Part of him wasn’t even ready for such a huge step yet, though a smaller part of him, one he had suppressed for the greatest part of his life, had always been seeking for it, being desperate for it.

But the problem was that there were no guarantees when it came to human interactions! Things could seem to be going well at first and then, even if unintentionally, take a turn for the worse in a second; one wrong gesture, look or word and a potential bond could turn into dislike, hate even! Or even worse a hard-earned already formed bond would break to millions of pieces and that would be even more painful.

Moreover, the other part of him, the “godly” one, still longed for the danger of engaging semi-legal - or plain illegal- activities. The excitement he earned every time he uncovered a new piece of
information, the thrill he felt while parkouring on Tokyo buildings, the adrenaline rushes he got
every time he was being chased by a certain debt-collector. Most of all though, he missed that feeling
of superiority he had felt over everyone; humans and supernatural entities alike.

He had thought before that he could substitute his past activities with others that would give him a
thrill and fit his current situation.

He knew such feelings of ecstasy were possible to be recreated through other means of course;
substance abuse being the obvious solution to his deprivation of excitement. He could afford both
alcohol and drugs and he was pretty sure it would be a piece of cake for him to get access to the later,
his past as an informant being a useful asset in regards of identifying the right places to go and people
to contact. If he was stupid he’d have probably indulged by now, regularly ending up high just to
feel his heart race for a few hours like it did in the past.
But he was Orihara Izaya for fuck’s sake! His devious twisted mind was his bigger strength, his only
strength! He wouldn’t compromise it for a cheap substitute to reminisce of his past glory. Sure, he
had stepped low in the past but that would have been a new kind of low even for him! Besides he
didn’t want to take any chances of ending up dead... He was lucky to be still alive in the first place
by the time that final battle had ended, thank you very much!

Sex could be another option he contemplated, though even back then when he used to love humans
he preferred to refrain from any physical contact with them more than absolutely necessary, since he
couldn’t help but feel they were unworthy of him -and technically they were still inferior to him
where brains were concerned. Also, for someone as emotionally detached as him he doubted he
could recreate the same excitement he felt every time he was, for example, being chased, since he
would not invest any feeling behind it. That, he knew by experience. He had tried it a couple of
times in the past during his high school life when he had a short-lived “romance” with Mikage-chan,
mainly because everyone else was so desperate to get it, so he had to see what was so special about
it. Nothing, was the conclusion he had come. Sure, the final moments of it were somewhat okay but
the thing as a whole was troublesome and he was feeling uneasy due to the whole procedure to say
at best. Mikage-chan probably took it at heart thinking she was the reason of his barely there interest
of her. No wonder she was hating his guts ever since he supposed.

Since then though he chose to plainly ignore any physical need of his. If it happened and it was
usually during him being asleep that was fine with him; it was saving him from wasting his precious
time from plotting to something so animalistic that a former God like him was obviously so above of.
If he was awake he would just get on with it as fast as possible like with any other chore, no
bothering of wasting his time picturing steamy senses with faceless, or not humans. On top of that,
even if he chose to be like that with another, there was also the additional problem of his partly
disability and the fact that he was being really uncomfortable in the idea of anyone seeing the scars
littering his body.

Well, he could always mess with some humans in this city too, just to have something to occupy his
free time, like hinting to Lifestyle chief-editor Amata-chan that her husband most likely is having an
affair and that’s why his business trips have been doubled this last month or at least troll humans to
an anonymous chatroom- which was innocent fun if you asked him!

The only reason he had not indulge to the temptation yet was this feeling in his gut that he had made
a tiny step to better himself this final year, making realizations about his life and managing to adjust
in a completely different lifestyle than before while others would have given up already. By going
back to focusing all his energy in humanity all his progress, if he could call it that, would be lost.
That oba-chan he had encountered weeks ago had smiled to him making him feel almost accepted
and he didn’t want to push that feeling aside even at the expense of his much-needed entertainment.
Besides, shouldn’t humans be decent to everyone no matter what, even it was just for the sake of fake or not-poleness?

Yes, he had encountered true scams during his work as an informant but such people were not proper humans, and that’s what he had concluded he should try to become if he would make any actual difference for himself this time.

He would have to come up with a new hobby he supposed.

The answer to his question came a few weeks later while he was rolling his wheelchair towards his office.

A colleague of his passed by him at the hallway and while the disabled man politely greeted him as he had been accustomed to do to everyone, imitating the proper way humans interacted with each other, the other man instead of following the etiquette of returning the usual pleasantries back, looked at the him straight in the eye with a look of pure loathing and spitted “Orihara-san” after going on his way in the opposite direction.

Izaya would have lied if he said he wasn’t startled about it, a bit hurt even since he was trying for once to get along with others in a “normal” way.

Kinosuke Arata-san was a few years his senior in his early thirties, a Social media graduate, decent looking, married if the band on his finger was any indication, working in Asahi Shimbu for the last four years as a sub-editor with mostly the same duties as Izaya himself and was also the nephew of the Sports chief editor, Kinosuke Ryou-san. Always polite, formal and an overachiever he was considered the next big name in the newspaper, one the rumor-mill suggested him to be the one recommended for the highest seasonal bonus for the summer period that could equal more than twice his salary and the amount of which was determined based on the average of the performance evaluations conducted during the season.

Which was why Izaya could not even begin to grasp why someone like Kinosuke Arata would bother with him of all people, being all hostile and antisocial out of the blue.

< The rest of the day was uneventful, the man doing his job and ignoring his surroundings, spending his lunch break holed up in his office eating his convenience store sushi -which was gross if you’d asked him but he didn’t have Namie-san at his beck and call anymore to cook for him at a daily basis- and then going back in doing his job and ignoring his surroundings once more.

Around the time to leave for the day his boss Kato-san knocked at his office door. Izaya nodded at him signaling that he could enter. He was a bit glad Kato-san was here, the old man being probably the only human he was constantly interacting with and though it was far from them being buddies or anything of the like, it was nice sometimes to hear one other voice mixing with his own. Besides Kato-san, annoying as he could be when he was in one of his chatty moods, he was alright to be around and certainly it was better being with him for a while than the raven being always alone.

“Good afternoon Izaya-kun!” he greeted conversationally. “How is the latest articles’ revision’s going?”

“Good afternoon Kato-san. I believe I am done with them. I will be emailing them to you by the time I’ll be leaving the office today. Please sent me any new drafts you have received and I will have them revised them by tomorrow.”
“Impressive Izaya-kun! I haven’t encountered such a highly task orientated employee in the 25 years I’ve been working here!” he said a little too excitedly for Izaya’s liking.

The younger one wasn’t comfortable with too much flattery. He was pretty good at being the one at the giving end of it, but when complements were directed at him, even though he expectedly hid it behind charming smiles and little laughs, he always felt a bit uneasy; like the other person was trying to earn his approval for some hidden agenda of them, thus, he was always a bit cautious when it happened.

“You must be exaggerating Kato-san.” He said humbly although he knew that what the man was saying was very much true. He was one of the most productive employees, always being done with his work far before any deadlines. The only one who could rival him was probably the golden boy Kinosuke-kun.

“I assure you Izaya-kun I am perfectly honest!” and then he lowered his voice whispering to him conspiringly “Listen son, I’ve probably shouldn’t be saying that but I’ve heard from Amata-san who’d heard from Ryuu-san who was told by the accounting department that you’re up for the highest bonus of the season. But do not mention it to anyone in the newspaper, we don’t want people to know the accounting department gave away financial information before being officially approved okay?”

The raven tried very hard to refrain pointing out that probably by now the whole Shimbu had learned about the oncoming bonus decision and that for a prestigious newspaper they were apparently terrible at handling information which was pretty ironic. Instead he smiled politely and nodded his head to assure the older male.

“I am honored to hear that Kato-san. I guarantee you I will be very discreet about the matter.”

“You have a bright future in the industry, child I can see it already!” he said with a hint of pride any mentor would have for their apprentice, though obviously Izaya did not need anyone to mentor him. He was above needing assistance or direction in life...

“Well and look how far that got you’ his own voice whispered poisonously at him at the back of his head but he shut it down before it got too loud, the thrill of this small achievement being too much to ignore.

“If you say so, that must be true boss-san!” he laughed a bit, his heartbeat rising by the second.

It wasn’t the monetary bonus that made his heart skip a few beats and his neck getting warmer. No, it was the remembrance of the poisonous look Kinosuke Arata had given to him that morning, now that all the pieces have come together. He had obviously known about losing the bonus to him, his uncle being the one who had seen the accounting reports. There was not a chance of him not knowing, not a single one! And he was obvious very displeased enough to not bother being subtle about it; the golden-boy of Shimbu losing to someone like him. It was hilarious!

And the best part was that Izaya himself haven’t even tried to get to anyone’s nerves in a year and half yet he still managed to do it, even unintentionally. The only thing he was focusing on all these months was adjusting to this new model of life of his and doing his best with whatever resource or capability he had to work with, be it money, health or a job. The fact that he was still better than the others when he put his mind into something was because he could simply not compromise with
Izaya was a perfectionist after all. He had got to thrive wherever he set his mind on, no matter what. Deep down he knew what was fueling him in life was the constant feeling of inferiority he had buried and ignored but was caring with him his whole life; that was the only thing pushing him towards perfection in his search for inner balance. He had to constantly set goals and achieve them, be it for him to become a perfect god in the past or be it for him to become a perfect human in the present!

However, while the morning incident could have been a reason for him to have a setback in all of the progress he was making due to becoming a perfect human, feeling loathed by one more person, he was surprised to have realized he didn’t actually care! The thing is, he had never had proper interaction with Kinosuke; the man never tried to approach him apart from false pleasantries or pitying glances. So, why would he want to be on that human’s good side anyways just for perfection’s sake?

Should he consider a setback to his progress not being liked by someone who had obviously so much more than him in life and still competing with the raven who had next to nothing -well, apart from more money apparently- if Kinosuke’s attitude that day was any indication?

Sure, he wanted Kato-san to like him, like he had wanted that oba-chan not to hate him but just because he was emotionally invested in these two cases, should he be invested to everyone for him to turn into a proper human like his boss or that nice old lady? No, that didn’t sit right with him. He could never be truly like that anyways.

Even truly good humans couldn’t be like that! No, they would still get angry and yell and scream from the top of their lungs in the middle of the busy Tokyo streets and cause distraction when later they would rip a sign to use like base-ball bats or lift a vending machine to throw at...

“Izaya-kun?”

“Oh?! I apologize Kato-san, I got a bit of a headache since this morning. What were you saying?” the raven-haired man he asked conversationally.

“You have to take better care of yourself Izaya-kun! Maybe find a woman to take care of you!” he said enthusiastically; Izaya cringing internally at the thought of himself with any type of partner, the old-fashioned views Kato-san probably held if the way he phrased his sentence was any indication, the implication that he needed to be taken care of and the indication of where this conversation was heading.

He tried to shut Kato-san’s voice of and reframed from talking more than necessary, adding a nod of the head here or there, mattering “Mhmm” occasionally to show that he was contemplating his boss’s ideas and of course blinking his eyes every few seconds indicating that he was still very much present in the conversation.

After fifteen more uncomfortable minutes of one-sided conversation Izaya was heading towards the elevator doors, his brain cells have been most likely turned to ashes.

He couldn’t even contemplate his new realizations regarding humanity right now!

Well, that was until he wheeled in front of a certain office and noticed the door being open and the occupant seated in front of his much larger desk than his own…obviously. That moment his mind
was back on truck at full force!

“Kinosuke-saan! Good job todayyy!” he called in a sing-song voice he hadn’t used in what felt like forever adding the polite little smile he always used in his office-interactions.

At the sound of his voice the other male turned his head towards him so fast his neck could have snapped, obviously startled by the playful tone of the other.

“Mm..Yeah..” he grumbled nodding and went back to ignoring the disabled man.

By the time the elevator doors were closing Izaya’s lips had been turned into a smirk.

Well, at least he remembered today’s realization:

Humans couldn’t like everyone and couldn’t be liked by everyone either, even the truly good ones!

Now he only had to work to accept that.
It was Friday evening.

He wasn’t sitting by the window this time. Besides it was pretty early for the lights to be turned on at this hour at summer.

Instead he was slouched on his sofa looking at the sealing; a documentary was playing in the background just to break the silence. Something about leopard being one of the 10 most loner animals or whatever…

The man would have appeared relaxed and dozing off to anyone’s eyes in these minutes but in reality, his mind was restless wondering once more to things he wanted to forget.

On his chest Shimbu’s latest copy remained opened. It had been released along with a special edition about Japanese urban legends; “Paranormal-truths or Conspiracy Theories?” was the title of the section.

A few days ago, someone had claimed that while he was cornered in an alley by a group of thugs who attempted to rob him, a dark figure had appeared from nowhere and saved him, scaring the scumbags away and then supposedly disappearing in the shadows of a dead-end behind the alley leaving no trace behind them.

Of course, when such a story is being made public, more and more humans will appear supporting it, claiming they saw or heard something, adding their own little contribution to the story, their own explanation to it too and gradually the word spreads and ta-da! A new urban legend is born!

‘Why partake in such charade? Is there any point to it?’ Someone might have asked.
‘It is because it’s entertaining!’ Izaya would have replied to them in a tone he would use to explain a little child how the world works.

Because humans love to invest their limited amount of braincells and precious time into theorizing and fantasizing the various “what ifs”. And then arguing with each other and searching and researching and then theorizing about everything unknown or incomprehensible to them some more and after that, wishing for it to be true, and then dreading it and fearing it and hating it; that is if they’d found out that they were right, that this legend was real all along.

Well, he was generalizing again at this point probably, even though he had finally understood that not all of the humans were following the rule. In fact, most of them were going by the numerous exceptions. But he couldn’t help it this time, he really couldn’t! He had all the proofs he needed in that case to claim that he was right. He had witness it happening for years and years in Tokyo… … with the Headless Rider, the Slasher and the monster-turned-human.

He didn’t want to think about them; about him.

The raven’s refusal to think of the former beast was neither out of fear nor hate. Sure, he felt a bit more than traumatized than he cared to admit to himself, but he wasn’t deluded enough to downplay his part on his eventual doom. He had been asking for it from day one really; had brought his befall upon himself; driven the other to the edge if only to prove his point in that suicidal mission of him. He had been a fool. He could have never won, even then he knew that deep down.

And now, it felt almost like a lifetime has passed since, though in reality it was a little less than two years.

His refusal to think of the blond wasn’t due to any “secret” feelings he harbored for him either; like a tsundere schoolgirl who could not handle rejection or whatever other ideas Karisawa was blubering on excitedly every time he had the misfortune to be in her presence in one of her “fujoshi moods”.

It was because by embracing his though, the disabled man would have to face everything that he hated about himself. It was as every little thing he knew he was lacking as a person himself had been fused and merged into the blonde to be a constant remainder of his inadequacy, to mock him in his face! Since he first laid eyes on the former beast he could tell; he was everything that he himself wasn’t and he’d never be able to be. Time further confirmed his beliefs.

That man was so much better than him. Stronger than him in every sense. He could take on whatever life threw in his path whether it was a gang or misfortune. He didn’t need anything or anyone and while he indeed did not have a lot in his life from a material sense, he attracted everyone like a night-light attracts moths. He pushed people away constantly for reasons Izaya himself has yet to grasp and yet everyone wanted him around them, unfazed of his monstrous strength and short temper. The only thing he needed to do was throw one timid content smile like ones he had whenever he roamed around Tokyo smoking his cigarettes and people would forget all about their fear or resentment for him. And Izaya would never forgive him for that.
The raven himself wanted to fit in since he could remember himself, however he was never good at it, didn’t know how or didn’t feel comfortable enough or brave enough to dare it. Even during middle-school when he wasn’t notorious yet none approached him. Apart from Shinra; however, the lovestruck megane’s selfish motives were of course revolved around the dullahan.

Despite that, Shinra had been his only true friend. But of course, the blond has to be of equal importance to the doctor -as important as Shinra could consider anyone apart from Celty that is. As if Celty, Tom, Kadota and his gang, his brother, his Russian woman and even Izaya’s own sisters weren’t enough people swooning around that man already. Izaya would not forgive him for that either.

Naturally he had projected all of his jealously, inferiority and self-loathing onto the blonde and wanted to punish him for his own inadequacy. He was always petty after all; still is most of the time.

Moreover, he had realized that his embracing of the blonde’s thought would be his final step in healing his little black ashy soul and moving on to truly leave his past behind him. He knew he had to make peace with his own inferiority through that man’s thought at some point to leave everything behind him once and for all, becoming fully human.

But he wasn’t ready for that yet. If he was honest with himself, he didn’t believe he would ever be, for had no desire to cause to himself more suffering than he was always experiencing this past year, even if it meant he would leave as a hybrid of a fallen god, a parasite and a human for the rest of his days. If that was the case, he only wished that they weren’t going to be many more.

Izaya wasn’t even sure he could even say his name out loud anymore, he refused to even think of it. He was certain it would feel strange on his tongue now, foreign; just like the other felt these days to him.

He’d lock his thoughts in the dark corner of his mind for now and ignore it as long as he could, that’s what he’d do till he would hopefully forget all about the other, about his own faults too and continue living his life in his forced blissful denial.

“Foolish attention seekers with their ridiculous urban legends...”, forcing his mind back in Tokyo after so long, back to the one man he wished to have never met.

The sound of breaks on the asphalt echoed in the nights.

“Yo! It’s been a while.” the man greeted, cigarette secured between his lips.

The woman did not get of her bike but leaned towards the blonde who was smoking quietly by the highway’s safety railings.
[Thought you outgrew this habit, Shizuo.] was written on her phone’s screen which was directed to the blonde’s face, her yellow helmet pointing lightly towards the cigarette now held in his hand; if she could talk her tone would be conversational instead of scolding the blond supposed based on her relaxed body language.

“I have. Still need it from time to time though.” Shizuo replied raising his head towards the night sky and exhaling a puff of smoke.

He would appear relaxed, daydreaming even if it wasn’t for a few exhales that were slightly stronger than others every time he let the smoke out of his mouth.

[Do you want to talk about it?] Celty typed and waited patiently for a few moments. Shizuo would usually share his thoughts with her though she knew that sometimes he’d tend to keep to himself.

“It’s only fatigue Celty, you think too much.” A small smile accompanied his statement; an attempt to reassure her that everything is alright.

“Anyway”, he changed the subject, “heard from Shinra you were out of the city these days.” He stated more than asked.

[I had a delivery to take from Tokyo to Umeda, Osaka.] she typed. [Never had to travel that far before for a job.] She showed him her phone, him raising a surprised eyebrow. Osaka was pretty far away from Tokyo after all.

“Umeda hmm? How was it?”

At that a shiver run over her body, she took back the phone and continued typing franticly:

[It was awful! The traffic policemen look even more terrifying there! And they are everywhere!! I had to hide Shooter in alleyway in case they’d ask for my license since I don’t have signs on him, but he is a horse who puts signs on a horse? And what would I do considering you know…being headless and all! Imagine if they’d stop me for a license check! Now that would have been a disaster!!]

She refrained from mentioning the thugs trying to rob that poor man in an alley next to where she’d left Shooter. They both had encountered such situations before. Besides she could she the amusement dancing on Shizuo’s eyes at her antics. She was exaggerating but only by a tiny bit (because they were terrifying indeed!) to lighten his mood after all and she didn’t want to ruin their meeting with her talking about unfortunate events.

Shizuo couldn’t hold back his laughter at Celty’s last text. The fact that her calm and composed attitude could crumble at the idea of aliens and traffic police would never cease to surprise him.
“Sounds like you had fun Celty.” She lightly punched his arm for that comment. “Shinra was more irritating than usual these days without you being here.” He joked.

Celty could have sworn her heart swelled a bit at the mention of her lover. She knew he’d missed her of course; she had missed him too. Annoying, selfish and obsessive as he could be she still loved him more than anything. She wasn’t even sure how it happened but he was worth the sacrifice of her separating with her head once more. At that point, she was pretty sure her head would be blushing at his though in the lab in America.

Celty only wished for Shizuo to find someone too; a nice girl who would love, appreciate and support him; but she knew better than anyone such things take time. It had taken her almost 8 years after Shinra had reached adulthood to finally see him as a man and eventually fall in love with him afterall.

I can imagine. She typed facepalming on her helmet to hide her embarrassment for her mushy inner monologue.

By the way, you should drop by our apartment during the weekend. Shinra and I would love to have you! The three of us haven’t caught up properly in a while.

“Thanks, Celty. Sounds nice, though I don’t have a lot to share.” And really, he didn’t. He rubbed the back of his neck. Nothing had changed these past years and yet everything. Same job, same friends, no relationship, still having a debt- albeit smaller. At the same time his control over his temper was much better; he would describe himself almost peaceful these days. His salary had been raised too, which contributed to his decreasing debt, though he had a long way to go.

Moreover, he had reduced the number of cigarettes he was smoking only doing one or two and that only at night; and only if he happened to cross Shibuya pedestrian crossing -which was more often than he’d like to admit. Where he’d last seen this fucking pest almost two years ago.

He quickly bottled up all his feelings to refrain from bending the railing in a fit of rage, or guilt, or hate, or whatever sickening feelings surfaced at the moment and blinked a bit once he realized that Celty’s screen was in front of him again.

Having exciting news to share is not a requirement for us to enjoy your company Shizuo, we’ve just missed you :) the screen wrote.

Shizuo felt his insides warming a bit at his best friend’s words.

“I’ll be there. Text me when you get home the day and time that works better for you guys’key?”

Sure. I’ll head home now cause it’s getting late. It was nice seeing you Shizuo!
“Yea, it was.”

As the ridder was ready to leave the blonde’s voice stopped her: “Hey, Celty..?”

There was an underling urgency to his tone, one that could someone easily pass as indifference unless you knew him. She had an idea of what was troubling her friend; these years Shizuo was always calm and peaceful yet sometimes his expression was getting darker. However, he has stopped talking about she was betting that was the root of his darkness. Still, she patiently waited.

“Say ‘hi’ to Shinra.” Was what the blonde eventually settled with.

She wasn’t convinced. She knew what Shizuo would ask at moments like these, when he would get silent, maybe a bit hesitant like that. She also knew he wouldn’t ask her about it anymore cause Shizuo was like that, keeping to himself whenever something was troubling him. What she didn’t knew though was the answer the blond was looking for.

She had taken a part at this final confrontation herself in a way, when she had chosen to seal the wound on Izaya’s side, however what was the informant’s fate she knew not. She didn’t want to reveal to Shizuo that she saw him at these last moments either.

She didn’t know why but she felt that it would do no good to reveal to the bodyguard Izaya’s post-fight state. If she was fully honest she wanted Shizuo to let everything about that fight behind him, forget about Izaya, focus on his life; cause even if he wasn’t here anymore to torment the blonde his thought was as toxic as to her best friend as his actual presence.

Even if Shizuo had taken it too far she couldn’t blame him. She had seen the other provoking him and harming him for almost a decade and in spite of all the blonde still was holding back from causing actual damage to the informant. Still Izaya would not give him a break; it was a matter of time till Shizuo would snap and even though she had grown enough herself these 22 years she was coexisting with humans to know killing was never the answer, she could not hold Shizuo fully accountable if indeed Izaya had perished after their final fight.

Despite all her thoughts, she still nodded her helmet and disappeared into the Tokyo highway.
Hey ya! ^_^ It’s been quite long since my last update. Life got the better of me once again! Trying to balance a Master’s with social life, summer vacations, moving between two countries, having to change cities and job-hunt (still job-hunting btw, wish me luck :P) and trying to keep in touch with friends and family scattered around the globe can be a hustle!!

However, I love this fanfiction and I’m always working on it in my mind or in an open tab in my laptop! And writing makes me quite happy so I will continue!! However, I am unable to have a proper updating schedule, I hope you can bear with me! :) This time I will upload 2 chapters since it has been 4 months since my last update! I had both of them ready for a while now but every time I go back to review them I think of things that change my initial plot and sometimes they seem as good ideas so I include them and then I read it again and I feel they ruin the characterization of my version of the characters which really frustrates me! I don’t want to post something to lead the readers in on track in case I decide to change the chapter later because I want to take my story to a different direction! :-S I’ll have to risk it I guess :P

I’m quite happy with this chapter and the next one in terms of storytelling, though I only reviewed them once since i decided they were finished so there might be some spelling or grammar issues! :P I will review them again in the future but now I just want to finally update!!! :D Also, I decided to add POV’s from other characters too! At this point I focus still in inner thoughts more than character interactions (meaning not much dialog unless necessary).

While writing this chapter I learned about Hanakotoba (Japanese flower-meaning). Flower-meanings never appeal to me much and I prefer not to see them in a story (Oh! the irony! \(0.0)/ ) but Hanakotoba felt to me so fitting here I couldn’t not include it! Anyways, enough with the ranting, I hope you enjoy this chapter!

Any constructive criticism is greatly appreciated! <3 :) Ja ne!

A bleached blond in the bartender outfit was moving away from the highway after exchanging words with the mysterious black biker.

He had a crappy day today. He had woken up drenched in cold sweat he might have killed someone already beaten to the ground, who couldn’t defend himself against Ikebukuro’s strongest anymore.

Fuck! Even though the shitty flea was asking for it.

Counting days and months passing by with no incident, he almost wishing the flea would reappear into his life and he hated himself for it! For thinking that fucked up bastard as a defenseless, pitiful, poor victim, especially considering all the shit that flea-bag had put him through for years and years!! For wishing Izaya to be alive, to ease his conscience, when he couldn’t deny that it would be better not only for himself, but for everyone, that the flea was dead.
Because he was sure of it, Izaya had died that night.

Where, when and how he didn’t know.

The last time he had seen him the bastard was falling on his knees, bleeding and trembling from exhaustion and probably pain and with Vorona pointing a gun at his head. But despite everything he still held his head high, smirking like mad and eying him like Shizuo was his prey, even though the roles had been reserved from the moment he flea’s actions had brought harm on the blond’s friend and kouhai. His accomplish to flea’s murder…

When he heard the flea gasping and seeing the knife plugged in his skinny body he had snapped from his rage. He had realized how far things have gone, how beaten and bloody flea was, while he had only a dislocated shoulder and a few scratches that barely hurt. For a second there, Shizuo had thought that Izaya had looked surprised and in pain.

He had looked almost human.

Shizuo had realized at that point that flea was never meant to be his opponent, his nemesis. Because him and Izaya had never been equals! Izaya was never meant to win against him at that fight; sure, the man wasn’t weak by any means but compared to Shizuo he was even…fragile?

It only took one punch to feel flea’s bones shutter beneath his fist! One!!

And what infuriated the bodyguard was that Izaya must have known that too.

Flea was supposed to be the “smart” one between the two of them after all, wasn’t he?

And then everything started to make sense.

Of course that piece of shit knew! That was what he was aiming for; Shizuo to kill him and effectively destroying his life whether with imprisonment, guilt or both! That sick fuck!

And then Shizuo snapped out of that raging daze and set the vending machine he was carrying down.

But Shizuo had another realization too. An epiphany of sorts someone could say.

Izaya wasn’t worth it! Neither his time nor his life!

He wasn’t worth Vorona killing him either. Not when she had left the past behind her. And that’s why he stopped her too from fulfilling what he had believed for years to be his accursed destiny.

But in the end his intervene had changed nothing.

The flea’s broken body would always lie cold and unmoving somewhere in the background taunting him for his hypocrisy.

For acting as the good guy while he was consciously beating those he considered scam to a pulp and constantly destroying other’s property during his bursts of anger and even hurting those he cared about and tried to help-like that kind woman. Good guys didn’t do such things!

For brushing off the fact that Vorona was an assassin and giving her a chance, while never trying to make things with flea better, or at least ignore him, who was of course a massive douchebag but have never actively taken a life.

Fucking Izaya even from fucking hell he was fucking him up!
While the flea hadn’t succeeded to ruin his life completely he had managed to mess him up pretty badly with that last stand he pulled and Shizuo didn’t even have some closure from knowing what had happened to the bastard.

By the end of that fight Shizuo hadn’t understood what happened. Everything had turned into white for a moment and then the flea was nowhere to be seen. Shizuo was sure someone had aid flea but the circumstances were unclear to him.

However, he was sure it would have been impossible for flea to have survived.

The first months he had always images of Izaya’s death.

Now his imagination would run wild mostly when he would get close to Shibuya’s pedestrian cross. He would picture the flea bastard somewhere in a dirty alley away from prying eyes lying battered and bleeding struggling to breath.

What was he thinking then? Was he in a lot of pain or had his body started to get numb by the time he was away from the blond. Did he know what was coming?

Was flea cold? He had seen in movies people mentioning to be cold at their final moments. Shizuo doubted Izaya would be cold though- not with this stupid fur trimmed jacket that was weighting as much as the flea himself probably.

Was he scared? Shizuo doubted it too- Izaya wasn’t sensible enough to be scared of anything. He would lie on the pavement like he would on a freaking golden throne like a king, or a god as he viewed himself, all taunting smirks and he would welcome death, full of himself and satisfied for he had proven his fucking point both to the ex-bartender and to everyone who had witnessed that final fight: That Shizuo was a monster. **And Shizuo would never forgive him for that.**

For all he tried he had never understood the flea. Izaya had everything! Literally everything and he chose to throw it away and for what for the blonde had no idea of. He was smart, intelligent even. He could have a bright future, any university would welcome him, while the blond was mediocre academically at best. And yet the flea chose to work with fucking yakuza! And despite all he was good at that, there was no denying it. He was swimming in wealth, he had his family by his side - even though he ignored them, he was strong and healthy, he had Shinra’s devotion, he was popular at school with boys looking up to him and girls chasing after him like lovestruck puppies! He even had a girlfriend at one point from what Shinra had mentioned during high school- an aggressive brunette who looked tougher than the flea himself. If he so much as wished for it, Izaya could have a loving partner and start a family with them, something Shizuo knew was not even a possibility for himself, considering he was being avoided like plague -not that he would hold it against anyone avoiding him considering his temper. Izaya however could charm his way to everyone he met; make them swoon around him- at least till they actually got to know him. Bastard had some sort of charisma that was undeniable.

Obviously, that would last till the point flea decided to screw over all the unlucky bastards who crossed his path and were lured by his false charms. The flea was more like a spider than a flea in that aspect, or maybe that other poisonous bags with fancy colors to attract their unsuspecting prey. Still while Izaya had everything he was unappreciative of all! He had chosen to drive everyone away from him, while Shizuo watched all of his life people running away from him even when he did nothing, just because they associated his name with a dangerous beast. Izaya could have a good life, perfect even, but instead choose to disregard the gifts kami-sama had given him. **And Shizuo would never forgive him for that either.**

=Shizuo had wondered a few times if things would have been differently between them had he
managed to control his temper at that fateful meeting years ago.

Maybe him and Izaya would have been friends like Shinra had hoped, hanging out together, going for karaoke or hot-pot on the weekends—normal staff. Not that any of the three of them would be defined exactly as normal by society’s standards but still!

He was entertaining this idea for a while, had even asked Celty her thoughts about it at some point a little more than year after the final fight.

The Dullahan however wasn’t very keen on that possibility and was painfully honest about it. She believed that any sort of friendship between him and Izaya would have never worked. They were too incompatible she had said. At that he had replied that maybe it would not have been important. They were quite a lot of odd friendships out there like Mikado and that Masaomi-kid.

But Celty was quick to point out Izaya was never one for sentiment. It wasn’t in his nature, he was too twisted for that she had said. For some reason he had formed a bond with Shinra during middle school, however that was probably the only kind of normal human relationship in flea’s life, but the how and the whys of that lead to that bond weren’t clear to either Celty or himself. Celty had a bit more insight because of Shinra maybe—not that she ever mentioned anything about it—but still not enough to make any speculations on Izaya’s feelings.

Izaya, Izaya, Izaya …the fucking flea was all he was thinking about since that fateful first meeting. Bastard was always residing somewhere in his mind. No matter what, even with him dead finally Shizuo just couldn’t forget about him, it was impossible! Sometimes he was afraid that he might never move on from the flea. That he would never be able to let him go.

How can someone forget the one whose life took after all? Was this even possible? disregarding them like that?

He knew that the only way for him to move on was to make peace with the Izaya’s thought, to get some closure over what happened.

After that fight, he had tried to find out if the flea’s whereabouts. To see him. Well, technically his grave. Just to accept that the other man had succeed at turning him into a monster.

That would have helped to at least give himself some closure of sorts and allow the history between them to come to an end.

His steps had led him unsurprisingly to Shibuya Cross. He took out a new cigarette and put it between his lips. If he shut down the people around him and the traffic he could vividly picture images from that fight.

He couldn’t resist turning his head to all directions, his eyes searching for a black furry coat and a bastard with a skip in his step.

He wasn’t surprised when he didn’t saw him. Shizuo was pretty sure that he would have sensed him had he been there.

As much as he hated the flea he almost wished that he had. It was a selfish wish though, for he didn’t actually want Izaya back, didn’t care about him and would never forgive him for all the misery the other had caused him.

He just wanted himself not to be a monster.

He took out of the inside pocket of his vest the slightly squished flower he was carrying with him for
the past couple of hours. The red ugly thing was growing in the Zoshigaya cemetery, a few blocks from his house.

He never used to pass in front of it in the past, since the shortest road to Ikebukuro was on the opposite direction—roughly 34 minutes away on foot. However, after almost half a year since the last fight, with flea not giving any sign of life, and himself being constantly plugged by guilt his footsteps had led him to the Zoshigaya cemetery. He knew he wouldn’t find Izaya there - he was still not sure what he had been looking for.

After standing at its gates and waiting for nothing his eyes fell on the higanbana growing there. He was never interested in hanakotoba—the Japanese language of flowers, so he did not know any meanings in particular but his mother was pretty invested to it and loved to bring home different species and explaining their meaning to him and Kasuka when they were little. He was never paying attention to that, he found it at times a “girl’s thing” to talk about flowers and feelings but he tried to at least pretend to pay attention to what his mother was saying. However, when he saw the ugly higanbana there he remembered her mentioning something about red spider lily’s being associated with final goodbyes; death.

He had bend down and cut one before his brain could process the action. It was stupid he knew but now that he had cut the flower it would be a waste to let it drop again on the dirt while the others were alive around it. He had put it in his vest pocket and headed on his way forgetting all about it. The same night while he was about to return home he passed from that cursed pedestrian cross. There weren’t lots of people around at that hour. While he was standing there he remembered the last conversation he had with the flea before he became a monster.

Izaya- goodbye’ he had said.

It was already more than half a year since he last saw that fleabag but he knew deep inside that he would not see him again. He had a feeling that this time it wasn’t a game, that bastard would have actually never return, it was the end of an era for them. The end of their story.

At that point he remembered the flower in his vest. Or maybe he pretended to have forgotten about it because he was crap at forgetting apparently, especially the particularly awful things. He looked around him quickly and let the higanbana fall to the ground.

“Higanbana grow wherever people part ways for good” mother had said. Well, this one hadn’t exactly grown there but the meaning was the same so fuck it, he had though and left leaving the spider lily behind him at the last place he has seen the flea.

Since then it has kind of became a habit.

He left this flower touch softly the cement too.

He wasn’t sure why he had done it at first place or why he had kept doing that but he wasn’t going to question his actions. The gesture illogical as it was made his chest feel a bit lighter, made him feel less of a bloodthirsty monster even though he knew it was stupid.

Besides he had accepted at that point that he would never forget the informant. In a way, he didn’t want to forget him! It was masochistic, sure, but if Shizuo forgot the one who killed and moved on something told him that he would be even more of a monster. Guilt grounded him to his humanity in a sense. Izaya’s though, disturbing and torturous as it was, was what was keeping him human.

That’s why Shizuo refused to let Izaya go.
Still though, some nights like tonight, when as much as he was trying not to, he couldn’t help thinking that maybe, just maybe…

… their history wasn’t supposed to have ended that night.

Chapter End Notes

I wanted to show that contrary to Izaya who tries to accept what happened and move on, Shizuo is unable to do so (In a sense Izaya is still running and Shizuo is still chasing! =p) However, dont mistake Shizuo's guilt for affection! There is too much bad blood between them still, so we have to clean it gradually I guess.. =p

This chapter's purpose, combined with the previous one, was to show the core of their toxic relationship: Missunderstanding!

From my perspective they envy each other, believing the other has/is everything they want for themselves and cannot acquire/be, but in reality Shizuo is unaware of Izaya's vulnerability like Izaya was (till the fight) of Shizuo's humanity. Hope I make sense! (^v^)
Chapter 5

Chapter Notes

Here’s is the second update for today! ^_^  
I’m not sure how I came up with this chapter, it literally popped out of nowhere in my head but it is my favorite so far!  
I hope you will also like this chapter and find Shinra as in character as possible! :)

See the end of the chapter for more notes

It was safe to say that Shinra was worried.

Which was a first for him by the way, cause Kishitani Shinra had literally no worry in the world since his life was perfect thanks to the certain ethereal, stunning, flawless, beautiful, amazing headless girlfriend of his.

But during the last year and a half, there were times he wasn’t feeling his usual goofy self with no interest in anything human-related. Not that he suddenly started to care that much over humanity - besides that was not his hobby.

But there were two particular individuals that they were always in the back of his mind and while he didn’t give much damn about anything he couldn’t help his feelings of uneasiness.

Sure, the bespectacled man was lacking empathy for anything living more often than not - well, he was encouraged to dissect living creatures from a pretty young age from his slightly crazy father after all - which in combination with his general eccentricity and his obsessive and selfish love for his Dullahan partner made him uncaring towards most of those surrounding him family, friends, acquaintances and patients included, despite his happy-go-lucky and bubbly attitude making you believe otherwise but…

Friends.

He wasn’t sure when exactly something inside him has started shifting, maybe it had always been there but he was too self-absorbed in his love to see it - and he still was - but for a while there was a weird feeling inside him, like his stomach was dropping or something, whenever he was thinking of his friends.

His only two friends in the whole world, who he has known for the bigger part his life.

The two friends who he had made for entirely selfish reasons.

The aggressive but kind-hearted kid he met during primary school, whom he befriended due to his scientific interest on his unnatural power (and a tiny hope that he might be allowed to dissect or at least take a blood sample from him?) and the quiet and lonely one, whom he befriended because he wanted to please his beloved by having more friends and joining a club as she had suggested.

‘If one of you ends up dead I’ll just have one less friend in the world’, he had told them after the failure of introduction to each other during their first day at Raijin High.

And he had actually meant it, he didn’t care much about what would be the consequences of their
distraction, though he would still patch them up after their fights; he was a doctor-in-the-making at that point.

And then after a decade of him bonding with them, growing up with them and growing to care about his friendship with both of them, all the while with them trying to off each other they finally went all out and did just that. One of them finally managed to kill the other.

Shinra had never doubted who the winner would be in such a fight. He always knew with certainty that the lonely one would fall by the hands of the kind-hearted one.

For Orihara-kun was never supposed to be an equal much for Shizuo-kun. Not because he was weak, far from that, but because no one could ever be a much for the blonde, simple as that. What annoyed Shinra the most is that he was certain that Orihara-kun knew that too from the first time they met. The informant was far from stupid but he was stubborn too and Shinra had no doubt that he would choose death over this admission. And in the end, he had gotten exactly that! Ironic much? Well, life loves irony!

After the doctor overthrowing the Saika’s possession and reuniting with his beloved and her returning by his side he was filled in with details over the final fight between his two friends. He had been caught of guard by what he found out at that point. He was confused and irritated and then confused again and finally exasperated with the whole situation.

He had seen Shizuo-kun after the fight with his shoulder dislocated and his arm hanging limp at his side, the torn and burned clothing and the slashes all over him bleeding. He was horrified and a bit impressed that Orihara-kun had managed to mess Shizuo-kun that badly! In all of the years he had known Shizuo-kun it was the first time he had seen him like that after a fight.

By the time everything had calmed down and the adrenaline had left his body, a horrifying though had crossed his mind. If Shizuo-kun who was indestructible ended up like that, then what about Orihara-kun? He had felt dread at that point! He rushed home with Celty and despite him being still bandaged and in pain and wanting to spend every second being with his beloved, he had started preparing the medical equipment for every possible situation and waited for them to arrive at his apartment to heal them as it had become their routine the past decade.

Shizuo-kun arrived indeed hours later looking worse to wear, being still bloody and dirty. Shinra had done his best to heal him and set his shoulder back in its socket. He practically doped him with pain-killers- Shizuo-kun, the man who was shot and though he slipped on the rain! He advised the bodyguard to rest in their guest room for the night but Shizuo-kun sat on the sofa and light up a cigarette, dismissing his advice. Shinra sat next to him, suppressing his need to be attached to his beloved hip, being chatty and bubbly as usual and Shizuo-kun being sullen, quiet and barely responding.

Shinra could sense Shizuo-kun next to him tensing more and more the more the time passed. At that point they weren’t even try to pretend that they were not waiting. Shizuo-kun never before have waited for the ‘flea’ to arrive after a fight so the idea that he had to see Orihara-kun after what happened was so disconnecting that the underground doctor could tell that during this particular fight the ex-bartender lost it so bad he actually was out for the kill that time.

They waited for the knock on the door that would alert them that the informant had arrived, barging in the house like he owned it and demanding Shinra to treat him while he’d spout insults to the ‘protozoan’ to aggravate the other man more.

After four hours of waiting the sun was setting and Orihara-kun still haven’t arrived.
“He is not coming.” Shizuo-kun said eventually after hours of silence, his voice rough after not having spoken for so long.

“Ha ha! Don’t be silly Shizuo-kun, Orihara-kun will be here as always! Besides I am more than capable to fix whatever damage you both inflict on each other and~” he said happily trying to brush of the magnitude Izaya’s absence spoke off.

“He is not coming Shinra!” the blonde growled anger getting the better of him making the doctor flinch at the sudden outburst. “Sorry…Go to bed Shinra. He is not coming.” he said slightly softer this time before getting up and walking towards the door a soft click as he exited the apartment.

‘Nahh, I must have given Shizuo-kun too much painkillers’ he had though then.

Only Orihara-kun never arrived to his apartment to seek treatment.

The next few days, the Dollars chatroom was on fire with descriptions of his friends battle against to each other and gory details about the state they were in afterwards. The bets were against Orihara-kun’s survival.

Worse thing is that Shinra didn’t know how to feel about the whole ordeal. He was used to investing all of his feelings to his beloved fiancé since he could remember himself so at that point he was honestly at loss.

Should he be angry? And if yes towards whom? To Shizuo-kun for finally killing Orihara-kun? To Orihara-kun for attempting to kill Shizuo-kun first? To himself, for introducing them to each other in the first place? Who was to be blamed?

‘Everyone and no one’ he had decided.

Yes, he was hurt from Izaya’s passing but he couldn’t drive Shizuo away for what he did. Both of them were his friends and he had accepted long ago that a day might come when he would have one friend less. Besides better one than zero. And also, in his own twisted way he cared about them both. One being dead and the other being his killer didn’t mean that he stopped caring about either.

Afterall, they didn’t want to hurt him personally with their actions. They just couldn’t not hurt each other. That’s how it always has been and he had accepted that long time ago, as he would accept the outcome of their final fight too.

He was surprised that he cared that much over the incident. He though himself detached from any form of empathy for a long time now but it seemed but he still had some crumbs of humanity in him.

He had started to become aware of said scrubs from the moment he had told Celty the story about him getting stabbed after stepping between Orihara-kun and Nakura, taking the blow aimed at the raven. Honestly, he was once again selfish and wanted to use his heroic action to appeal to Celty’s eyes. But to Orihara-kun apparently his action meant something more. He had taken the blame for the incident and had vowed to take revenge on Nakura for Shinra’s sake and even though he turned Nakura into his puppet for his own twisted games, Shinra had no doubt that the informant was going out of his way to punish Nakura as much as he could. Shinra also suspected that switchblade was not a random choice of weapon for Orihara-kun, that it held some sort of meaning for the man relevant to that incident. Not that Orihara-kun ever admitted that but Shinra had a hunch.

Besides that, he could always see behind Orihara-kun’s many masks better than most people could take credit for. He didn’t know if that was because Orihara-kun consciously allowed him to do so or just because they were both too similar, too twisted, so they could understand each other better than
He knew that while Orihara-kun had no reservations to manipulate everyone, he chose to left Shinra out of his plans. However, he had no qualms to use Celty for his games which was something Shinra wanted to say he would never forgive him for. But he knew he had already.

Because he had known that he was everything Orihara-kun had in terms of a relatively normal human relationship, he knew how much it meant to the informant despite having never voiced it. Also, Shinra himself had acknowledged that he had hurt Orihara-kun himself in more than one occasions. He had ignored him and shunned him because his beloved didn’t like him (and not for no reason), he had refused to include him in any plans he made that involved others, like when their acquaintances had hot-pot at his and Celty’s home and not inviting him (again not for no reason) but still he knew Orihara-kun was hurt about it and he never apologized or try to make up for it. At least he could make it up to him by spending some one-on-one time together if not with the others who didn’t want the raven around them. But no, even when Orihara-kun was stabbed by Yodogiri Jinai (?) in the middle of the road and ended up alone at the hospital and called him, Shinra once more left him there alone and hanged up on him.

And the worse thing is that while he treated him like that, between his two friends, Orihara-kun was the one that he favored the most! His bond with Orihara-kun was special compared to any other.

Because out of all the humans out there he was the only one who knew Orihara-kun The Human instead of Orihara-kun The Informant or The God-In-The-Making. He knew Orihara-kun being the lonely individual who spent his time in the library, focused on his marks and trying to keep to the sidelines instead of being in the center of attention. He knew Orihara-kun who liked to observe all kinds of living creatures, but was not particularly interested in humans, who believed (on contrast to Shinra) that as long as you don’t hurt others you can love whoever or whatever you want. He knew a version of Orihara-kun that had ceased to exist a little over a decade ago, but was undeniably human. Not that the past version of his friend was a saint or anything, he was still a little shit who started a gambling club using their biology club as a cover and probably more things that Shinra had no idea about, however there was something gentle, or at least less edgy about him then. Yes, his motives to befriend Orihara-kun were purely selfish -Shinra never denied that he was selfish- with him wanting to be in his beautiful Celty’s good graces by looking for a new friend now that Shizuo-kun wasn’t in the same school because the Dullahan had shown interest in his social life –or lack of it thereof. So, he looked for a loner that would need a companion of sorts just to show his beloved that he was following her advice. However, as time progressed he had seen that he and Orihara-kun could surprisingly understand each other, be open about their eccentricities with each other and even rely on and care of each other a bit. And yes, he had been stabbed by Nakura to look heroic to Celty as his primary reason but deep down a part of him didn’t want Orihara-kun to get hurt either.

He also suspected that something he said or did triggered the change in mindset of the informant, he had seen how Izaya’s eyes were shining that day at the roof- and now he couldn’t deny that he felt accountable for twisting him like that. Not guilty cause Shinra was not a person to feel guilt or empathy like a normal human. But still he had to take responsibility for Orihara-kun which lead to him actually get to know and become fond of him, despite Orihara-kun being just a mortal human being.

But most importantly he was aware that Orihara-kun, beneath all those masks who wore, was fragile and brittle and scared of love and even more terrified of the betrayal that might come when love fades away. And that last reason was the sole explanation on why he would always have a soft spot for Orihara-kun in favor of Shizuo-kun.

Because Shizuo-kun could face difficulties of all sorts and emerge victorious, knowing how to be
happy without needing much in life, being unaffected by people’s opinion on him, not asking for approval and not needing assurance and making peace with his loneliness which only lead to people flocking around him -hell, his beloved was even closer to the blonde at that point that Shinra himself!

Though he wasn’t jealous because he knew that Celty loved him; he was sooo happy, just the thought of her making his heart skip a dozen beats!!

Anyways, the point was that Shizuo-kun didn’t need Shinra nearly as much as Orihara-kun did. Shizuo-kun was strong in every sense: physically, mentally, emotionally.

Or that’s what he had thought.

However, after the fight Shinra had noticed things starting to change.

Shizuo-kun had always been aggressive, impulsive getting into trouble with gangs and destroying both public and private property giving him quite a terrible reputation and leading the people around him scatter to different directions like mice if they couldn’t avoid him. It was like that almost ever since they have met. Shizuo-kun was always a bit lonely and reserved in nature -not unlike Orihara-kun in that aspect- with only his younger brother as his company. The other kids in their class were trying to bully him constantly for that even though Shizuo-kun was simply annoyed, if not unaffected by their stunts. He was always strong at hear even as a kid, Shinra supposed, not caring about things that they’ll have children at their age running crying to their parents. In other words, he did not interest Shinra in the least at that point.

However, after his first fit of rage and display of incredible power in public, Shizuo-kun became more interesting to him -from a purely scientific point of view off course so he had to get close to him so the brunette boy would allow him to examine him! Because Shinra was selfish, haven’t we established that already?

But from that point also Shizuo-kuns’ loneliness only intensified and not just due to his reserved nature but because he was being avoided like plague. However, if you actually got to know him you would see that the ex-bartender was a heavily misunderstood person. Even his incredible power was not because Shizuo-kun was a monster or anything. It was more due to the chemical reactions of his brain, similar to his explosive personality probably, not that Shinra would know since the bodyguard had never allowed Shinra to take some samples to test his theories. But despite how scary the man was he was also just a mortal human too.

Despite that, Shinra had to admit that he was pretty fond of Ikebukuro’s Strongest though. Probably because Shinra was young enough not to be irreparably twisted at the time they met which enabled him to connect with the other man a little bit. But not only that, Shizuo-kun was truly kind, his heart could fit everyone as long as they didn’t hurt him or his loved ones, but Shinra was sure that he was also forgiving even to those who had hurt him or wrong him too, like with his murderous kouhai. He was someone who understood loneliness better than anyone and made peace with himself in a way lots of people could not. He would subtly support even those strangers to him and he seek to protect those weaker than him, even if his strength could sometimes bring the opposite results. And most importantly Shizuo was there to support his beloved Dullahan, with the two of them being closer than himself and the man ever were! To Shinra this actually made sense, in a weird way, him always having a soft spot Orihara-kun over Shizuo-kun, while Shizuo-kun being the most important friend for his beloved because each best friend pair had certain similarities.

Both his precious Celty and Shizuo-kun were viewed as monsters and feared while in reality they were kind and human in a pure way that himself and Orihara-kun could never become. Yes, the two of them were viewed as human by the society and they could mingle successfully with people but in reality, they were more twisted that anyone else, making them the true monsters, which also made
them humans because humans could be more monstrous than actual monsters after all, did this make sense? Wow, now that’s some human-related rumbling that could give Orihara-kun’s ones a run for their money!

Anyways, as long as, he was the one who had his beautiful fiance’s love, thus the black-market doctor had no reason to be jealous he could only be grateful for the support Shizuo-kun provided his beloved which made him appreciate him more as his friend.

Also, Shinra had no doubt that Shizuo-kun could become a superhero if he would ever manage to control his strength and temper, or at least an urban legend with his name living on for the generations to come, much like he was certain his dear Celty would be. He also knew that Shizuo-kun’s gentle nature would never allowed him to turn into a monster, much to the annoyance of a certain someone, thus he was always meant to be the hero in every story.

But also, he knew that if Shizuo-kun killed someone in a fit of uncontrollable rage he would drown in guilt until he would eventually perish. For Shizuo-kun was gentle and kind in ways not more humans were, despite his temper making people think otherwise.

However, the time had come for Shizuo-kun to face his greatest fear. He had actually murdered someone, albeit not a poor innocent soul. But Shinra could see that his friend wasn’t the same anymore. The blonde tried to appear unaffected in the world but Shinra knew better.

He would sense Shizuo-kun’s reluctance to meet with him ever since that fight. And when they would eventually meet he could tell that at sometimes Shizuo-kun was guarded or awkward around him, like he was expecting the megane to jump him and try to stab him with a poisonous injection or something. At first Shinra though it was his idea but also his beloved who was remarkably observant for a headless woman took notice too and commented on it. They both believed that Shizuo-kun’s reluctance generated from guild towards Shinra, for the ex-bartender being aware of the fondness Shinra had for Orihara-kun and thus he perceived the outcome of the fight as causing harm to the doctor personally.

Shinra wanted to reassure him that yes, he was upset but with both of his friends for being idiots. But he never said anything because it would be hypocritical of him to scold Shizuo who was the only one left alive, while he always in the past was uncaring of the outcomes of their fights and shrugged off their hate because honestly, he never cared much till the moment it affected him personally.

Because haven’t we established already that Shinra is selfish? And while also lacking empathy for the greater part he was for the first time in his life probably tactful enough not to mention anything to Shizuo about the fight, and continue interacting with him as it never happened. In other words, he shrugged off the issue.

Yes he missed Orihara-kun. He missed him, despite the informant hurting him indirectly through Celty. He missed him a lot in the safety of his mind and his twisted soul hurt but he kept his mourning for his best friend in the privacy of his lad so he would always be smiley and bubbly and chatty when spending time with Shizuo-kun to reassure him that he was still unaffected by everything that had happened. He had lost Orihara-kun, he didn’t want to lose Shizuo-kun too.

But he was starting to think that maybe he should have talked to Shizuo-kun about it, put his thoughts into words because he was terrible at expressing his feelings to any one but his beloved, because he left too much time pass and because it was just like him to shrugged off issues and ignore the elephant in the room.

While after a lot of weekend hang-outs with Shizuo-kun, Shinra could tell that the other was finally relaxing again around him, he was trying less hard to suppress his feelings and be as impassive as
Kasuka-kun in front of him as if willing Shinra to forget about his temper or his strength which were the causes of Orihara-kun’s perish.

However, something was still off about Shizuo-kun. Even with him being relaxed around him it left as if he was retreating into himself more in general; talking less, spacing out more. Shinra was starting to worry that he was losing his strength. Not the incredible physical once, but the glowing inner one. His strong heart, his ability to face all the difficulty, to be unfazed in front of the hateful comments he would receive had started to fade slowly but surely.

Yes, Shinra was starting to worry indeed but he was at loss with how to help. His new found and still infant empathy he gained after Orihara-kun’s death was not trained for these kinds of situations.

However, Kishitani Shinra refused to lose both of his best friends. He cared about them late as he admitted that. Though his emotions to them would always be overshadowed by his blinding and maddening love for his amazing headless fairy obviously!

But if Shinra knew one thing was that his love and care were bound to be twisted and he would never allow himself to lose those he cared about.

Ha had already lost Orihara-kun, he could not lose Shizuo-kun too because then he would have zero best friends. That was not acceptable and he would never allow it to happen.

Because Kishitani Shinra albeit late had realized that he wanted his best friends in his life, to have fun and sped time with like they should when they were younger.

“Ne, Celtyyy!” he jumped from his office chair and went behind his fiancé to snuggle her. He was so happy when she didn’t turn to punch his solar plexus any more, he still couldn’t believe that she was his finally after all those years.

The smoke from the tip of her neck moved a bit towards his face. She was “looking” at him expectantly, she could tell he wanted to suggest something.

“Let’s invite Shizuo-kun again this weekend here to hang out! We can have a hot pot all together! Or we could go to Russian Sushi we haven’t been there for a while!” he said excitedly and he could tell from the move of the black smoke that she liked the idea.

“I might even be able to sneak a small dose antidepressant to Shizuo-kuns system that way, for precursory reasons, ohh!” he moaned in pain because that comment of his finally earned him a punch on the solar plexus.

“I know it’s not right Celty but can you blame me?” he whined pouting. “Besides better be safe that sor- wahh! Okay, fine.. Lets just hang out more with him, ne?” he smiled sweetly in her arms.

[It’s sweet how you worry for your friend Shinra, but Shizuo knows you care about him and that’s all he needs. You don’t have to use such methods to take care of him, he just needs to talk and take his time you’ll see. He is getting better, I promise] she showed him her phone screen and Shinra knew that there would be care and love in her voice if she could talk, from the soft black smoke edges bouncing happily at the tip of her neck.

“Celtyyyy, I love you so much my darling!!! Let me hold you some more and then I’m going to call Shizuo-kun and tell him about our plans!” he squealed happily.

His Celty was caring and loving and wise and she knew how to be compassionate and empathize with human emotions a lot better than himself so he would take her advice for now. However, he knew that she wasn’t completely honest with him. That one little puff of smoke closer to the nape of
her neck shivering a bit more than the rest which showed him that she was unsure herself about her
promise and she was also worried about Shizuo-kun.
But for now, he would do as she said and leave the powdered antidepressants at his desk drawer and
make sure to enjoy his time with his beloved and his last living best friend!
He just wished in the back of his mind that Orihara-kun would be with them too, so he could have
close to him all of his dear ones.
Because indeed, Kishitani Shinra was a very selfish man.

Chapter End Notes

While I really love Shinra, I am very aware that he is not exactly a "good" person in the
least. :P I believe that he really cares about both of his friends -in his own way (though
he would be happy to throw them off the cliff if it meant pleasing Celty ^.^"). Also I
think that Shinra has a softer spot for Izaya, not to say that Shizuo is not important to
him though! But in my mind while Shinra can be overly affectionate and carrying
towards those important to him, he is also terribly selfish and manipulative towards
them, to a certain extent at least, if it means that he would be happy or keep them close
to him (as we've seen doing with Celty in canon). In a way Shinra will always "work"
for Shinra first and he is aware and completely at peace with himself regarding that (if
that makes sense :P)
PS: I'm currently working on the next chapter, however I am not sure when I will have
it ready to upload yet :P
Take care and see you soon!! \(^8^)/


Chapter 6

Chapter Notes

Hey everyone! I hope you are doing alright and that you will enjoy my two latest chapters.
I have to say that I almost never like OCs. Usually they serve their purpose and fade in the background, so most of the times they don’t feel real to me because I don’t get the time I need to “know them” properly to care about them. So, having to make this addition was a real challenge for me.
Btw my favorite online fiction EVER -is not fanfiction though- was one with four characters that were created with such detail and care they felt so real that would blow your mind how much you could grow to care about them! I aspire to be able to do something like that one day with characters I’ve created from the scratch, so Kato-san is my guinea pig in a sense! ;-P
Also, I wanted to show his influence on Izaya, the foundations of their acquaintanceship and the impact it has on both of them and their decisions. So unless I focused a bit on Kato-san in these chapters their dynamic and future events would make absolutely no sense and would interfere with the quality I want to give to my storytelling, so please bear with me and Kato-san! (*//v//*)
Finally, I’d love to know what you think of these two chapters and what you think of my OC.
Also, a massive thank you to those of you who have supported me so far with your kudos and comments! You are really motivating me to try my best! 😊

See the end of the chapter for more notes

He was feeling much better lately. He would eat healthier, sleep more, grow stronger, interact more with his surroundings, even go out for a stroll at times when he was in a particular nice mood. These changes were subtle, the actions not being repetitive every day but instead sporadic, however the result was the same; he was more at ease with his condition, more confident in himself, more mentally stable.

Heck, sometimes he swore he could move his toes unconsciously and even had regained some feeling in his legs again! It was just this sensation of a muscle flexing on its own that he though he got from time to time.

Sure, his leg muscles had atrophied and weakened considerably with a bit more than two years of being unused but he couldn’t help but feel that maybe he would be able to use his legs again. Most certainly not for parkour but maybe being able to run again was possible?

In reality he had never gotten the full medical picture after “the incident”. He was too beaten up (literally and figuratively) therefore, from the moment he realized something was wrong with his legs he gave up all hope and decided that since he lost, the least he could do was accept his punishment for his miscalculations. Still, his legs were an uncrossed territory and he wouldn’t go there.

He had accepted he would live like that what was left of his file and had moved on from the past.
Besides its not like he needed to run away from anything anymore or parkour on slippery roofs and half-demolished buildings. These things were for Orihara Izaya, Tokyo’ best informant, god, forever 21 years of age.

However, he was Osaka’s Orihara Izaya, human hybrid, age 27. He didn’t need to parkour on Tokyo’s roofs or to be hidden in the shadows. Nowadays, he felt like he could wheel around his way in the streets of Osaka like he owned them for what he was: Ashahi Shimbu’s best editor assistant!

Yes, being free and accomplished was a good feeling!

A part of him still feared that he could relapse any day back to the catatonic and depressive moods he used to fall into every other day for almost the last two years. Regardless though, he couldn’t deny that his chest was a tiny bit lighter lately.

He didn’t know it at that time but his reason for gaining confidence in himself, for having some sort of long-wished normalcy for the first time since he was a child and support in his attempt to remodel himself into a less hideous being was bound to be the same reason which sooner rather than later would take him back to point one.

Kioshi Kato. Assignment Editor of Ashahi Shimbu.

Kioshi Kato was an interesting human. Person.

He was a chubby man in his late sixties. Typical Japanese facial features, tan skin, a mixture of grey and white hair surrounding a too big forehead, a thick mustache below relatively big a triangle red nose that covered his upper lip and massive framed square glasses. Always dressed formally and carrying a pen in his shirt-pocket.

Nothing particularly noticeable could be said about him by a first look. Normal.

Same with his personality.

Despite his old appearance, Kato-san’s personality and general attitude would remind you a general at the eve of the final battle. He was extremely absorbed by his work most of the time, always acting professional when among colleagues and really passionate and proud of his career in Asahi Shinbu - he worked in a leading role within the number one paper of Japan after all for decades. Most of the times the man could be really intimidating towards his subordinates; a perfectionist, always expecting -no, demanding for them to perform to their best of their ability. As expected of a person like that he could also boss you around quite a lot before you could even form an objection. In other words, he was an old-school boss. Not much of the new leader-type bosses western companies preferred. Regardless, he was still very well-liked and respected in the company. That was probably due to the air of stern kindness he carried with him. He would recognize the hard workers and assist the weaker-links in the paper and despite his rough exterior and the constant scolding his subordinates would be subjected to and in all his years in the paper he had never fired a single soul.

Two words. Boring and expected.

However, once you got to know the man more your perception of him would make a complete 180-degree turn.

First of all, Kato-san very obviously could not live up to his name. Kioshi meant silence. But, Katosan apparently was waaay too bubbly for his own good! Not unlike Shinra-bubbly, however boss-san’s range of topics varied much more than the black-market doctor’s. Once he started, he could not stop! He had to fill you in with several unnecessary opinions, advice, events, bits of gossip, job
related matters that didn’t particularly concern you etc. Nothing of particular importance, but always something. At times he got so lost in his rumblings that he failed to make conclusions! It was surprising how the guy could be an editor with his head being all over the place!

If Izaya could guess he’d say Kato-san couldn’t stand silence. He was trying to fill it at every opportunity.

When Izaya was hired in Shinbu, he himself preferred silence too thus the whole thing could definitely be annoying at various degrees based on Izaya’s mood and workload at the time.

Moreover, Kato-san was as tactful as an investigator during a third-degree interrogation. He would pry in every personal matter and would inquire about your thoughts and feelings at every chance he got if he thought something was off. Whenever he realized Izaya got too exasperated of his prying he would simply blame his prying to the “Nature of the job” and smile so openly with his eyes turning almost into slits and his reddish cheeks lifting up high, that you’d feel the tiniest bit guilty to be annoyed at him. At such times he reminded Izaya a crossbreed of the American version of Santa Claus and a meddling mother.

Despite his intrusive nature Kato-san refrained from asking Izaya anything about his medical condition or his past. It was kind of startling to realize that the old guy understood the concept of boundaries despite all. Even at first, when Izaya had his job-interview with him -which was not easy to get by the way, because the competition for a role in Asahi Shinbu was intense no matter how small the role was- he had never asked what had happened to him. He was eyeing the chair from time to time though, making Izaya uncomfortable himself, so at the time the ex-informant had stuttered the first thing that came to his mind just to make him stop: “Car accident”. The only thing the man had done at the time was offer him a nod of his head and went on discussing the manuscripts Izaya had submitted.

The third thing Izaya could note about his boss was this weird liking he had developed towards him. He was just a subordinate after all.

When he had started in Shinbu, almost two years ago, Kato-san had been a bit cautious if not hostile around him. Had Izaya not seen the man’s general disposition to be difficult and borderline threatening to his subordinates at times, he’d think the old man was personally out for his blood those first few months waiting for him to make a mistake to kick him out of Shimbu -not that something like that made sense considering he was the one to choose him for his current role.

“Confidentiality. Discretion. Loyalty. Honesty. Success. I’m giving you a chance here Orihara-san. Break any of these rules and you’ll be out before you could blink” he had told him on the first day and Izaya had no doubt he’d go along with it.

Not that he’d tried to provoke the man. He had nothing at that point and considering that he wouldn’t be able to support himself financially forever with the money he had in his bank account and that the massive medical bills kept piling up, he didn’t have many options than to play nice. Izaya wasn’t stupid. He knew that with his disability and lack of higher education his options on a legal profession -because what was the least expected of him than to hide at plain sight and act like any other normal human- were very limited. ‘Cold hearted old bastard’ He had though at the time with spite.

But apparently playing nice was the right thing to do cause through that first year it had earned him an increasing amount of cookie-points with the old man who had developed what appeared to be a liking for him. And then from Orihara-san he had been promoted to Orihara-kun and eventually to Izaya-kun and more recently several nicknames were making an appearance. Still though, being a good at his job wasn’t reason enough for Izaya to justify Kato-san’s increasingly friendly attitude towards him. It’s not like Izaya had done anything to earn such positive sentiments towards himself.
He was always distant and more often than not annoyed by the man’s antics - at least he used to be. Moreover, the last thing he needed was to be labeled in the Paper as the “boss’ pet”. Disgraceful!

Kato-san, however, wasn’t obvious about favoring him but Izaya could tell by his little visits at Izaya’s office increasing in number tenfold over the span of the first year, when he would update him about the events in the company Izaya hardly cared for or pester him to drop by the company’s cafeteria to mingle with the other employees. After the ex-informants repeated refusals, the old man would bring his lunch at Izaya’s office at times to eat together in order to “discuss work” when in reality he would just chat non-stop about ridiculous things like the historical importance of jajangmyeon, a Korean dish he loved oh-so-much that kept insisting Izaya should try - despite him having mentioned before his aversion for sweet foods, or the divorce poor Amata-chan was going through cause she apparently had caught on that her husband was a “despicable piece of art” as boss-san had put it.

It wasn’t that Izaya was uneasy by his boss’ subtle but friendly attitude because he was afraid the man was a creep or anything along those lines. He was talented enough to distinguish twisted entities successfully among humans - After all it takes one to know one.

Kato-san however was a bit of an enigma still. He was clearly eccentric though; loud, bubbly and intrusive as he was in nature. He would fit well into Ikebukuro he had dared to think once.

Izaya had been contemplating for a while if he should do a bit research about him, but had always decided against it. He shouldn’t, not only because he was trying to break free from his past habits, but because the temptation to revert back to his old ways would be always lurking in the back of his mind. It would make his life much easier for starters financially, but also it would make it much more amusing. At the expense of other poor souls of course. He would be tempted to make Osaka his new playground! And he would pay for it again in the end because karma apparently existed and had caught up to him once already in the form of a steel beam. Even though there was no guarantee that the history would repeat itself Izaya knew that he would end up completely isolated once again. Not that he wasn’t completely isolated in Osaka but having at least someone to say ‘Ohaio’ when they saw you and pester you to eat and keep talking while you were busy, deep down he though: ‘It’s not completely annoying’.

Still, he couldn’t help but feel cautious with Kato-san. Having someone wanting to be around him and actively attempting it felt so new to him and so surreal at the same time that Izaya was waiting for the catch. The alternate motive.

However, Kato-san was also someone who defied his expectations and Izaya’s self-preservation instincts lessened more and more against him. The more the man kept pushing in his subtle - and bossy way, the more Izaya’s resistance weakened. In fact, for the first time in so long he finally found himself forming a bond so naturally and effortlessly despite his cautiousness he had not realized it was happening!

One night after he had finished his work, he had decided to return to his house using the metro instead of calling for a cab like usual. He had just entered the mental stage when he had decided to get in touch with his surroundings more so being in a busy environment and getting accustomed to doing everyday activities like using public transportation in his condition was an important step to rebuilt his confidence and feel independent.

However, the moment he reached the front entrance of Shinbu he realized that it was raining cats and dogs. He had been so immersed in his job that had kept his window closed all day for fear of getting distracted. He was usually thinking ahead of himself always checking with the weather forecast especially because due to his condition even small things like rain could prove especially
troublesome.

But, with Izaya having trouble for the first time since he got hired to Shinbu to meet his deadline which was on that particular day due to his constant nightmares of his being beaten within an inch of his life due to the two-year anniversary of “the incident” approaching at that time, he had not slept properly for days, leaving him so disoriented and tired he was left struggling not to destroy all the steady progress he had made all those months.

Truth be told he could not even hold an umbrella himself even if he had one since he needed both of his hands to roll the wheels of his wheelchair and even if he had an electric one crossing through the paddles on the road could damage it.

After waiting for several minutes Izaya had decided to opt for a taxi. He just had to wheel to the pavement and call of one, what if he got wet? He hardly cared at that point, he was so tired he just wanted to lay on his bed and pass out.

The moment he got out of the building he was drenched to his underwear as expected. He wheeled towards the pavement and waited. And waited. And nothing.

And suddenly the rain had stopped, but only over and around him.

He had raised his head up seeing a hand holding a ridiculous rainbow-colored umbrella over his head shielding him from the rain. Following the arm attached to its handle with his eyes revealed a very drenched boss-san looking at him with a gray eyebrow raised and a scowl like he was an absolute idiot.

“What on earth are you doing standing in the middle of the rain boy? Are you out of your mind?” he reprimanded him.

“Taxi! I mean, I’m waiting for a taxi. Sir.” Izaya would think back on that moment later and wonder why Kato-san lecturing him would always make him feel like a teenager being scolded by his father. Even his pattern of speech felt less eloquent at such times.

“You know there is a phone on your desk for a reason, right Izaya-kun? You could have used it to book a cab if your self-phone wasn’t working instead of freezing yourself. Ts! When I had decided you were sensible!”

Izaya had regarded him blinking stupidly. He decided to go with Kato-san’s interpretation of the story and refrained from pulling his almost fully charged self-phone out of his coat’s pocket in front of his boss in order to save some face and not to appear like an even greater idiot in front of the man. Damn he was making an absolute joke of himself in front of this particularly obnoxious man of all people! This could not get any worse, it was impossible!

Taking a look at the old man looking visibly annoyed for standing over him while being equally soaked to the bone because he was holding his umbrella over Izaya’s head instead of his own, Izaya decided in fact, the situation was getting progressively crappier by the second.

“Gomme Kato-san! Please take back the umbrella Sir, I’ll call for a ride and wait inside!”

“Izaya-kun, no offense but do you think anyone sane would allow you to ride their vehicle in that state? I’ll tell you what, Let me give you a ride just for today!”

“You really don’t have to sir!”

“Izaya-kun, I might have phrased my sentence as a suggestion, but it really wasn’t.”
“I’m telling you it’s--!”

“Don’t talk back to me, brat!”

‘Brat?’

“As your boss I have to take responsibility for your wellbeing! That’s an order!” he monologued.

‘Order!?’

“Izaya-kun, get yourself moving boy! My car is parked at the public parking by the end of the next block.”

“You just said none sane would allow me to ride their vehicle in my state..”

“End of discussion!”

“Discussion?!”

“What was that?”

‘Ups!’…”Arigato gozaimasu, sir!”

“Good to know your fragments of sensibility are still somewhere in that head of yours. Now get going!” Kato-san smiled satisfied with himself for successfully bossing him around, his chubby cheeks moving higher towards his nose and his droopy almond eyes turning even more like slits.

When Izaya started wheeling himself towards the direction he could see with the corner of his eye Kato-san’s outstretched arm holding the ugly umbrella blocking the rain over his head.

During all the time it took them to get there his boss was walking beside him on the pavement.

And that’s how Kato-san had fully transformed from a human into a person.

After the “umbrella incident” Izaya had embraced his work in Shinbu with a newly found passion.

It wasn’t a bad job, he was excellent at it as he was at almost everything and he didn’t dislike it even though it wasn’t thrilling like the previous one. But now he was more motivated to do well in it than before.

Walking along another person who reprimanded you, made you feel like an absolute dimwit and protected you from something trivial was a very weird feeling. It was warm below your diaphragm and tingling at the left side of your body behind the ribs. It was good he could tell that but it felt alien to him. He wasn’t sure cause he didn’t remember when was the last time he felt something similar but he thought it is how being cared for is supposed to feel.

He had realized at that point that Kato-san regarded him as someone who was worth of his care for whatever reason. At first Izaya had though it was just Kato-san’s overly social attitude but then he started noticing that while the old man showered everyone with stern-kindness he would not use such terms of endearment? - Brat Ts! - with his other subordinates or focused so much on their wellbeing.

The young assistant believed that to a certain level his medical condition was a reason for his boss’ behavior but he also hoped that it was a bit about Izaya himself too.
This hope had led the disabled man to strive to succeed harder than ever before, he wanted to prove himself worthy to the man, maybe even spend more time with the old guy chatting—because since that day Izaya has started participating in what otherwise would have been mostly a monologue, turning it into a dialogue instead.

The change apparently had not been unnoticed by the old man though he never made any comment on it.

However, a week after that rainy night, after they were leaving from Shinbu, boss-san had decided that Izaya needed to go out more and what better way to make sure of that than force him to have his “Jajjagmyeon Initiation” as he had put it. To Kato-san’s utter delight Izaya had accepted the invitation without protesting too much.

He was Izaya Orihara after all! He had to be a pain in the ass, just for appearances sake at least! And because being a nuisance was fun.

Besides he had realized that his boss hardly ever got angry with his despite the impression he gave. In fact, Izaya guessed that being bossy was Kato-san’s source of amusement, much like being annoying was Izaya’s own. It worked for both of them fine.

Izaya had also realized that jajjagmyeon was quite good despite the unappealing brown color and the greasy, overly saucy appearance. According to Kato-san Izaya had worn the same expression when he saw them the old man’s son had when he had tried it for the first time, when they had family vacation in South Korea years back.

Izaya hadn’t met the man personally but he wouldn’t blame him for being skeptical about this dish. On the bright side the brown noodles were accompanied by rice wine. While Izaya was never one for alcohol as it could lose dangerously one’s inhibitions—and tongue, which was very unproductive for an informant, he did accept a cup cause, honesty, he needed to calm his nerves. He wasn’t one to do friendly outings, hell if he actually had one before! And considering his uneasiness to be publicly seen because of his condition a cup helped him to put him at ease. That, and seeing Kato-san slurping his noodles like he a starved man, with brown sauce all over his white mustache and nose! If only his other subordinates saw that spectacle!

With a bit of wine to keep him warm and Kato-san’s antics Izaya wasn’t surprised that he had actually a decent time. Even though their pretty big age difference limited the topics they could talk about—for Izaya’s part at least, cause Kato-san always came up with one thing or another—and their opinions in other matters were quite opposite, such as when they contemplated whether or not supernatural existed and a little scandalized Kato-san was asking “Izaya-kun, were you part of a cult before, boy?” which actually made Izaya laugh for the first time in what seemed like forever, Izaya wasn’t surprised by himself that the following Friday he joined this gramps again—even if it meant eating greasy jajjagmyeon instead of creamy ootoro!

And like that Jajjagmyeon Fridays became sort of a tradition.

While it was most certainly an unprofessional thing to do to spend Friday evenings with your boss Izaya didn’t care anymore. Besides job-related matters were not allowed to be discussed on the table after that first outing and truth being told hanging out with your boss only meant they would get more comfortable to bury you in extra work.

Izaya though still contemplated on this new-found bond and the reasons behind it. Humans always have a reason for everything they do, the decisions they make, the relationships they form.

He had come to the conclusion that they both craved companionship for their own reasons. He knew
his own reasons. Kato-san hadn’t asked him about them so Izaya wouldn’t ask his either.

Little did he know Izaya would get his answer a couple of months later.

Kato-san had extended an invitation of his wife to the ex-informant for lunch during a week end. It startled Izaya to hear it at first, he hadn’t realized the old man was talking to her about him. On the other hand, he’d have to explain whom he was drinking rice wine with every Friday noon.

Regardless Izaya accepted the invitation gratefully. If it was only Kato-san’s idea he would act all difficult to annoy the man a bit before accepting but since it was his wife’s idea, he had to be courteous.

The first time he visited his boss’ home a few things started to make sense.

For starters he realized why the man was rumbling at every single chance he got. The house was a beautiful standalone house of a western style, carefully decorated with expensive pieces of furniture and impeccably clean. It was obvious that Kato-san and his wife had been quite well-off in their lives. But it was so …silent. Even his boss itself appeared more subdued. Izaya would have expected him to bang the door and start screaming “Tadaima!” from the top of his lungs by now! Its not like every house hold is loud and boisterous at every moment but this silence felt a bit amiss. He also got the sense that the house didn’t have visitors often either.

Kato Mayumi-san had been stunning at her youth, he could tell. She had a gentle silent aura surrounding her, her black eyes looking at you gently and melancholic. Her shoulders were a bit hunched like she was carrying an invisible weight constantly that made her seem shorter than she was. She was a good conversationalist, she knew about discerption – unlike her husband- and never even looked once towards his chair. Her cooking was quite good, not too simple neither too complicated dishes, she would offer him more food but wouldn’t pester him too much if he refused - which he didn’t because he had manners and doing so would be impolite towards her efforts.

Another thing was that he could tell was that she was warm and motherly -made sense since she was a mother, but also a bit distant at the same time. She gave the impression that she was making effort to be pleasant but had trouble to do so at times because she was extremely tired. She gave a vibe pretty similar to his own if he were to be honest. That last observation made him feel a bit uneasy.

They held successfully a three-way conversation, quiet but comfortable after the initial ice broke where a lot of information was exchanged. Mayumi-san was a high school teacher that had retired a few months ago, Kato-san wasn’t allowed to drink too much for his liver -ups!, Izaya didn’t completely hate jajjangmyeon etc. They had moved to the living room after the lunch to continue their conversation over tea.

“We don’t get visitors often Izaya-kun. Thank you for coming today. Please visit again sometime” Mayumi-san had told him before bowing slightly to extend her gratitude.

Izaya bowed himself and the woman left to retire to her room.

Izaya was about to wheel himself towards the door when the corner of his eye caught a big wooden cabinet that was positioned to the other end of the living room, parallel to where he was seated so keeping his head to the front to the direction of the elderly couple it had escaped his attention.

Something escaping Izaya Orihara’s attention! That was new!

A pretty big butsudan escaping his attention though? That was impossible!

Suddenly though every piece of information had clicked to the right place and he felt like he was
punched in the gut.

The general silence of the household, Mayumi-san’s melancholic gentleness, the information that they exchanged during the conversation that was only about Kato-san and his wife despite him knowing they had a child, Kato-san taking a liking for him... Kato-san taking a liking for him.

He couldn’t help himself and he wheeled a bit towards the direction of the butsudan. He stood there staring at the picture of the smiling young man around his age, with the triangle nose and the eyes being stretched to slits, same to Kat-sans and Mayumi-san’s gentle smile and big eyes. Around the pictures there were several offerings; a bowl of the rice they had today being cold now, flowers similar to the ones growing in the garden, candlesticks.

Izaya then said the first thing that came to his mind which was “Car accident?”

Izaya was staring the cabinet so intensely he hadn’t realized Kato-san was standing behind him till the man mattered a “Robbery” as if it would explain everything. And probably it did.

‘Good’ he had though. It wasn’t good obviously but the last thing he wanted was for Kato-san’s son to had died in a car accident.

“I was too focused on the work, even when he was little. Didn’t get to spend much time with him”.

It was the first time the man had been speaking so openly about his past too. Izaya wanted to tell him to stop and he wanted himself not to care; caring was a pain in the ass -it always messed with everything. Neither of the two happened though.

“He would be older than you now, you know. In his forty’s” he continued in a tone so calm Izaya felt his stomach tying itself in knots. He much preferred the man to be loud and obnoxious he realized.

Did Kato-san fear he would feel like that for Izaya’s past too? Could it be the reason he never asked about it despite his zero tact and intrusiveness?

“Oh...” was all Izaya could reply at that point. His brain was too overloaded with information. It was one of the few times in his life he would have liked to be left in the dark.

Besides Kato-san’s admissions logically only led in one conclusion.

Kato-san was a very perceptive man though and he had caught on even before Izaya had opened his mouth again to voice his thoughts: “It’s true that you share some similarities.”

‘Similarities- so that's what it was. The alternative motive’

“But, you are also very different. Hideki was at peace with himself. You can never fully let go”.

Kato-san had hit the nail on the head again. Izaya went instantly in defense mode.

“Let go of what?”

“That answer, only you know.”

“....”

“I think I would have still grown to like you even if Hideki-kun was still around”.

“How can you be so sure?” defensiveness was giving into uncertainty.
"Hideki-kun was Hideki-kun. Izaya-kun is Izaya-kun."

Kato-san was a master at stating the obvious it seemed!

"I don’t understand. Then why are you like that to me?"

"Wherever there is a human being there is an opportunity for kindness, isn’t there Izaya-kun?"

Izaya didn’t know how to answer to that. It was one of those cases when their opinions differed greatly.

"I see…"

"Is it so hard to believe that someone can like you?"

Izaya wasn’t sure what to say to that either: "Why?"

"You have capacity."

"Half Shimbu has capacity."

"For someone as intelligent as you claim yourself to be, you are not as perceptive as you seem to believe! You get it now?"

"What the hell, these are not questions you are supposed to answer on the spot, without properly contemplating them first!"

"I suppose?"

"Excellent! We have an understanding then! Enough with the questions for today."

The man said, his whole disposition turning successfully back to the bossy-boss.

"It’s not like you are giving me any answers anyway" Izaya pouted a bit.

"If you want answers stop hearing and start listening Izaya-kun! Thinking too would be useful too in your case!"

"Kato-san is a bully~ Hidoi!"

"It’s all about perception boy! Now stop giving me a migraine, yes?"

"No such promises, boss-san~!"

They both stood in front of the cabinet a few more seconds, looking at the photo of the young man dressed in the police uniform, neither of them talking which was a first.

For once, Izaya was the first to break the silence.

"Ne, Kato-san?"

"Hmm?" the man raised his head and turned towards him.

Now, if Izaya was a normal human, he’d say something like ‘Thank you. I think I’m also growing to care about you’. But, well, he wasn’t one for big sappy emotional declarations so he went with:

"Let’s stick together a bit more, okay?"
“That’s what I though!” the man smiled, his droopy eyes turning into slits and his smile almost splitting his face in half and Izaya knew at that point that he had understood, like he always seem to do.

Chapter End Notes

I hope you liked this chapter and Kato-san's introduction of sorts! I also hope Izaya is not too OC cause that is against what I'm aiming for here! :P I just think that he can grow attachments under certain criteria (like with Shinra) and honestly if I let my version of Izaya in complete isolation and without someone to finally boss him around a bit, this story would start progressing in chapter 40 or sth! xD
Chapter 7

Chapter Notes

Finally the plot is moving on here and we are about to enter a new arc probably in the next chapter or so!
More Izaya and Kato-san bromance in this chapter! :P
Also lots of dialog!
Now dialog is not my strong point, I find it difficult to keep it natural cause in a real discussion, when both parties know what they are talking about, I think that most things are kind of implied by the context rather than directly addressed but on the other hand writing like that might confuse slightly the reader, which I hope is not the case! :)
But I also find fun to write about the inner thoughts we usually have during a conversation that we would not say out loud! :)
Aaaand I'm more into dissecting the inner thoughts of the characters in case it wasn't obvious by now (xD) so I am not sure how this chapter turned out.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

He had always independent from a young age. His parents working overseas, leaving in his care his younger sisters with none to turn for help had made him disregard the importance of parental figures in his early life. It wasn’t that his parents were bad or that he blamed them for how he turned out. It was just how the things were. They didn’t know any better and frankly speaking it was quite common in the Asian culture for the parents to work abroad to support the family leaving the children to care for themselves. Though, usually the children were teenagers at least but still Izaya understood even then that his case was simply one of the many.

Moreover, with his parents being away and his life as an informant they had lost touch years before. He didn’t even know if they knew that he was “dead” or not.

So Izaya for the better part of his young life never had an older figure to advise and scold him. Or pry and nag him annoyingly because they cared, talk to him so he would know that he was not all alone, get drenched themselves so he wouldn’t catch a cold or to treat him to food. He didn’t have someone before to chat his ears off with random shit but occasionally they would say something that would leave him baffled about how obvious something was that he didn’t notice, offering him another perspective. He hadn’t had someone before to have jajjangmyeon-Friday’s with or to invite him in their home. He hadn’t had someone before that his only motive to approach him was to be kind to him, help him even though he was constantly being met with low-key disdain and annoyance, care about him.

He hadn’t had anyone like that ever before until he had met Kato-san, who had done all of these things from the moment he had hired him in Shinbu a 2 years ago, after he got discharged from months being mostly alone in the hospital.

He hadn’t even realized how much he needed- and wanted- a sort of parental figure like that in his life till he reached his late 20’s.

Caring was apparently a natural and unavoidable response to unnecessary kindness, not unlike throwing a bone to a stray and it following you around he had decided.
But having a bong meant fear.

Fear of losing that bond was the main fear. Then there were other kinds of fear. Fear of being disappointed, fear of not leaving up to the others expectations, fear of betrayal, fear of death. All of these were associated to the main fear.

It also meant 3 troublesome requirements.

Hard work for once. To nurture it, sustain it and make it grow. Sometimes it was challenging cause Izaya had to get out of his comfort zone, like when they were hanging out in public and everyone could see the man on the wheelchair or buying presents for once home when you visited or eating jajangmyeon every Friday. Though after a certain point what Izaya had labeled as hard work was becoming something that came naturally. It wasn’t even a requirement any more, it was more of a given.

Trust was another given. Izaya new that the man trusted him both in work and personal matters and he would confide in him more often that not these days if something was troubling him. Izaya had also grown to trust the man, though not as much as the other party if only because he was not used to it. All the years working as an informant, his constant scheming in Tokyo and his overall personality made it harder for him to rely much on others. Though he understood now that Kato-san would go out of his way to care for him if he had to it was difficult to let himself become even more dependent on the man. Though he enjoyed knowing the old guy was finding him reliable. All in honest he much preferred to support his boss than the other away round. He was confident in himself that he’d wouldn’t hurt the man intentionally but truthfully, one should never fully trust any other than themselves.

Finally, was honesty. Now here we had a problem. If pillar 1 was effortless as breathing, and pillar 2 was showing reluctant improvement, pillar 3 was impossible to achieve! Kato-san was pretty honest with him, blunt even and he would speak at times painful truths if he felt it was for the younger’s benefit. Sure, Izaya knew the man wasn’t above telling a few white lies here or there -like when he said to Amata-chan she looked “lovely” in that ridiculous green and pink firly sundress of hers- or keeping information to himself when he felt necessary -like when he was unsure information they received in Shinbu would be used in less than absolutely moral purposes- and yes, there were matters he would simply not speak with him very often or at all, like Hideki-kun, his health etc but he was still honest about acting like that if he felt he had to. Despite these things, he had grown to be much more open with his life than Izaya was with his own.

Frankly speaking, what Izaya could say about his past to the man? He had already said that first lie regarding his condition at their first meeting and even if the other did not ask for details all of their acquaintanceship? -friendship? - had been built upon that first lie.

Izaya didn’t even dare to think what honesty would result into. How could he say to an old man whose life was based upon values like confidentiality, discretion, loyalty and honesty and whose deceased child was a policeman because apparently he wanted to protect others from people like Izaya, that he was in fact a former informant who had no qualms to cross the law, frame people, stir trouble for his amusement, had a freakin’ head in his previous house, his secretary was responsible for human trafficking, was carrying several switchblades that he actualy used against people, had tried to start a gang-war in Tokyo less that 3 years back?…Forget about it, that was a long list of misdeeds!

Still could he ever say to the old guy that the “car accident” was in reality him trying to suffocate and blow up a certain someone to bits, among other things, just because he was resentful and jealous and that he had lost in that last fight when said someone had beaten him up so badly that he could not
even stand on his own?

Now, that would go well...If Kato-san didn’t have a heart attack on the spot, he would have definitely have him fired at best, arrested at worse!

So instead, Izaya had decided he’d be honest only for his present and that as long as it wasn’t mixed up with his past. He would always try to speak the truth when it came to his feelings and thoughts in a situation – or at least hint to them since he had trouble speaking of his emotions clearly and try to do his best. It’s not like his past would come to bite him in the ass!

……………………………………………………………………

One of the usual Jajagmyeon-Fridays had found the two men seated opposite from each other on a picknick bench, close to the kiosk they had purchased their noodles with a bottle of sake in the middle eating and chattering.

However, something was a bit off this time, Izaya could sense it. It was in the way Kato-san was more lenient towards him in the job-related matters that week, the way he was paying way too much attention in his plate and the constant shifting on his seat.

Izaya wanted to let the man bring whatever was bothering him up himself at his own pace but this weird atmosphere was getting to him.

“What’s wrong?” he couldn’t help but ask. Kato-san’s attitude apparently was rubbing off on him.

“Why would you think something is wrong?”

“You don’t seem your usual dictatorial self today boss-san! You even let me pick my own noodle toppings without criticizing me” the younger man joked to put the other at ease.

“Since when you’ve turned that blunt boy? Good job!” the elderly praised him.

Few more seconds passed in silence and then-

“Izaya-kun. There is in fact something I’d like to discuss with you. Please be patient with me and try not to be too much of a brat, ‘kay?”

Okay, now Izaya was sure of two things: 1. Whatever the man had to say would somehow affect him. 2. He was not going to like this discussion.

He tried to maintain his calm for fear he would get paranoid, kept quiet and nodded so the other would continue.

“The past two weeks I have been in touch with Japan Times Editor in Chief Kajio Natsuki-san. There have been some rearrangements at their paper’s management. I was offered the role of management director.”

“These are great news! Congratulations, Boss-san~! You never fail to charm the editor-mashes!” Izaya joked as he sincerely congratulated the man. However-

“I will have to relocate during the next couple of months Izaya-kun. Times headquarters are not in Osaka.”

‘Oh…’ Izaya could already tell he hated this conversation. He truly wished it to be one of the oldman’s humorless jokes. Kato-san moving away meant that his only companion for so long figure
would leave him and he would be alone all over again. Just like when he first came in Osaka, just like he always was in Tokyo.

The waves of insecurity kept hitting him like tsunami. He was trying to calm his pounding heart and not fidget much with his chopsticks to betray his inner turmoil. It wasn’t easy though. Once one stops wearing a façade it’s really hard to put back on when you are unprepared for something.

And then came the final blow.

He already knew the answer to his next question even before Kato-san would open his mouth to confirm his suspicions. He could feel it to the nerve pain that suddenly was hitting his legs. But he still had to ask- just in case he was wrong.

But he was Izaya Orihara. He was hardly wrong about something.

“Whe-where are they?”

“Tokyo.”

At the mention of that place the muscles of his right calf cramped so suddenly he put the chopsticks down so fast he banged his palm on the wooden table before so suddenly he made the other flinch for a second, before reaching to massage his sore leg as discreetly as possible.

“Tokyo.” he repeated.

“Yes.”

“So? Have you accepted their offer then?” Both knew that this question truly meant: “Will you be leaving Asahi then?”

“Yes.”

At the other’s calm tone, Izaya couldn’t control himself. Sometimes it was easier to just snap than hold back, he realized the implications of such realization never registering with him.

“Why would you want to go there of ALL places? Do you know how dangerous such place could be for you and Mayumi-san? There are gangs, yakuza, kidnappings, supernatural beings, beasts!”

That mini outburst earned him a raised eyebrow and a scowl of disapproval mixed with some amusement. It was surprising really that someone with Kato-san’s temperament remained that calmed.

“And you said you weren’t part of a cult boy…”

“I am being serious here Kato-san!”

“I want you to understand that it was not an easy decision to make. Mayumi-chan- you’ve seen how she is. Now that she’s retired, staying at home by herself all day and thinking- it’s not good for her. “Japan Times” operate at a western working hour rate. She won’t be alone as much that way…”

“I don’t like you having to leave Shimbu. And I do understand you have to prioritize Mayumi-san’s wellbeing because she is your family. But still Tokyo– ”

“Izaya-kun. It’s been only me and Mayumi-chan for so long…”

"I know."
“…after what happened, there were times when it got so lonely.”

'I know’

“and I understand that I’m not the easiest person to get along with…”

‘You are not’

“… and maybe you have other things you’d like to do instead of humoring an old gramps like me but-…”

‘I don’t’

“Even if I’ve never said that before, I am very grateful to have you around.”

‘Grateful’

Izaya couldn’t help but his initial annoyance fading a bit. No one had ever been grateful to have him around before, so it was nice to hear that from someone.

“What I am trying to say is: I always do take your best interest into consideration…”

‘Eh?’

“Now, I know I’m not your father or anything -I am too old for that… So, this is a mere suggestion…”

‘Kato-san..Please get to the point neee~?’

“and this is one of the few times that a suggestion coming from me is actually a suggestion. Meaning the end decision will be entirely yours.”

“Boss-san! I didn’t take you for one to beat around the bush so much~”

“Come to Tokyo with me and Mayumi-chan!”

……

“Eh?!”

“I said you can come to Tokyo with me and Mayumi-chan. If you want to, that is.”

……

……

“Thank you for your offer Kato-san, but I have to decline.”

“Izaya-kun listen to me first! I told you before Kajio-kun does rearrangements in their management for the past weeks. There are three different editor positions open as we speak!”

“….”

“I have already put a good word for you with Kajio-kun. All you have to do is prepare and send material in Japanese and English. We both know they will hire you!”

“….”
“We still get to work together, we both get a promotion, a salary raise and less working hours! It’s a win-win for both of us, please be smart and at least think about it seriously before declining!”

“I don’t get you Kato-san. Why do that!”

“Because I care. I never gotten the chance to do the right thing before. I want to support you until you be at your best!”

‘Kato-san, my best is not a good thing despite what you seem to believe.’ he wanted to say to the man.

Instead he went with anger because he also really didn’t like feeling like the man cared for him to relieve his guilt for neglecting his own child.

“And what happens after I am at my best? You’re treating me like your project right now! You said I was no substitute!”

“If you were a substitute Izaya-kun I would have kicked your arse from here till next Tuesday for having an attitude with me right now and would have dragged you straight for rehabilitation whether you screamed or kicked the first time I saw you. Also, there is a fat chance that right now we wouldn’t be having such conversation because I would never allow Hideki to decline an opportunity of career progression unless he had a really good reason to give me to back it up!”

They glared each other a bit and stayed silent for a few seconds. It was the second time in these two years they have both disagreed and raised their voice to each other like that. They could both be really difficult people – stubborn and childish too at times. Izaya would forever deny it but he was the one to avert his eyes first. He didn’t like acting like that with the old man since they got closer.

“I’m sorry… for accusing you of thinking of me your project. That was low. I was being out of line, Sir”

Man, apologies were difficult! He felt like he was choking the entire time he spoke. It was much easier being stubborn! Still Kato-san was one of the only two people on this planet he felt genuine distressed for upsetting them!

“Sir? Izaya-kun no need to be so formal. It’s not the end of the world to have a disagreement boy! It’s not as if we tried to kill each other! Besides I was also out of line too, I said it was a suggestion but I ended up pressuring you and making you feel emotionally compromised anyways. I’m sorry too.”

“You didn’t. It’s okay, you just look out for me.”

“You are a good kid Izaya-kun! Take your time and make your decision okay? You still have a couple of weeks if you change your mind.”

“Okay.”

“Good! Now eat your noodles before they get soggy and stop pestering me!”

“Hai boss-san!”

They ate in comfortable silence for a couple of minutes before-

“Oh! I know! Have you heard about Amata-chan’s new boyfriend from the accounting department?”
“Ano..You are absorbing random information like a sponge Kato-san! How do you even know such naughty things at your age~”

“Well, we are reporters Izaya-kun! And I will pretend I didn’t hear any comments on my age for your safety.”

“Whatever…No wander you are getting squishy lately…”

“Who are you calling squishy? This is all muscle! Kami-sama~ give me strength not to drown him in Yodo!”

He was at loss.

A week after the boss-san’s announcement that he was leaving Osaka and his suggestion of Izaya to follow him on Tokyo and the disabled man felt like the life he was trying to build in Osaka was in danger of collapsing like a tower made of cards.

Osaka was a nice place. Safe. Easy to live in. A massive metropolis with lots of humans allowing him to observe from a distance if he felt like it, enabling him to hide effectively among the crowds, having a relatively enjoyable job that was information related and what could be now considered as a reliable friend constantly stuck by his side.

Having all those things made Osaka grow on him more and more over these past years even if he first came here his eyes stung for how much he hated this new city. After all this time Osaka even felt home-y to him at times. He liked being here! He didn’t have to hide and fight to protect himself, to wear a façade every moment of the day to maintain appearances -because all in honest he had turned into a quite pitiful being so why bother? - or stir trouble to entertain himself because he didn’t feel completely left out and alone here. He also didn’t feel hated -even though they were colleagues who low-key antagonized him, the majority of humans he had encountered regarded him mostly with sympathy or aloofness, though there were some who pitied him too.

Tokyo on the other hand would be dangerous! The place was filled with people who had it out for him and most likely some of them would love to take revenge, even kill him off. There were numerous gangs and thugs lurking at every corner. Izaya knew very well that if any of such people decided to come after him, he was dead meat! He couldn’t fight back- hell, he couldn’t even run away in his state!

Being in Tokyo also meant that he was in danger of being recognized! Izaya had been one of the most “notorious figures” in Toshima and Shinjuku, possibly to the other wards too. And what about “Ikebukuro’s prominent figures”? Even if not all those people despised him from the depths of their hearts, he still had no desire to see anyone of them. Just the thought made him uncomfortable! Besides Ikebukuro was like an internet virus. One person would see you and word would get out to the Dollars chatroom and suddenly half the city would have found out your whereabouts. He already knew he would look like a fallen villain at best and all of them would agree he deserved what he got in the end.

He’d hoped he’d never see any of them again.

Maybe except from Shinra.. and his sisters.

He wasn’t sure how Mairu and Kururi would feel about him being alive considering he had never been the best brother to them, but he had a feeling Shinra would like to see him at least.
But on the other hand, Shinra knowing meant Celty knowing which meant her best buddie would find out which meant certain death.

Well technically Celty already knew since she was the one to shield his wound with her shadows though she couldn’t have known if he survived or not. But again, that meant that Shinra and the protozoan would know of that possibility.

Pros and Cons considered it was obvious Osaka was the right choice.

Besides he had never been truly happy in Tokyo since he was a child. In fact, he always felt he was sticking out like a sore thumb. Living in Osaka for 2.5 years, he had been better that living 25 years in Tokyo!

Better though, not happy- never happy. Izaya had though once that even if he had managed to go to Valhalla, he’d still wouldn’t be happy there either. True happiness was simply not something he understood, so obviously he could never reach it.

But still? why leave the place that made him feel “better” for another one?

No, he would decline Kato-san’s offer tonight at their usual dinner.

………………………………………………………………

He hadn’t declined.

In fact, he had not even mentioned the older man’s suggestion at all at their dinner last Friday.

Now another week had passed and he was still contemplating.

Damn, this was getting him nowhere.

The only 3 things he was still 100% sure about were:

1. Being in Tokyo would be an absolute pain in the ass for more reasons than he’d care to list.
2. He really didn’t want to see any of his old “acquaintances”.
3. He would be completely left alone in Osaka with Kato-san’s departure.

Reason’s 1 and 2 were enough for him to stay were he currently was.

Reason 3 however, gained more leverage to turn the tables as the days was passing.

Izaya had still zero faith in himself regarding being able to create a similar normal human connection, he still not understood how it happened because he had used no plan and had zero strategy.

But even if he had, Kato-san was Kato-san!

And this admission made him increasingly paranoid.

What if boss-san went to Tokyo and learned the truth about him one way or another? The man was so chatty he would only have to mention Izaya’s name in one of his rumblings and then he might end up with a whole story about him!

Or worse what if the man or his wife got in trouble there? Once again, their connection to him could stir trouble for them if only Kato-san -because Mayumi-san was discreet and quiet in nature- spoke to
the wrong person!

And what if they got themselves mixed up to other Tokyo-shit! One could never know what lurked there, this was not the best place for elderly people!

_Elderly_. That word only was enough to generate new uneasiness.

Boss-san was a man reaching his 70’s. He had some health issues already. At such age one can never know if new issues will present themselves. And even if they don’t he was just old. He wouldn’t stick around forever because even if he wanted to, somethings you can’t control!

If any of these happened Izaya would be unable to do anything to prevent it from Osaka. There was a chance he wouldn’t even find out until it was too late!

Kato-san hating him and cutting all ties with him if he ever learned the truth about him was the one thing he dreaded, He knew deep down it was inevitable to happen from the moment the old man relocated in Tokyo.

But Kato-san and Mayumi-san getting themselves in potential danger because their only mistake was to be kind to him when no one else was, would be unforgivable and he wouldn’t let that happen.

Boss-san getting sick or dying was a topic he would not even contemplate more than he had too.

No. Boss-san had his back almost from the start of their acquaintanceship, Izaya had to also have to make sure to have boss-san’s old back too!

………………………………………………………………

“Ne, Boss-san?”

“How the preparations for your moving are going?” Izaya asked genuinely curious.

“We are in a rough stage still. The time frame to organize everything is a bit tight I admit but we’re getting there. Housing is an issue that requires a lot of attention but with me working all the time the past week there was hardly the time to look into it in detail” the older man replied leaving his plate on the wooden table of the kiosk they had chosen to eat from this time.

“I see.”

“Penny for your thoughts, boy”.

“Kato-san..I submitted today my application to Japan Times.”

“OOOOH! That’s the BEST news I had since the Nojiko corporate scandal broke out last week!!”

“You have some weird priorities boss-san!” Izaya said rather amused at the old man's genuine excitement for such a taboo topic as a corporate scandal. He was talking about that for hours all the past week!

“I won’t comment on that because finally you made the right decision my boy! And you made this old man happy! Best of luck Izaya-kun! I’m sure you won’t needed it though; you are their best shot to save themselves from the mess they created! Can you believe their whole foreign news department were people with elementary level language skills? Ts! It’s a miracle their Paper did not collapse!”
“Thanks boss! But don’t get too excited ne? I’m not sure how it will go, I already left quite a bit of
time pass till I made my decision.”

“Izaya-kun, about that. What made you change your mind?”

“Why, money of course~!”

“Ts! Young people these days are too materialistic for their own good! Money don’t bring happiness
boy!” Kato-san reprimanded.

“Eeeh? They don’t?” Izaya was in the mood to troll a bit tonight. It was just too funny to rile up the
other man sometimes!

“Stop messing around brat! I meant it when I said think your decision carefully! I don’t won’t you to
have any regrets afterwards!”

“The only regret I have is that I accepted pile of articles you tried to bury me into! I’ll have to work
all the weekend you know! Do you want me to die~?”

“Don’t whine now, consider it your parting gift to Asahi!”

“I told you not to get to excited! You always ignore what I’m saying~”

“I’m your boss- I’m paying you to ignore you!”

“Uts! So cold Kato-san~!”

They laughed once they were done with their friendly banter, Kato-san ordering an extra bottle of
rice wine to celebrate Izaya’s decision who was the one doing the scolding for once, reminding the
older man he shouldn’t drink for his liver.

After their second bottle arrived Izaya changed the topic.

“Have you decided which area in Tokyo you and Mayumi-san will be living at?”

“We’re not sure yet. Times are located in Chiyoda, I’m sure you’ve done your research by now.”

“Off course~.”

“So, there are 5 wards in a close distance to Chiyoda, but we think the central wards are more
practical in terms of transportation. Shinjuku, Chuoo or Chiyoda itself that is.”

At the mention of Shinjuku Izaya felt the usual uneasiness that started to take a toll on his good mood
a few minutes ago.

He used to love Shinjuku. Now he couldn’t see it again considering how close to Toshima, meaning
Ikabukuro, it was located and how many of his old acquaintances from Ikebukuro did business there.

“Transportation in Tokyo is quite good though, it’s not like you have to live in the central wards to
work there!”

“I’m sure I won’t like where this is going but I will humor you anyways Izaya-kun.”

Izaya gave him his best -and most annoying grin hearing that.

“Where exactly are you planning on living?”
“Ota is nice. Edogawa too!”

“Oh wait! I have a better idea! Why don’t you move to Saitama? It’s only an hour to get to work from there! I’m sure you’ll be on time! Better yet, you should go to Okinawa! Only a two hour flight to Tokyo every day! Hokkaido is nice at this season too though, don’t you agree?”

“You never take me seriously~!”

“That’s because I can’t believe you are seriously thinking of moving there! These wards are the furthest possible from the center, have you realized that?”

“They are 45 minutes Kato-san. People do this distance every day to get to the center.”

“Izaya-kun, if it wasn’t for your condition, I wouldn’t say anything.”

“That’s hardly true and we both know it.”

“Fine, I still wouldn’t like it. But will you be able to do this travel every day back and forth? Especially in winter time? Not to mention a third of your salary will go to transportation fees. Is it because of the housing fees in the center? We could work something out if you can’t cover them!”

He didn’t know what made him say it.

Maybe because the old guy was opening up to him more and more lately while Izaya himself had yet to utter a world for his own past. It was unfair to boss-san, wasn’t it? Or maybe he just wanted to justify his unwillingness to move in the center of Tokyo properly. Or because he suspected, if not being sure, that the man was about to suggest to him to move in with him and his wife when he said ‘work something out’, which would make him feel both incapable and a bargain to the elderly couple.

“Its just- I used to live in Tokyo..before. In the center. And it never felt very..emm.. comfortable? That, and some of the areas there are not safe.”

“Izaya-kun I know you believe in some weird things, but I never took you for a cotton ball! Okay, I get why you don’t want to live in the center, despite the fact that you will be working there- I hope you’ve realized that.”

“It’s still not decided that they will hire me Kato-san.I only did an application so far.”

“.but still you don’t have to go to the outskirts of the city. Go to Taito or Bukyo they are closer to Chiyoda! Hell, go to Toshima!”

‘Toshima... Ikebukuro.’

Maybe it was a good chance to say the truth now that it was somewhat relatively early and he still had control over the inevitable truth that was bound to blow up in boss-san’s face. Maybe the old boss wouldn’t regret the moment he gave him a chance if he spoke now and be done with it. After that, If Kato-san shunned him he wouldn’t need to risk his neck to go to Tokyo either right?

“Kato-san! I- Toshima is.. em, I grew up there. I lived in..in Shinjuku too. Then Osaka -after.” he finished lamely gesturing at his legs. Izaya took a breath and braces himself for what was coming next: “I know - I should have said something before but- The thing is, I- “

“Hold your horses right there Izaya-kun! You’ve never told me, I’ve never asked. I took my time telling you about Hideki and had you not seen the butsdan, I might have still not have told to you he
is gone. When you are actually ready to share something, I will listen to whatever you have to say then, okay?"

“There are no secrets time does not reveal, ne Kato-san?” Izaya laughted a bit to his nervousness.

“It is wonderful how well men can keep secrets they have not been told! Winston Churchill. Great man! Great speeches! However, he must have been a bit on the crazy side! Did you know he threw himself off a bridge once for fun? Who does that? I would only expect something like that from you Izaya-kun, because you have no sense at all! Who knows, you could be elected prime minister of Japan one day!”

And with that the old boss continued his rumbling about the politicians of the past while getting more and more tipsy while Izaya could hardly remember what they were discussing before that topic came up, by the time Kato-san had stopped monologuing.

Chapter End Notes

So this chapter is probably the end of the Osaka Arc.
Next time we'll enter the Tokyo Arc hopefully!
Please let me know what you think of the recent chapters! :) Constructive criticism is mostly appreciated!! <3
Also send me some of your positive energy, so next time I will upload a chapter I will hopefully have a job! :P
Chapter 8

Chapter Notes

Happy Belated New Year Everyone!! :D
I hope you are doing well and hopefully you are still interested in this story :P
Did you miss my massive Notes? xD
This time I'm back to Shizuo POV because I wanted to build his character a bit more before the big meeting so we'll understand a bit more where he is coming from.
Also this was my attempt at a light lemony piece just to see how lemons flow with my writing (Not easy but not as difficult as dialogues :P) and I am hella blushy and embarrassed as I am uploading it right now.
Another chapter will be coming very soon and it will be a (belated) New Year’s FILLER with both Shizu-chan and Izaya...separately of course because… Plot!! ^_^/
I was planning to upload it on New Year’s but things are always crazy during that time. I guess It is a bit anticlimactically now but I put great effort into it and I don’t want it to go wasted -and it became a slight part of my plot.
This leads me to my next point. FILLERS. I decided to have a few filler chapters here and there related with things that I like, find funny etc that won’t necessarily add much to the plot but the aim is to be simply light hearted and funny (cute too?) to lighten-up the atmosphere of this fiction when it gets a bit heavy :P
So far I have come up with two topics apart from the New Year’s Day’s one that will be added to the distant future due to their nature but I will try and come up with more if I can think of anything along the lines I mentioned before.
Also a big thank you to all of you who left me kudos and comments! Your support is greatly appreciated!!! <333 :
Finally a special thank you to @ChrysanthemumVow for giving me really important guidelines and details regarding Tokyo that would have taken me ages to find by myself and some of them I might have not even think to search for. These details I will be using on my next updates! <3 :

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Ikebukuro was quiet as always nowadays.

But lately it felt restless.

At least to him.

No, not only Ikebukuro. The other Tokyo wards made him feel similarly uneasy.

He couldn’t put his finger on it but his gut was telling him that something was about to happen any day now.

Something big and not particularly pleasant.

Or maybe he was fearing because everything today had been simply too good! Too peaceful! Maybe that’s why he was on edge? That’s why the sudden fear that something would disrupt this quietness.

Or simply, he was starting to get paranoid but could you blame him? Living with the flea inside his
head for more than two years now, sometimes he feared he would wake up one day being as crazy as that fucking pest was!

Speaking of this bastard, he was still there to mock and remind him that he was nothing more than a monster.

But at least Shizuo had finally made some sort of peace with that happened.

Not with his murdering the flea, never with that.

But with himself being the monster that he was.

He didn’t think he would ever be able to accept he had seriously hurt anyone, especially to that extent.

It was okay though, because his guilt would prevent his from losing his humanity completely.

So, he would live the rest of his life as a mix of monster and human.

There was one fancy biological term for that. He couldn’t remember it now...Something starting with “H” …He bet Shinra would know it. How the fuck it is called?

Screw it, he couldn’t remember. Why bother anyways?

So yes, he would be this thing from “H” instead of a full monster.

Thanks to the flea.

Not that he was really thankful. It was also thanks to that same flea that he did not consider himself human anymore either.

That bastard would be so happy had he been able to see him now.

And a happy Izaya was always bad news!

Because the only freakin’ thing that flea took happiness from, were people’s misery! Especially Shizuo’s!

The blond didn’t even know how big of a part Izaya had played in his low self-esteem and negative opinion on himself while the pest was still there, but after that night he had been shocked to realize that Izaya’s poisonous words the past decade had gained a lot of weight in his brain, having a major impact in the way Shizuo perceived himself.

That was mostly because the flea was an expert in identifying your deepest and darkest fears and your most twisted feelings and keep twisting them further and further until it became such a tight knot of bitter self-loathing and cold insecurity that it was impossible to be solved anymore!

Because that’s what that bastard did. He planted ideas into your head and he would nourish them carefully with hate until they grew roots and thorns and bloomed self-loathing. One can only be told so many times that they are something, until they start to believe themselves that they really are this thing.

And Izaya had master this tactic, an excellent manipulator, so he could just feed on Shizuo’s -among other people- already existing anxiety and negativity and pain.

‘Much like a fucking parasite...’
'Ts! Izaya again!'

Today he had managed to think of the flea only four times -'Five with this one!' - and it was close to bed time already, which was an accomplishment.

If he kept this up a couple of hours more, he might even break his record of “Daily Fucking-Flea-Thinking Moments” which right now was six!!

The ultimate goal was to achieve one flea-thought per day on his good days and three on his bad.

If he managed, he believed he would be able to live a relatively peaceful life till the day he kicked the bucket.

It was a good thought, even though some asshole would call it miserable.

So, he had to do better and try harder from now on!

Because, there were more people way more important to him that the flea could have ever dreamed to become and they wouldn’t be happy about him continuing this train wreck of life anymore.

He knew he saddened and worried them because even if he tried to act “normal” they still knew him well enough not to bite it. And he didn’t want to hurt them, even if at times he couldn’t help it.

He was feeling as much guilty about that, as for killing Izaya that night.

Hurting the one person he hated more than anyone in this world and fucking himself up in the process, despite knowing that he was doing the right thing in the moment, was a fair punishment to him -considering he wasn’t in jail where he belonged.

But hurting one of the people he actually cared about, some loved even…there would be no punishment severe enough for that.

Even death wouldn’t be enough to make up for something like that!

That’s why he had to keep going and will his heart to be strong for them. He had to do his best to become a better version of himself for them; Kasuka, Celty, Shinra, Tom-san, Vorona, Simon…

Mairu and Kururi too.

Because he had taken their brother from them. And even if they were a little fucked up in the head at least he thought their hearts were in the right place most of the time.

Surprisingly, the twins acted like always around him even during these last two years.

They would pester him about Kasuka and chase after him to chat or to beg for his little brother’s autographs.

To say Shizuo was baffled at first, would be an understatement.

A couple of months after the fight Shizuo noticing the weird fact that the twin Orihara girls were still acquainted to him he couldn’t help but question:

'Did they really hate the flea?’
Sure they said it all the time but Shizuo hadn’t even bother to take them seriously thinking that they were being the type of girls that were embarrassed to admit affection for their older brother and acted like they disliked him. He had heard Karisawa talking about this kind of girls in one of her anime rants about a school president girl who was also someone’s maid or some shit that sounded way too perverted to Shizuo so he had successfully shut off Karisawa’s ramblings.

But seeing how both of them were acting so unaffected by Izaya’s death, Shizuo had come to the conclusion that in fact they didn’t care about the flea.

He didn’t know why and he would never admit it as long as he lived to anyone else but that one and only time his heart clenched painfully at the thought of the flea with something that was unrelated to guilt for killing the pest or hatred for all the misery Izaya had caused him.

It was the one single time in his life that Shizuo had felt something akin to…sympathy -was it? - for Izaya.

So that first question had lead to another:

‘Did they really hate their brother that much that don’t even care about getting acquainted with his killer?’

A couple of more months after this second though first occurred, he couldn’t help but ask them directly.

Shizuo had stumbled upon the twins being harassed by a group of thugs one night while he was returning home.

He was about to intervene because even though he was a fucked-up individual himself he still had some morals intact and one of those was not to allow thugs bullying children.

He had picked up a trashcan and was about to throw it directly to the one who was leaning closer to the two identical girls.

Though he never got the chance cause Mairu had started doing some crazy-ass karate moves effectively knocking down most of those scumbags, while Kururi took a spray-can out of her pocket and managed to spray a couple of them in the eyes.

Shizuo had been pretty impressed.

He was sure flea would have been proud to witness his sisters doing some serious ass-kicking too!

Still though he approached the girls just in case any of the thugs revived themselves and had any ideas.

The Orihara girls had seemed pretty happy to see him running towards him shouting “Shizuo-san!” jumping all around him, Mairu asking if he got to witness her “kicking some butt” and Kururi being docile as usual.

Shizuo admitted that he had and that they could definitely do some damage despite their small structures.

Mairu had beamed at his praise, her twin looking equally giddy.

He had offered to walk them to their apartment to make sure they wouldn’t get into any more trouble for the day and the three of them had started walking with the girls asking anything they could think
about Yuuhei for the duration of their time together.

Shizuo had never really paid attention to their appearance before and he wasn’t one to stare at little girls anyways. That would be indecent not to mention illegal! And these were the flea’s sisters of all people, which was the cherry on top!

That time though he had stared them a bit more—their faces at least. That’s what he had been interested only.

He had just wanted to see if they bore any similarities to the flea’s.

Siblings were supposed to look at least a bit similar after all, if you looked carefully enough.

Him and Kasuka for example weren’t really looking alike at a first glance but their thin lips and nose shape were pretty much the same.

Mairu and Kururi while identical to each other they were so different from flea though that one would not consider them related until they saw their birth certificates. Nothing resembled Izaya at all! Apart from Mairu’s somewhat obnoxious personality that was. Face shape, hair color, nose, lips; everything differed.

Apart from the eyes he finally realized. That was the only slight resemblance the three siblings shared.

The shape was the same, big and almond one. The color was also the same. Light brown that gleamed mischievously all the fucking time! Hell, even Kururi’s eyes gave that impression and she was the most subdued out of the three Oriharas! The weird thing was that whenever light or shade illuminated or obscured that particular shade of light brown from a certain direction, it gave the illusion of it being an ugly, disgusting and demonic red!

To the flea at least who was ugly, disgusting and demonic himself. Mairu and Kururi’s eye color looked normal light brown to him, mischievous glim in it or not.

However, this fact considerably toned down any resemblance between the three Oriharas that could be detected.

Shizuo wasn’t sure if that was a relief or not, but he was pretty sure that it was on the girls’ benefit that they didn’t resemble Izaya in appearance—nor hanged out with their brother too much—cause with all the shit the flea was into this could get them into trouble.

Finally, when Shizuo had worked up the nerve to ask about their feelings on his and Izaya’s fight that night, to mention the possibility of Izaya being murdered by him and wondered out loud how the hell they could still talk to him knowing all these things they were already standing outside of the building the twins resided.

When the girls heard his question, Mairu had quieted surprisingly mid-sentenced, looking a bit divided.

And then she had laughed!

Fucking laughed like that! When she was done, she simply had said that if Izaya was truly dead she and Kururi wouldn’t be happy, but it would be funny to both sisters.

‘Who the hell says such things about their sibling no matter how fucked up said sibling was?’
Kururi had only said one word: “Alive”.

Shizuo had looked at her waiting to elaborate but it never came.

Mairu had interjected then: “Kuru-nee is right! Iza-nii can’t die that easily! Who do you take him for Shizuo-san? Ohh, Shizuo-san, to think you could ever kill Iza-nii!” Mairu was laughing again like it was the joke of the year or something.

“Funny” Kururi’s quiet input interjected again.

Shizuo wasn’t sure at that point if the twins wanted to reassure him, themselves or if the crazy gene run into the whole Orihara family.

Soon though the conversation went back to Hanejima Yuuhei, so Shizuo rushed to push them inside their building and leave.

He had decided that day though that he would keep an eye on them to make sure they stayed safe, as a form of repentance for murdering their asshole of a brother.

Since he had ripped the twins of the flea it only made sense that he had at least to step up and make sure they were safe.

He was sure that if Izaya had managed to set him on fire successfully as the pest had tried to that night, he wouldn’t give a fuck about Kasuka -besides flea wasn’t above of endangering Kasuka to get to him. He had tried to get his little brother into trouble in the past after all -albeit rarely- and despite having warned Shizuo of the danger Kasuka had been into, it was more to annoy Shizuo than actually caring for Kasuka’s wellbeing.

Disgusting!

Shizuo wasn’t like Izaya though.

He had never used the flea’s family to get to him and despite his past with the pest he had always tried to be nice to the twins. Though he was sure Izaya never cared about that, let alone appreciated it.

Still Shizuo hadn’t decided to take care of flea’s sisters for Izaya so it didn’t matter. He would do so just because Izaya wasn’t around anymore to do so himself -because Izaya must have loved them, right?

Being an older brother was the greater gift to Shizuo’s life and no matter how failure of a role model he had been to Kasuka he would always try his best to care for him.

Being a big brother was a 24-hour job after all. It could be tiring but it was a bless non the less! Shizuo thought that even Izaya must have known that simple truth, right?

So yes, even if it was difficult Shizuo couldn’t give up even though his guilt brought him close to thinking the opposite many times these years.

The encouragement from his environment, the people who mattered and stood by him these last two years, to sustain and support him or even ignore the truth of his crime bluntly had gradually pulled him out of the vicious circle he had fallen into.
He had started to reclaim his lost interest in life, he had started to have goals again and he even to
dream hesitantly. Dream of peaceful days, making memories, being with his loved ones properly and
without fear and maybe -and that was a huge maybe- having a family of his own.

He could have these things even if Izaya cohabited in his mind forever, as long as his resolution was
strong and his weak heart would start beating with fearless determination once again.

That is why he had to do his best to control his temper, get up and make the best of each day. He had
to give back all the care he had taken from his small circle of loved ones. He had to feel some sort of
phony happiness at last!

He wasn’t sure if the change in him was gradual or sudden, he just knew that one day he started
becoming interested again in life.

He had just grown tired and bored until that point with everything though he was lucky cause he still
had some beautiful memories intact to cling onto at moments of desperations to remind himself all
that he had been missing the days he felt he just wanted to sleep.

He wasn’t sure he would have shaken himself out of this trance if it wasn’t for those few happy
moments that were untainted by the flea: the childhood memories of him and Kasuka, Shinra fusing
over him whenever he got hurt, his quiet discussions with Celty by the safety rails on the highway,
Tom-san reaching out to him in middle school and then again when they become adults, the hotpot at
Shinra’s and Celty’s house with the van gang and the high schoolers, him and Vorona drinking their
coffee from the undestroyed vending machine while heading to the next scumbag and just enjoy their
comfortable silence and more recently the new memories he was making with the ones still
surrounding him.

Shizuo knew that if he didn’t have these memories he would have not made it. And he really thought
he had forgot most of them at one point. So much that he wanted everyone to leave him alone and
him to be brave enough to let go so his brain would stop feeling full and his body wouldn’t be tired
and eating or sleeping wouldn’t count as being productive nor as prolonging a never-ending torture.

At one point he had entered a weird phase when his only interest had been smoking. After a while he
was bored to do even that. That was the moment alarm bells had started ringing like crazy in his
head.

He wanted to go back to how he was and if he could, to become a better version of his little
miserable self.

He wanted to want to live more!

He was so lost.

Apart from Celty and Kasuka he had always been afraid to express what was truly in his mind and
heart to others so he preferred to act angry, annoying, distantly kind or aloof depending on the
situation.

He knew that people believed whatever they wanted about him and there was no point to try and
change their minds because in the end they would still doubt him. Was there even a point to try?
They had all see him for what he was that night. He could never persuade them that he was not what
they perceived him to be after that.

Only Celty and Kasuka could really see him and they weren’t even there anymore!

Kasuka was filming a movie abroad and wouldn’t be back for a year at best! While Shizuo knew that
his little brother would always be by his side he didn’t want to bother him, due to his little brother’s tight schedule. But that was a lame excuse he used often when it came to Kasuka nowadays. The truth was that he didn’t want to disappoint him even more to his little brother than he already was. Every promise he had made to Kasuka he had broken. Kasuka had mentioned thousands times that he should control his temper, how the hell could he tell him that he let go completely and even killed someone? No, he would make him an accomplish and that could even endanger his little brothers career and reputation for which he had worked so tirelessly.

As for Celty, after that night her and Shinra left for six-months to see more of Japan in a sort of early honeymoon even though technically they were still just engaged at that point. Celty had thought it good for things to calm down and to distract Shinra a bit from everything that happened she had said. Surprisingly even after two and a half years his friends hadn’t decided to tie the knot yet. And even more surprisingly Shinra was the one suggesting to wait to wed. Shizuo remember reassuring Celty that the black-market doctor would never look another woman when his friend expressed worries at Shinra’s somewhat chill attitude with this matter.

Because Shinra was anything but chill in all the Celty-related matters.

Anyways, Shizuo agreed that a change of scenery was a good thing and since they could do so they should. He really came to regret his thinking though afterwards because without his best friend there he felt so completely and utterly lost and didn’t have anyone to talk to.

He didn’t want to bother Celty with his problems while she was trying to find the much-needed normalcy she needed.

Him and Celty had clicked from the start. Something about how they were both perceived as threats and hideous monsters and most people ignored how lost and lonely they felt. Being outcasts more often than not no matter how many people surrounded them, always trying to hide themselves in the shadows, because they knew that they would be regarded as anomalies, had drown them together and a friendship had been born.

Shizuo had used to feel bad for Celty the previous years because at least she hadn’t done anything wrong intentionally on contrast to him who consciously had decided not to try to restrain himself even if that caused damage to those around him. Celty’s only crime was that she was alive without needing a head and that wasn’t even a crime to begin with!

At least she was happy now, finding her head and memories, having a relationship with Shinra and building her network of friends these last years. Shizuo was honestly happy for her cause he knew she deserved it all!

How could he bargain her with his problems at such time? He simply couldn’t, it didn’t feel right. And he was sure Shinra wouldn’t appreciate it much either if he interrupted his time with his precious fiancé.

In fact he had not seen Shinra again after that first night they waited for Izaya together and with his and Celty’s sudden departure he was terrified that he had lost his friendship with the doctor for good. Shinra and Shizuo were good friends sure, but Izaya was really important to Shinra for whatever reason -probably more than Shizuo- and Shizuo had grasped that much over the years.

He also knew that Shinra didn’t deal well with those who messed with what he considered important.

Shizuo had never felt more alone.
Somehow, he managed to survive these six-months, with Tom-san being the last constant in his life remaining.

The man could always offer another perspective and wanted Shizuo’s best interest and even if Shizuo did not want to burden him with his inner demons the other always offered to lend an ear for his kouhai’s problems.

It wasn’t that Shizuo didn’t trust Tom-san, in fact he was one from the people he trusted the most!

However, he was embarrassed to show the man how weak he still was.

Tom-san had seen him at his worst when he offered him employment outside that police station.

Moreover, Shizuo’s temper often interfered with their work, making things for the other man difficult. He knew the reason Tom-san kept him around was mostly to help him.

He had done so much for him already, having his sempai playing his psychiatrist on top would be a burden to the other man for sure, even if he said nothing about it. He had been a disappointment to his sempai so many times already it was ridiculous!

Despite Shizuo not talking too much about his feelings Tom-san wasn’t discouraged. He was used to the fake blond man’s mannerisms so he remained unaffected by that.

Moreover, Tom-san wasn’t one to push someone. He was more of a go-with-the-flow-type of person who had very clear ideas about personal space and sensitive topics.

So, he mostly focused on hanging out with Shizuo while debt-collecting and making sure that Shizuo would not lose his job by covering for him, due to the blond had started to avoid going at it at one point, thinking it being too much trouble preferring staying at home doing nothing instead. It was in fact during his smoking-only phase days.

‘A shitty life with no hope of getting better’

‘Nothing makes it alright’

‘I’m so fucking tired’

‘What’s the point’

Were some common thoughts of his at that time.

That went on and on for months but changed when Tom-san had arrived to Shizuo’s house on morning after days of the blond being absent to ask how much more days of unpaid leave Shizuo needed, spotting a bruise to his cheekbone.

It wasn’t a big bruise but the fact remained.

Shizuo had been responsible for someone getting hurt again! And this time it was someone he cared about!

If only he had been there nothing would have happened!

Ts! That had been the second time Tom-san had been hurt because of him -counting that incident back in middle school.

That was all it took for Shizuo to get straight to the shower and then head to the wardrobe and take
out one of his dozen bartender outfits, no matter how much he wanted to go back in his bed and smoke the rest of his cigarettes or sleep till afternoon.

After that day Shizuo had felt so awful with himself for troubling Tom-san so much with his behavior that he tried to do his best to be more agreeable as the months went by.

Still Tom-san was a great sempai to him, always patient and caring.

If only Shizuo had followed him in his high school instead of remaining to Raijin his life might have ended up differently…

Luckily a month after that even Shinra and Celty returned finally things had started to look up.

Very slowly, but still everything got better.

Celty was also by his side again to support and guide him with her kind words and her gentle nature. She remained his best friend despite everything and to Shizuo she was the purest person out of all, even though technically she wasn’t even a person. Did that make sense?

And Shinra surprisingly had been one of the people who had clang to him almost desperately when he returned from his early honeymoon with Celty. He constantly tried to involve him in whatever, reminding him of happier times and encouraging him to make new memories together. These last few years Shinra came up with all sorts of things to lift his spirits and offer him new ‘normal people experiences’ as he put it, so him and Shizuo could become a bit more ‘ordinary’. Shizuo couldn’t follow the doctor’s logic at that point -not that he ever could- so he just went along with whatever Shinra wanted. It was easier that way anyways.

Shizuo was also pretty sure that Shinra tampered with his milk and food on occasions though. He had seen him once, while returning from the toilet, pouring some sort of white powder in his milkshake while Celty was not with them. Strangely enough, Shizuo was not alarmed but had recognized that as what it really was -this kind of manipulative care Shinra showed to those he considered important to him.

It was both a bit creepy and scary but it was care nonetheless, that Shizuo had understood and appreciated.

Besides if Shinra had decided he was worth the trouble, Shizuo decided not to let him down -again.

He had walked to the doctor grabbed the milkshake as casually as he could so he didn’t give away that he had seen the other man mess with it and drunk it to the last drop.

He wasn’t sure what Shinra had put in it but if it would help him clear his head, he hoped the doctor gave him more in the future.

Honestly, Shizuo had been surprised the other bothered so much with him in the first place. He had always known that Izaya was probably the dearest person to Shinra -after Celty of course- for whatever reason, but seeing the way the doctor was invested in him and never once blamed him for anything, always acting like nothing was wrong, he had realized he also occupied quite a space in Shinra’s heart.

Knowing that the doctor would stick with him no matter how bad he got was sort of a reassurance that things would get better for him, manipulation included or not he didn’t give a fuck. He would gladly gulp down whatever Shinra tried to trick him into swallowing as long as it made the doctor happy. If it made Shizuo function properly too that was an added bonus.
The constant support from his surroundings, the fact that Shinra didn’t appear to hate him and cut contact with him upon his return, that Celty was back to support him, that Kasuka came back for a while close to a year after the fight and they got to spend time together, that Tom-san was still there patient and understanding as ever and that Shizuo himself had now the responsibility to protect Mairu and Kururi made him finally realize how lucky he was. How grateful he should be for his life.

Because for every difficulty he had face, there was someone out there who had it ten times worse.

He knew he couldn’t help the turmoil of dark feelings and thoughts that threatened his sanity but still he couldn’t help but feel a bit guilty for acting like he was being ungrateful.

He had never seen it before but he could now. He was never alone even if it felt like that to him. And even if not everyone knew his true self, there were still people who wanted to, as long as he let them in.

The realization that there were also people out there who truly had no one by their side was scary.

He could relate to them, because he had perceived himself one of them for so long but he had finally understood that he had been very lucky in his life so far. He didn’t have much, but there were others who had nothing.

It was weird that his fight with Izaya had opened his eyes to things like that in the end.

He didn’t know if he would have seen his life from this new perspective had that pest not gone completely crazy.

He was not thankful for that though.

He still had so much pain and self-loathing to deal with, not to mention the guilt, that he though it would take him three lives to heal himself.

But at least he was a bit stronger that he gave himself credit for.

So, he had started making more effort to control himself. To see his friends more. To do well in his job, to avoid fights and cause the least damage possible to the city. To become a better person in general. Kinder, more patient.

He took better care of himself and his needs too and made great efforts to accept that night and Izaya’s ghost in his life.

And then just like that it had started getting easier. Better.

His friendships grew stronger, he had more fun going along with Shinra’s crazy shit than before, his temper improved considerably though he still had his bad moments, he reduced smoking quit a lot and even had succeeded to pay off some of his debt! Still he would need close to a decade to pay back for everything he had destroyed if he still wanted to be able to afford food and pay his rent, but suddenly it didn’t seem so impossible anymore!

Nowadays he also tried to appear more approachable to people and at his non-working days and during the weekends he wore normal clothing. That could still be a disaster at times when his temper got the better of him but, these days he would break a glass instead of a table or a bench instead of wall.

Even in his work he did better. He got a slight raise and even was encouraged to collect debts on his own in a somewhat of a probation period. He had passed surprisingly, though not with flying colors.
and was even assigned debt-collecting on his own in some new wards in Tokyo. Apart from Shinjuku, Shibuya and Toshima where he still worked with Tom-san as they were the more “dangerous zones”, Chuo, Minato and Chiyoda were listed as the areas he was to debt-collect on his own.

Another area that showed an improvement lately had been his almost completely vanished sex drive. He always had a high libido, being a young healthy man, however the past years had barely been in the mood to touch himself.

He had lost the will to do so, same with the will to eat or the one to work.

But now it was returning full force and he couldn’t deny that he was happy with that.

Masturbation was one of his favorite habits in the past.

Though to Shizuo it was less about sexual pleasure and more about fighting the loneliness in his heart.

He never used it as means of stress relief from his anger either.

In his mind it was an activity very connected to the one unknown person who would be his life-long partner one day.

Because to Shizuo sex and love went hand in hand. That was absolute in his mind.

Cheesy as it sounded, he didn’t care because even though he wasn’t a hopeless romantic, he was a bit of a romantic still.

He believed that there is one person for everyone and that one was supposed to be with that person and only that to be happy forever.

Something like what one would call a soulmate probably?

Someone to love you unconditionally, to support you and protect you with everything they have, while you would try to do your absolute best to return all those sentiments, love, care and support tenfold.

Someone who could never betray you or hurt you intentionally and you would never betray or hurt either in any way, shape or form. Ever.

Someone to trust more than you trust yourself. Someone to love as much as yourself, maybe more if possible.

He never wished for something as much as for having such a love in his life.

All he wanted was a kind and gentle individual. Pure-hearted and well -good!

At least that’s how he used to view it because he had accepted long ago that with his anger issues and most importantly his destructive strength no one would trust them enough with their hearts, let alone their bodies!

All in honest he wouldn’t trust himself either not to hurt any partner of his, even accidentally, in the heat of the moment. If he just applied too much pressure on a body, he could definitely break it. Therefore, if he ever were to be with someone, he was really scared that they would have to deal with a lot of discomfort and that at times they would be distrustful or scared of allowing him access
to their bodies and to Shizuo both things made any thought of being intimate with another feel like
potential abuse from his part, no matter how unintentional.

That was also one of his biggest fears. In fact he had been so terrified of something like that
happening that he closed off his heart even if deep down he always wished for the opposite, and so
he had never felt any sort of attraction towards anyone since he was a child and he hurt that beautiful
kind lady. That also meant that he had never touched anyone else either. He was 28 and he hadn’t
even had his first kiss yet! That though always made him blush as nicely as a field of angry red
tomatoes.

So eventually he had come to terms with his inevitable loneliness and accepted that too, even if his
heart rebelled against his mind at times.

He had decided these last years that he should go less with his gut and more with his brain when it
came to people so not another impulsive mistake of his would not potentially condemn him in
another decade of shit! Better safe than sorry, wasn’t that what they said?

But still… there was no harm to fantasizing a bit about it -about was it? About this faceless and
nameless ethereal woman that was his soulmate and one day if he was lucky enough he would start a
family with?

There was no harm in chasing some of his loneliness away with thoughts of a nameless lover, right?

So, he refused to taint this activity with his anger issues or his other worries.

And now that his day had been relatively good, that he had managed to stay calm and collected all
day and then relaxed in the comfortable familiarity of Shinra and Celty’s home which was a great
epilogue to his peaceful day, he was determined to make the most of his night too.

‘*God it had been so fucking long!*’

When was the last time he had done it? It felt like years! It probably was years too!

He was a bit too edger but who could blame him?

He walked straight to his single bed and stripped carefully of his uniform despite the anticipation
coiling in his belly.

After he was left in his underwear, he took care folding the clothes and putting them on the chair
next to the window.

He closed the drapes and lied on his bed getting comfortable.

*Shit! The alarm!*

He grabbed his phone set the alarm clock for the next morning and threw it again on the bedside
table. He didn’t trust himself to be able to think of anything else after he was done.

Now he was ready to focus solemnly at the task at hand- literally and figuratively.

He palmed himself lightly over his boxer shorts and closed his eyes concentrating only on the
stimulation of his neither regions.

He wanted this to last as long as possible, be as good as possible. He needed it so much!

He felt himself grow and stiffen through the soft cotton fabric, his breath getting shallower, his body
growing hotter and he couldn’t help the urge to thrust his hips towards his palm impatiently.

‘Feels good’

He reached for the first drawer at his bedside table again with his free hand trembling in anticipation, hitting accidentally the tissue box next to the small lamp.

He staffed his hand in the drawer and searched blindly for the plastic bottle all the while rutting in his other palm.

He grabbed something else instead. It wasn’t the bottle -that was something hard and cold, wooden and metallic instead of plastic and cool and squishy. It didn’t register with his brain though what could it be at the time and he kept messing with the things there. He had so much random stuff in there.

After a second or two of blind exploration he finally grabbled the bottle of lube, closed the drawer with a light hit and then opened the lid and purred some of the slippery contents quickly to the hand that he had used to provide some friction until that point.

He rubbed his fingers together in his palm to warm the oily substance a bit and with the other hand he lowered his underwear to free his aching erection.

A shiver went thought his body the moment his hardness sprung free from its confinements and the cool air of the room came in contact with his burning flesh.

He wouldn’t last long, he could tell already.

When he finally closed his fist around himself, he couldn’t help the small moan that left his lips much less that he could the arch of his back to bring himself closer to the tightness of his hand.

‘So, so good’

He started pumping his fist slowly up and down his shaft in a light grip to build the sensation more for a while longer, squeezing a tiny bit more whenever his fist was reaching the tip which had already started to leak a few pearly white drops of precum in satisfaction.

Soon though his ministrations became the tiniest bit rougher and faster, the pressure increased but not too much.

He was never one to enjoy a death grip. Too much pressure in Shizuo’s head meant resistance and resistance clashed with what the feelings he was trying to recreate every time he touched himself.

He didn’t have any sort of other fantasy regarding anything, whether that was his partners appearance, the sex position, the setting of the act-nothing really.

His one and only fantasy was that he was as deep inside his partner’s willing body as she would allow him and was comfortable with. That he could make love to her slowly and leisurely, with long, deep thrusts and barely enough strength for her to feel him properly within her and him to enjoy the friction of her hot, slippery tightness.

Because that’s probably how it would feel to be inside a woman- how she would feel around him if she excited -his soulmate, he had always thought.

He didn’t need hard or fast. Anything that could harm her unintentionally if he wasn’t in control of his pleasure. And through the years he had trained his body to respond to that simplicity. Just that.
Slightly tight and wet. Pliant and soft. Accepting, trusting and unafraid.

Just this feeling of acceptance and completeness.

He was reaching his pick now, lost in his little fantasy. His wrist working tirelessly up and down faster and faster, his hips raising from the bed like they had a mind of their own and snapping towards his fist to drive him harder to the ring of flesh, his breathing hard and with too many seconds separating one breath from another. The carefully designed rhythm he had trained himself to set and enjoy had long been forgotten and replaced by unpracticed and unrestrained movements.

It didn’t matter though because at the end he was alone like always. She wasn’t really there to risk hurting.

And maybe if she was, she would be also reaching her pick like him -too much pleasure to fear.

Just before he came Shizuo squeezed himself hard once and spilled his release with a broken sob all over his stomach and chest.

That final squeeze had a different meaning that is why it was always more insistent than the moderate tightness he used during all the other time of his session. This squeeze meant in his fantasy that she had come too, that he had satisfied her like a lover should -the pleasure was mutual and shared.

He tried to ignore the feeling of his sperm cooling and crusting on his exhausted body.

He wanted to prolong the lie a bit longer. To ignore the feeling of loneliness a few seconds more.

In his fantasy it wouldn’t be like that. He would release inside her to offer her all of his pleasure and he would stay within her as long as she allowed him afterwards to keep them connected, till his manhood softened to the point that he wouldn’t be able to do so.

There would be no cold air hitting his body afterwards, only a pair of soft arms encircling him to keep him close and a soft body beneath his own to share their warmth.

‘It would be so much better with you.’

With a disorientated brain and a body shutting down from exhaustion and too much pleasure he grabbed a tissue to messily wipe his release as good as he could and got beneath his bed covers.

He would shower in the morning.

Maybe if his mood would be good and he was relaxed he could masturbate again too tomorrow night.

Just as he was about to pass out he heard it.

It was there in his head; loud, obnoxious and evil as always!

That shrill and cold laugh that made his relaxed muscles tense suddenly and his sweaty body shiver like he was hit by a gust of wind despite the covers being warn and comfortable.

And then: ‘Ts ts! Such a shameless uncontrollable beast you are! But it’s okay, because who would want a monster like you..Ne~, Shizu-chan?’

Of course that bastard Izaya would come and tear him to pieces now of all times! He would have such a laugh if he knew what a pitiful creature Shizuo truly was beneath all that strength and anger.
He closed his eyes with one last though:

‘Damn. I didn’t break my record.’

Chapter End Notes

Is it just me or each chapter I write gets longer than the previous one?:P

Also I have my reasons for Shizuo and Izaya identifying as straight at this point so bear with me please. I take pride to my overanalytical brain and as I’ve said before I like to explore perspectives and personalities from all possible angles and I do not do anything by chance! I could get into more detail but I’m starting to think I might spoil my plot if I keep explaining my reasoning about the character’s thinking processes or actions in the End Notes, because one way or the other their personalities are still plot points!

One thing I want to pour some light on though in case it seems contradicting: We saw Shinra in ch5 to feel that he is shrugging the issue of the last fight off instead of addressing the matter to Shizuo thinking his approach does more bad than good. Here we see Shizuo to be grateful to Shinra for not addressing the fight and instead it is one factor that helps him feel better and cared for.

In this fiction there will be such contradictions, simply because each person approaches a matter from their own angle for their own reasons therefore leading to different results. They are all humans after all! ;p

Finally feel free to comment if you want to ask me anything or simply discuss Shizaya (^_^)
Chapter 9

Hello Everyone! :) 
I'm back and ready to upload my massive belated New Year's special chapter! 
I hope you will enjoy it!-I certainly had a lot of fun writing it!! :) 
I got so into it that I accidentally wished a friend of mine Happy New Year yesterday! XD
This chapter has both Izaya and Shizuo's POVs.
I tried to make a tribute to Japanese New Year's Eve celebrations with some mention's to New Year's Day customs too.
I have learned quite a lot about them and the whole process was incredibly educational!
I wanted to include many more stuff but I feared I will overload is!
Also this time I would like to thank very much @Ayokaya since she offered me great help these days regarding canon material I had no access to! :) <3 Also I haven't written yet to the blog because I was too focused on working on this chapter but I will do so these days! :) 
I am really amazed and very surprised to see that there are people willing to invest their time to offer me assistance with several things regarding this fiction and I am incredibly grateful to all of you! <3
Finally, I will try to upload the next chapter next month -I haven't worked much into it but I have to take a small break because I could not really focus on anything other than this fiction lately! :P
Ps: I hope the changing POVs won't makes it difficult to follow. I thought It would be fun to mix both POVs since both celebrations take place at the same time :P

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Today was a special day!

It was the first New Year’s Eve he was going to celebrate with anyone other than himself!

The last time it had happened it was probably around the time he left his family house in high-school.

His parents would send him and his sisters’ money to buy gifts from them and Nengajo -New Year’s cards - to wish them well and notify them that indeed they were still alive and kicking wherever their job had taken them and that they hadn’t forgotten they had children yet.

They would usually write them something like:

“Happy New Year kids! Sorry we couldn’t make it again this time. We look forward to our contact together again this year! Stay well-behaved and studious! And buy something nice from us, okay? Love, Mom & Dad”.

‘What contact? You are never here! We hardly even talk as it is!’

He didn’t blame his mom and dad, he really didn’t! They had things the other kids envied and a really nice house because they worked so hard! But still -it would be nice to be all five of them every now and again, like a family.
That’s how he used to think when he was younger, but he’d always keep his thoughts to himself. He didn’t want to upset his parents with being ungrateful nor the twins. They had cried a couple of times in the past when they’d hear their parents wouldn’t come for the holidays.

So, he always tried to act all grateful and excited instead and put on a façade. He watched stupid shows with the twins and ate a fancy dinner which he had bought, because he didn’t know how to cook very good yet and they wrote cards back to their parents or played with the twins’ toys the three of them.

Because he had to take responsibility; because he had wanted to be a good child.

Oh, how well he understood what ‘take responsibility’ meant.

Maybe that’s why as an adult he had grown to despise this phrase so badly.

Later, he had finally decided that humans are either charming or tedious.

And his family certainly wasn’t charming.

So, he stopped going to extremes for them. They weren’t special after all, they were just humans and he was above humanity. He wouldn’t love anyone in a special way and wouldn’t go out of his way to please anyone anymore- it wasn’t fair for the other humans who didn’t get to enjoy the privilege of his superior godly love!

He would prefer to stay by himself during holidays and work or just mess with his humans.

He hadn’t celebrated New Year’s Eve or any other holiday for over a decade.

So, now that he was a god who had fallen from grace and had slowly gotten over his loss, now that he was trying to reach back towards the humanity he had abandoned and now that being almost-human didn’t look like such a miserable option anymore as it had been in the past, it was about time to celebrate New Year’s Eve!

All in honest he was sort of forced into celebrating -which wasn’t completely unexpected considering who his boss was, but he would lie if he said that he wasn’t even a little bit happy he was dragged into it, or that he wasn’t anticipating the day the moment the not-really-suggestion left Kato-san’s mouth.

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It was a quiet Tuesday morning almost two weeks before the holiday season Managing Director Kato Kioshi barged into the Front-Page Editor’s office of Japan’s Times in Chiyoda, Tokyo like a hurricane was about to strike.

“Izaya-kuuuun!”

Izaya, who until this point had been very immersed in the latest article he was reviewing at the time, something about how the latest political affairs of Japan with the west would affect the investments in the country’s major industries -which was very tricky to edit properly because: 1. It was in English and 2. It was full of business terms some of which Izaya had never encountered before therefore he had to do additional research and 3. His eyes were growing blurry whenever he was in front of a computer screen for long nowadays, giving him a headache, therefore he needed absolute silence.

-Thank you very much Kato-san!- flinched so hard he almost jumped to the ceiling from the sudden noise of the door opening in combination with boss-san’s loud yell.
“Wh-what is it Kato-san?” he squealed half in panic half in annoyance.

“Izaya-kun is everything okay? You look a bit fidgety..” the other man wondered scratching his chin.

“Who wouldn’t be fidgety when it comes to you? You sure are energetic for your age Boss-san, you almost gave me a heart attack~” Izaya whined indignantly.

“Now-now, stop being a whiney brat, it’s something really important!” Kato-san said getting into the office and closing the office door and getting comfortable in the chair opposite from Izaya’s.

“New Year’s Eve or New Yea’s Day?” Kato-san asked patting both of his chubby knees with his palms a few times, oozing excitement.

“What?”

Izaya would have caught up must faster if it wasn’t for his headache that morning.

“Mayumi-chan and I want to cordially invite you to spend whichever day you want with us! You’ve yet to see our house and we’ve already been at your place when we did the move. It’s about time you visit!”

“We’ve only been in Tokyo for a month Boss!” Izaya said in amusement and both men noticed that he had yet to decline the invitation, even though neither commented on that.

“Come on Izaya-kun say yes, we both know you like seeing Mayumi-chan putting me in my place!”

“Can’t really deny that. It’s no fun if I’m the only one getting abused all the time~!”

“Great! So New Year’s Eve it is!”

“Eh? I thought I got to choose now, didn’t I?”

“You were late!”

“I’m starting to think you wanted me to come to Tokyo to order me around, Kato-san~.”

“There you have your answer! Oh! And don’t expect to return home that night!” he winked at him.

“Ehhh? Are you going to kill me on New Year’s Eve, Kato-san? So heartless~!”

“That could be negotiated if you check the article that intern from Todai is working on about the Asian Cup semifinals. I know a disaster when I see one!”

“You are being too hard on interns Kato-san, caught them some slack before all of them quit and you force me do their work too, please~?”

“We cannot leave them unmotivated Izaya-kun! See how far you’ve got already!”

“I’m sorry to burst your bubble but that reverse phycology of yours Boss-san, really works only on me for some inexplicable reason..”

“If you want great, you have to be great, my boy! Now I’ll be on my way-meeting with the higher-ups. I only dropped by because I couldn’t wait till the lunch break! See you then, kay?”

“Hai, Kato-san!”
While he was at the door the man turned to take a last look on his employee who was back blinking at his computer screen.

“One last thing Izaya-kun.”

“Hm?”

“Expect Secretary Hora to be here within the next 10 minutes from the moment I leave this office. She will bring you something for that headache of yours”.

“Eh-?”

“As if I wouldn’t notice you blinking like a fish since I walked in! You are not perceptive, I’ve told you enough times already! Well, later Izaya-kun!”

And that’s how Orihara Izaya was forced to be celebrating New Year’s Eve after more than a decade. He wouldn’t be alone the holidays after what seemed like forever! He was invited to do so!

His headache had eased considerably and his mood had lightened up by the time Hora-san knocked to his office door to leave him the bottle of pain killers and a glass of water on his desk and bow respectfully to him during her exit.

He checked his watch.

It was 5 minutes since the moment Boss-san had left his office.

He wasn’t sure if she was that fast because she understood Kato-san’s reverse phycology methods as well, or because she was just terrified she would lose her job as the old guys secretary if she wasn’t “great”.

It didn’t really matter, but he hoped it was the second, because then it would be amusing to watch!

Heiwajima Shizuo was currently on his way to the Kishitani/Sturluson residence.

He had to be there by six thirty precisely, because he wouldn’t hear the end of Shinra’s whining if he wasn’t on time.

This time of the year always got Shinra exited!!

Actually everything got Shinra exited which could be a bit much at times!

However today it was a special occasion!

It was New Year’s Eve!

That’s why he had to be there by half past six maximum as the doctor had said, since Celty wanted to watch the “Kohaku uta gassen” that would air on TV at quarter past seven with everyone, but they needed a bit of time beforehand to gather and get everything ready.

Shizuo was currently armed with a 2 liters of beer -his contribution for the day since everyone had to bring something.

He wasn’t sure what else to get but he had thought everyone would enjoy booze -apart from himself that is since he wasn’t much of a drinker, not to mention beer was fucking bitter.
He had a slight feeling he would regret this contribution though and he should have brought something safer -for his mental health that is- instead.

Anyways, this year again Shinra and Celty had decided to throw a Bonenkai Party.

It was a nice and positive way to end the year so it really didn’t take any convincing for Shizuo to join them.

Last year he had almost missed it since his spirits were a bit low and all, but the doctor had dropped by at his place and after he had almost knocked down his door to force him to open it. After that, he had literally dragged him out of his house acting particularly obnoxious! He didn’t want a repeat performance of that, did he?

However, this year things turned out to be much simpler luckily.

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“Ne, Shizuo-kun?”

”Hm?”

Shizuo replied a bit absorbed by the movie they were watching.

They were currently sitting on the couch bowls of snacks and glasses of refreshments for him and Shinra -Celty had no way to eat with her being headless and all-that Shizuo had brought as a thanks for the invitation.

His best friend was sitting in between the two men, hiding the front of her helmet with a pillow.

They had been watching a super hero movie this time but it had some intergalactic battles that further convinced Celty of alien life’s existence which had her a bit on the edge.

“How about we throw a Bonekai Party this year?” the doctor asked enthusiastically and literally out of the blue.

“You asked me the same thing last year too Shinra.”

“But this time it’s different! It’s for this year!”

“…”

“So, how about it?” Shinra pressured.

“Do whatever you want.”

“Shizuo-kun- That’s not fair..!” Shinra was pouting.

He felt Celty softly tagging his shirt sleeve then and looked down to her PDA. He hadn’t even seen her reaching for it.

[ It will be nice to leave the old year's worries and troubles behind with a party. Say you’ll come, we want you there! :) ]

He wasn’t against the idea, really, he was just too immersed in the space battle.

Still, he smiled at her and lightly knocked on her helmet, taking his attention from the screen for a
“I’ll be there” He told her.

“So you’re coming? Man, this year it was easy to persuade you! You are so stubborn at times Shinzu-kun!”

Shinra scolded him.

‘Look who’s talking!’

“I’m coming, I’m coming! Now will you let me watch the damn movie?”

“Yay! You heard that Celtyyy? We have to make preparations and everything!”

‘We still have two weeks, what’s the hurry?’ Shizuo had thought but didn’t mention anything for fear it would send the other man in a rant.

Shinra had jumped suddenly towards Celty to hug her who was startled, thinking she was being attacked by an alien probably since she punched him in reflex when he felt him touching her earning a pained: “Celtyyy~!”.

Once she realized she hit him though, she cuddled against him rubbing her helmet against the doctor’s chest like a cat for apology. She still held the pillow though.

Shizuo couldn’t help but laugh seeing them.

And that’s how he was currently walking down the roads to Ikebukuro.

He passed again that pedestrian cross to leave the tiger lily he had picked up for the day at its usual spot, but since he was in a bit of a hurry, he didn’t think too much of it.

Things were still calm, even the flea in his head was less annoying lately.

It didn’t make his presence known as often.

When it did it was pure evil as always, but on occasion it just stayed quiet and was just there. Existing and observing -he could feel its eyes on him at such moments- but leaving him alone mostly, unless Shizuo did something that the pest deemed stupid or shameful and then obviously it wouldn’t shut up about it.

Thankfully his mind was still peaceful by the time he had reached Celty and Shinra’s house.

He rang the bell to alert them and checked with the time on his phone screen.

‘Good, six twenty. Shinra won’t pester me!’

Once he was let in he called for the lift to take him on the top floor.

He found the door open, Celty being there in her usual attire and waited for his approach.

They hugged each other and stayed like that for a few seconds to take some of the comfort you share with your dearest friends even at the times you don’t really need it.

“You’ve been good?” Shizuo smiled at her giving him the bag with the booze.
She nodded her helmet and then motioned with her yellow helmet towards him.

“I’m good too. Is anyone else here yet?”

She nodded again and took his arm with her free hand to lead him inside the apartment.

“Shizuo-kun! Everyone, my favorite guest has arrived!”

Shinra jumped onto him straight away encircling him in what was a weaker version of a bear hug.

Celty hit him on the head waving her finger in his face accusatory.

“Come on now Celty~ They already that Shizuo-kun is my favorite, why would it be impolite to say so in their faces?”

Shinra was whining chasing after a frustrated Celty, while Shizuo took his time to take a look around.

He could see that apparently almost everyone had decided to bring alcohol if the dozens of bottles and cans on the kitchen counter was any indication.

‘This will be a rough night!’

He walked towards the living room to greet properly the other guest who -thanks to Shinra of course-have already noticed his arrival.

Kadota and the van gang were there like every year, Shinra’s weirdo of a father wearing that gas mask as always and his foreigner wife -he though they were still in America, the two former high schoolers that were a couple and were acquaintances of Celty’s and-

“Shizuo-saan!”

He that voice very well.

“Mairu, Kururi.”

“Hello” came Kururi’s voice.

“It’s been a while! Did you ask Yuhei-san to meet us this time?”

He decided to ignore the part about Kasuka since he wasn’t really going to do so -Kasuka was a very busy person.

“Have you too been well? You didn’t get in any trouble lately?”

“Off course not Shizuo-san, you know us!”

‘That’s why I am worried!’

“Oh! We made matcha flavored mochis and brought for everyone! Come on, you have to be the first one to try! We waited for you to arrive before we gave any to the others!”

“Oh! Em..Thanks. Just give me a second to say hi to everyone first okay?”

“Hai~!/Hai.” they replied in synch.

They still followed him into the living room, never leaving his arms free and leached to him during
his greeting of their other acquaintances.

“Yo!” Shizuo said to Kadota and his gang.

“It’s been a while.” Kadota replied calmly while the otaku duo made a show waving at him and yelling “Shizuo-san hello!” Saburo was quiet at least!

He greeted politely the campus couple and bowed a bit to Shinra’s father and step-mother as it was respectful, though he refrained from approaching them.

He didn’t want Shinra’s dad to beg to dissect him again this year once he got drunk, which he was quite sure would happen sooner or later.

If one thing this house didn’t miss right now, that was booze!

He could see quite alarmed that the van gang had dived straight to it already and was already worried about what would happen. It wasn’t even seven for crying out loud!

The twins put him down on a chair at the abjointed dining room, Kururi taking her place on his one side while Mairu run to the kitchen where Shinra and Celty were currently arranging the various foods.

She returned with a tissue with a pale green mochi on top and took a seat on his other side bringing her chair as close as possible to his own.

“Come on Shizuo-san! Try it!” she pressed.

Shizuo let an exhale and bit into the squishy thing.

‘Fuck, matcha flavored they’d said before. It’s bitter!’

“Sooso?”

“It’s good.” He said simply and hoped his face didn’t show his immediate need for water to wash away the bitterness.

While the flavor was definitely not to his liking the texture and shape it were correct.

If they had chosen another flavor, he was sure he’d love them.

“Where did you learn to make mochis from anyways?” he asked to distract them a bit from his struggle to eat the whole bitter desert.

“Secret.” Kururi replied putting her pointer finger in front of her lips.

“That’s right! But mochis aren’t that difficult to make anyways, Shizuo-san!”

Izaya was currently ridding the train to Bunkyo, where Boss-san and Mayumi-san resided.

He was a bit nervous since he wasn’t used to being around people in such occasions that humans deemed important so he wasn’t sure about a lot of things. Was he considered too casual or he was acceptable for the occasion? Would they like what he got them? Would they give him something also? What would he do if they did? Would he be sad if they didn’t? How should he react if he didn’t like it?
He was really terrible at those normal human things.

It was a good thing he had seen Mayumi-san quite a lot since that first lunch so he had grown more familiar with her and had accepted her gentle presence as an extent of his friendship with Kato-san.

He had grown to like her also though, because despite her reserved and a bit distant nature she felt genuine towards him and lots of times she had gone out of her way to make sure he felt comfortable -even scolding Kato-san in front of him on occasion from fear his bossy ways were too much for Izaya to deal with-they really weren’t but most often than not she didn’t fully believed him when he told her that.

Once he wheeled his way out of the station, he saw his boss standing on the opposite site of the road dressed up with as many layers as an onion, waving at him excitedly.

He smiled back while waiting at the pedestrian cross and went back rolling the wheels of his chair to reach his elder at the other side of the road once the light for the pedestrians became green.

“Izaya-kun konichiwa!”

“Konichiwa Boss-san!”

“I didn’t bring the car since the house is barely 15 minutes away and it’s not very cold. I hope that’s okay”.

“Hai! No need to worry boss, I have done longer distances with my loyal wheelchair!”

“How was your trip boy? It is pretty far to get to Bunkyo from Edogawa after all!”

“No need to worry Kato-san! Sure, the train ride was a bit hectic with so many humans and I almost got a lap full of a lady your age but I arrived in one piece, didn’t I?” Izaya grinned certain that he’d get a nice reaction with his little comment.

“Izaya-kun when you reach my years, you’d wish to have this wisdom-” he said pointing his temple “-let alone this body structure-” said now pointing his big belly “-and we both know it!” grinning in the end.

They kept at it a bit more till the time they reached the elderly couple’s new house.

Mayumi-san must have heard the bickering from miles away and she was waiting at the door smiling.

“Izaya-kun, it’s so nice to have you join us today!” she said bend down a bit to warp her arms around him lightly.

The first time she had done it, months ago, he had stiffened a bit not used to being hugged.

His sisters hugged him once in a while so he wasn’t completely unfamiliar with the feeling but even when they did it he was always a bit caught off guard.

This time he anticipated it though and while he did not return it, he allowed his hand to rest for a second or two on her waste and pushed his body a bit closer to hers to show her the sentiment was reciprocated.

When they went inside, he noticed two things at one.

First of all was the effort they had obviously the elderly had put some effort to decorate its house. He
had seen the Shimezakari hanging over the door—a sort of good luck charm for protection that was made of straw ropes decorated with various objects like charms, pines and one single bitter orange, as well as the Kadomatu—the three bamboo sticks that were tight together with pine branches and sprays of plum trees for godly protection being placed by the entrance.

He found it cute that Kato-san and Mayumi-san were traditional people and despite how badly the non-existent gods have wronged them years ago they still believed in their protection. He’d call any other humans stupid, but he was bias when it came to these two particular humans so the only word, he could describe them with was simply and honesty that: cute.

The second thing he noticed was that they were the two pairs of similar male dark colored slippers at the door, one a bit worn and the other new.

Mayumi-san’s feet were engulfed by her own pink ones. Kato-san went straight for the worn black ones.

Izaya understood the untold invitation—he guessed this was Mayumi-chan’s initiative for it was so subtle. If it was purely Kato-san’s the other would have said so in his face the moment he stepped into the house.

Izaya bent a bit more on his chair to reach to untie the laces of his shoes and take them off. Then he reached for the blue slippers.

He saw the old woman beaming at him and he knew his assumption had been correct.

“How about I go make us all some tea? Izaya-kun, give me your things and I’ll take them inside” Boss-san offered when they were finally at the living room. Izaya slipped out of his coat and then wheelchair with little effort and managed to rearrange himself on the sofa. Then he passed his coat and the beautiful paper bag he carried to the other. While Kato-san headed to the kitchen Mayumi-san slipped next to Izaya.

“Izaya-kun, I hope you will enjoy yourself today. Honestly, I am not sure what you’d like to do since Kioshi is always forcing you tag along with his ideas or how you were used to celebrate in the past but I want you today at least to feel completely at home, okay?”

Wow! This was the most Mayumi-san had spoken at a time since he had met her! Usually she was very subdued and gave off a vibe similar to Kururi’s but much more normal since she at least formed full sentences and her face wasn’t as expressionless as his little sister’s.

Maybe coming to Tokyo was indeed a wise decision.

Sure, the butsudan was still there with Hideki-kun’s picture and all the offerings and candlesticks that could fit onto it, how could he miss it that first time still seemed impossible considering its size, but at least Mayumi-san didn’t look like living dead now. Maybe it was simply the occasion though. He would have to observe her more to decide.

“Rest assured Kato-san is not dragging me along to his antics, Mayumi-san. The only thing he really drags me along for is to eat jjajangmyeon every Friday, but after so long I’ve grown to like it.” He joked a bit and continued “Besides Kato-san has been very good to me—both of you. Also, thank you for including me today and please don’t worry about it too much. I haven’t celebrated for a while now so I think I will be fine with everything really.”

Izaya had felt from the moment he had first seen her that the woman was very socially awkward, not unlike himself, so he could relate to her a bit and knew the best approach for people like her—like
himself- was to not overwhelm them and use polite assurances instead to make them feel at ease.

That’s why it was still a mystery too him how he had gotten so attached to her husband -let alone how she had gotten attached to her husband! But on the other hand, he had also grown attached to Shinra so maybe something in his notion was misplaced and people like Mayumi-chan and himself needed loud and obnoxious individuals to force them out of their shells?

“Thank you for your reassurances Izaya-kun. You are such a sweet boy” she touched his arm a bit bending her head to the side as she smiled.

He felt a bit guilty at that point and averted his gaze. He always did that when the couple praised him for things like him being sweet or kind or good.

Mayumi-san kept going thankfully, so he didn’t have time to feel too awkward.

“The only thing I’ve really prepared is food- ” she said a bit bashful “-but I’m confident you’ll enjoy that part” she suddenly giggled a bit which he didn’t expect.

“I’m sure everything will be lovely!” he reassured her once again.

“You know, I wanted to make some Kagamimochi today too to put them in the family altar, but I didn’t have the time” she looked a bit wistful as if making Kagamimochi was something necessary. For her maybe it was.

Kagamimochi…they weren’t much different from the actual mochi, but they served a somewhat different purpose. They were supposed to be decorative and larger than the mochi they ate as desert and had usually some filling inside, though they could afterwards be added in ozoni- rice cake soup.

He had never made a Kagamimochi himself but he had made mochi before. It was fairly simple actually.

Yes, Orihara Izaya ex-best informant in Tokyo and former god used to make mochi at a period of his life.

Raising Mairu and Kururi at such a young age had graced him with a bunch of “talents” that would make the best housewife turn green with envy and swallow her apron!

He wasn’t sure why he suggested what he ended up suggesting actually: to make her happy, to see Boss-san freaking out, because making mochi brought back memories that weren’t completely terrible?

Must be a reason out of everything?

“Ne, Mayumi-san? I know we are not supposed to make decorations on New Year’s Eve being bad luck and all” he knew had to take into consideration the traditions as he voiced his suggestion to her “but, if you want to we can make some mochi together after the tea. It’s still seven so we still have a lot of time to do lots of things right?”

Izaya would swear afterwards he had never seen Mayumi-san’s eyes look so big and her timid smile shaping into a massive grin! He could see an enthusiasm there that reminded him a bit of Kato-san, though not nearly as obnoxious!

“Izaya-kun! Would you really do that?” she grasped both his hands looking at him with a determination as if they were speaking of a life and death matter rather than cooking mochis.
“It would be a pleasure Mayumi-san! If Kato-san agrees too we can start soon!”

“Oh, he will agree!” she said with such a tone on finality Izaya could see that unintentionally he had gotten her all fired up which was very interesting! This reaction was sure not expected.

He had also realized at the times he had seen the couple together that Mayumi-san was probably the one who was bossing around Kato-san - who was bossing around him as an extent.

‘What an exciting dynamic we have here!’ he couldn’t help but think amused.

He had seen a lot of exciting dynamics but this one was his favorite because for the first time ever he was actually an active part of a dynamic, not just a spectator.

That moment Kato-san arrived holding a tray with a steaming tea pot and three cups.

“What got you two so thrilled?” he asked raising a thick gray eyebrow.

“We are making Kagamimochi!” Mayumi-san announced excitedly.

“Now?” the old boss exclaimed and Izaya could swear that was the first time he had seen the other sweat drop since the moment they’d met!

“Let’s do our best, Boss-san!” came Izaya’s input.

Kato-san looked at him accusatory and a bit exasperated but Izaya could tell from the way his lips were trembling to change from a downwards to the opposite direction that he secretly was happy maybe even a bit proud for Izaya for stirring up Mayumi-chan.

After they drunk their tea and enjoyed a light hearted conversation regarding their new lives in Tokyo, their inability to find good jajangmeyon so far, the gossip from the Japan Times and the neighborhood Kato-san had already discovered and more, Mayumi-san took their glasses to the kitchen announcing that she would bring the mochi ingredients in the dining room for them to start.

The moment she left Izaya felt Kato-san’s palm on his head, petting his hair like he was a small kid.

That was also a bit unexpected. It was another way he wasn’t used to be touched, actually no one had ever stroked his head in such a way at least as far as his memories went.

“Izaya-kun. Thank you for being good to Mayumi-chan.”

“It’s nothing. I just felt like making mochi really..” he said in embarrassment.

Man, he was such a child sometimes!

Still, knowing he had made the older man proud was making him a bit warm inside.

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“Everyone!” Shinra’s voice interrupted all the chatter around the apartment.

“It’s getting close to seven fifteen so how about we set the table and enjoy our food while watching Kōhaku Uta Gassen? In case you didn’t know, it’s my darling Celty’s favorite New Year’s Eve show!”

Everyone voiced their agreements and cleared the living room table so Shinra and Celty could set the two three-leveled boxes on the table.
“Me and my darling decided to have Orechi today since we won’t be spending the New Year’s Day all together. Also, since we are quite a big group, we thought it would be enough for all of us!”

Shinra was explaining while him, Celty and that girl Anri arranged the boxes on the table and distribute chopsticks to everyone.

Shizuo stared at Celty quite impressed.

“Did you make all these?”

Celty nodded a bit and wiggled her fingers in embarrassment – Shinra of course was there to brag for her.

“My lovely Celty is talented in everything! You know she has been cooking for days to make sure everything is perfect for her friends - such a kind-hearted angel she- Och! Celty~!”

They all squeezed around the table, others sitting on the floor, others on the couch all turning their heads occasionally to steal a glance at the TV, their conversation remaining lively during the whole time.

“I’ve heard this year your little brother will be hosting the show Shizuo-san” Walker said taking a bite from a burdock root piece.

“Yes, it will be his first-time hosting a New Year’s Eve show.” Shizuo replied feeling his insides swell with pride for his talented little brother.

“Yuhei-san will be phenomenal! I’m sure they will raise the views like..300%!!” Mairu was getting all excited.

“Yuhei.” Kururi just said in a dreamy tone - as dreamy as Kururi could sound anyways.

“The views won’t skyrocket this year just because of Yuhei-san! No offense Shizuo-san-“ Saburo said a bit embarrassed for his outburst but he continued anyways “-But also because Ruri-chan will be competing this year!”

Now the man was practically squealing at his seat.

Oh! Kasuka had told him that this was the reason he had agreed to host the show.

He supposed Ruri-san participating this year explained Saburo’s very controversial attire with the t-shirt that spelled “I <3 U Ruri-chan!” and the face of his little brother’s girlfriend plastered in the front of it, let alone the light sticks and the other merchandise he was currently covered from head to toe.

Mairu and Kururi were glaring daggers at him for insinuating their idol wasn’t enough reason for the views to be raised but thankfully the campus couple attempted to engage them in a conversation about their University choices so he thankfully could eat with some peace.

[So you and Kasuka won’t be meeting during the holidays?] Celty showed him her PDA from the other side of the table - the twins who were still herding him stacking their faces to the screen and then eyed him with interest.

“We will be visiting our parents on the 3rd so we’ll see each other there.”

“Can we come with you? Please Shizuo-san, Please!!”
“Please?”

“What? No!” Shizuo said a little freaked out at the possibility.

Thankfully they left him a bit at peace for a few minutes before they attempted to beg him again.

They kept at it for a while, sometimes eating, sometimes chatting but mostly everyone was watching the show and enjoying their booze. It was a four-hour show for crying out loud! If Kasuka wasn’t the host Shizuo most likely wouldn’t watch it.

It was nice seeing Kasuka though even through the glass of the TV. He almost -almost- felt his little brother’s presence that way.

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They had made their Kagamimochi without too much of a mess.

Each one had made one Kagamimochi and they got to compare them in the end.

Izaya and Mayumi-chan’s were unsurprisingly perfect! Both parts of their Kagamimochi looked round, white and shiny. They looked similar to snowmen with a tangerine on each one of them and they even went as far as to tie different colored ribbons in variations of red and white at the parts one mochi connected to the other. They even decided to have a friendly competition when Mayumisan realized that Izaya was indeed more than a decent cook.

They called it a draw in the end and shook hands on it.

The process turned out to be quite fun mostly because Kato-san had made the most pitiful and miserable Kagamimochi he had seen in his life!

It was flat, he had put the smaller mochi as the base and the larger on top and when he noticed he couldn’t separate them, they had cracked and the overall shape looked like a dull dusty white pile of poop and Izaya was pretty sure it probably would taste similar -or maybe poop would taste better. He guested it was also as hard as a stone too! Can a mochi even turn out to be rock hard?

However, in the end they gave Kato-san some points for the effort because it was New Year’s Eve.

Izaya still couldn’t help himself and not comment on the ugly stony mochi once they had all decided their scores.

“Still though, that’s the saddest mochi I’ve seen! It looks like it wants to fall to pieces from embarrassment!”

“You obviously need glasses Izaya-kun with your eyesight going all bad lately! This is a fine specimen of mochi! It’s just little rough around the edges!”

“That’ the problem Boss-san -the edges! Mochi is supposed to be round you know! ~ ”

“Hey! I was being creative okay? Culinary art is for the daring!”

“More like contemporary mochi art..”

“I should have left you in Osaka..”

“Now-now you two be nice today! Don’t fight to much while I will be setting the table okay?”

Mayumi interrupted them taking back to the kitchen the dirty bowls and the leftover ingredients.
“Hai Mayumi-chan / Mayumi-san!” they both agree sheepishly but the moment they left they grinned challenging to each other knowing that their game was still up, even if it was behind the old lady’s back.

Dinner was another fun ordeal.

If one thing Mayumi-san was correct that night was that Izaya would enjoy it.

Mayumi-san went with tradition again, presenting them with three steamy bowls of Toshikoshi Soba -the symbolic year-crossing soup of buckwheat-noodles, which she had taken to the next level since she had topped them with scallions, fish cakes, shrimp tempura and bonito flakes -probably many more things were in the bowls that he couldn’t even see. Off course a giant bottle of sake was left on the table too and Kato-san went straight for it regarding the disapproving glares he received from the other two parties that he pretended to not see.

However, in her second trip in kitchen she also put in the middle of the table a platter of steamy noodles covered in the familiar brown thick sauce and thin cucumber slices that had both Kato-san and Izaya alert on their seats.

“I though since both of you missed your Friday outing being on leave and all to surprise you a bit. Hopefully you will enjoy them Izaya-kun!” she smiled bashfully again, her bravado during the Kagamimochi-making looked like a distant memory.

“Arigato Mayumi-san! I’m sure they will taste as great as they look! Sorry for troubling you so much!”

“Thank you Mayumi-chan! Now that’s what I call New Year’s Eve dinner!”

“It’s nothing really, it didn’t take me long to make.”

“Shall we start then?” Kato-san’s excitement had skyrocketed seeing both the sake and the jajangmyeon on the table. His chubby face was so red Izaya thought his blood pressure must have raised for sure.

They all sat around the table and after a small prayer they went straight to the food.

The second the symphony of “Itadakimasu!” was over two pair of chopsticks flew over the soup bowls and landed with perfect accuracy in the jajangmyeon platter.

The same instant two pair of eyes met in a glare as the rival chopsticks battled over the same noodle scoop.

Sure, the platter was full but taking that particular scoop was a matter of pride!

And it was a fun excuse to stir things up between them again.

They haven’t seen each other for three whole days after all since their holiday leave started on December 29th so there were three whole days of non-bickering! Could you blame them really?

“I thought jajangmyeon were too sweet for you Izaya-kun~!”

“That’s the results of your bad influence Boss-san, take responsibility now, ne~?”

“As if! Put down these noodles.Take from the other side.”

“Gomme~ I can’t really do that since I was first to take this part!”
“You knocked my chopsticks out of the way and we both know it you little brat!”

“Better luck next time Boss-san~”

They were both glaring and smiling, no pair of chopsticks giving up pulling towards each of their respective sides successfully mashing the noodles caught in the middle.

And then the platter was lifted on the air and away from them, Mayumi-san who was quietly enjoying her soup till that moment was now holding it and smiling pleasantly, however both him and Boss-san could see that the authoritative aura she had an hour ago was back full force.

“Now children, how about you wait here for a moment while I go and separate the jajangmyeon in two plates in the kitchen?”

She asked pleasantly but Izaya knew this tone well. It was the suggestion which is actually not-so-suggestion that Kato-san also used on him.

‘Ohh! So this is a family thing!’ Izaya couldn’t help but laugh internally. He really liked this atmosphere. He supposed in a normal household such exchanges would occur often among the family members.

It was a bit surreal to participate in these kinds of human interactions whenever he was visiting the old couple.

Surreal and not bad. Not bad at all.

The circus started the moment Shizuo reached out for a piece of salmon a couple of hours after they set the orechis on the table just to have something to occupy his mouth now that he wasn’t smoking as much and Shinra -being loud and obnoxious as usual and worst of all half-drunk already practically shouted from the other end of the table:

“Shizuo-kun! Here have some herring roe for fertility!” stretching his chopsticks with the yellow piece of fish as far towards him as he could reach.

‘What the actual fuck!?’

Shizuo’s face got so red and his eyes so big he must have looked like he was having an aneurism right on the spot.

“WH-WHY, WHY WOULD I NEED THAT???” he half-screamed half squealed at Shinra in embarrassment.

“Mpreg!!”

‘Oh fuck!’

Whatever the fuck was that, he was sure it wasn’t anything good since it came out of Karisawa’s mouth - especially right after Shinra’s “fertility” bullshit on top- who currently was giggling and whispering to herself with both Kadota and Walker shaking her trying to snap her out from whatever fantasy she had fallen into.

At another point Shinra’s crazy father -probably more drunk than Shinra himself- indeed tried to dissect him with his chopsticks mumbling how “Shizuo-kun’s attitude is an obstacle to the science”,
then the twins engaged at a new fight with Saburo over idols and Karisawa started harassing the Anri-girl whose boyfriend was currently too flustered by Karisawa’s antics to do anything about it and just stood there being all stuttering and awkward till Kadota and Walker went to console him and calm Karisawa down.

After that thankfully everyone refocused on the show since it was close to reach its end.

In the end the white team had won much to everyone’s delight since it was Ruri-san’s team and currently everyone was relaxing, some playing board games on the carpet and others cards on the coffee table so they could all somehow participate in some activity but still maintain a feeling of togetherness.

They had around an hour till midnight still.

At one point his phone rang to alert him he had a message.

He took it out of his pocket and stared at it.

“Vorona?” He read the screen.

For some reason Karisawa almost went crazy again at that instant.

“Shizu-chan! You can’t do that to me! I’ve been waiting for so long for my couple!”

Karisawa was bubbling in drunk stupor suddenly all over again, obviously still very intoxicated.

He very pointedly didn’t allow his brain to register how she had just called him.

He didn’t want to ruin his night thinking of anything unpleasant.

But wait a minute!

‘Do that to her? The fuck is she talking about? Couple? Is this Karisawa’s idea of a …love confession?’

This was way too direct and public but most importantly too weird if it involved Karisawa and since she was drunk obviously, he decided for his sanity that she wasn’t to be taken seriously!

“Yo! I’m out for this round.”

He said to the van gang who also had chosen to play board games with him and Celty and got up to head to the balcony to read his text in peace.

While he was opening the balcony door Karisawa started screaming things at him like: “Shizu-chan, please you can’t leave him!”

Man, she can’t even distinct what pronoun to use at that point! Should I tell Kadota to make her some coffee or put her to bed or something?’

Anyways, he first wanted to read his message so he got outside.

23:40. The time on his phone screen indicated.

20 minutes to go.

He opened his text.
It read:

[Happy New Year Shizuo-sempai. I would like to wish for your health and happiness. I apologize for not initiating communication as much recently. I affirm that I will put the best of my efforts to visit this year. I have missed the vending machine coffee in Tokyo. I would also hope that this year we could engage in a non-lethal combat to measure our strengths.]

Shizuo smiled reading her message. It was just like her express her feelings in such a weird way.

He had also missed spending time with his kouhai.

He took out his phone and typed back:

[Yo! Happy New Year to you too Vorona! It would be nice if you could visit this year. Let’s have more vending machine coffee then. Not sure about the combat. As long as it’s non-lethal I will think about it.]

After he pressed ‘Send’ he enjoyed a bit more the winter breeze and relaxed staring at the city lights.

‘So peaceful.’

He would have to go back inside soon for the countdown.

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Once the clock hit midnight it didn’t go unnoticed.

They were once again in the living room, sitting comfortably on the carpet and playing card games while the TV played in the background some sort of music show.

It was a bit weird to arrange his legs on the floor since he couldn’t bend them unless he used his hands but after a while, he managed to sit upright with his legs laid out in front of him and his back to the sofa.

They were drinking tea again to snap out of the daze the sake had put them into but their spirits were still lively.

Izaya and Mayumi-san were once again head to heads competing with each other since their score was practically the same which made both of them passionately strive for victory.

Izaya had thought for a moment he should go easy on her and let her win since she was the host and he was her guest; however it didn’t sit well with his pride and he was sure that she would share the sentiment. She didn’t do him any favors, in fact she was out for his blood during the whole game - which made sense because he was apparently her only serious competition. She had a very competitive bone in that small body of hers apparently!

Poor Kato-san, the only way he could win was for the three of them to compete towards who would reach a negative score faster. He was pouting again, being all red and exasperated in the face for losing every single time and in every single game. Even the ones he taught them on the spot!

Izaya had come to the conclusion that as much talented his boss was in his job, he was equally lame in -well- most other things, which was really surprising to him who believed the man could be nothing but great in everything he put his mind into!

Still, no matter how bad Kato-san was apparently to a lot of things Izaya couldn’t help but keep
asking for his approval and recognition internally.

Suddenly the could hear the bells ringing from practically every temple within hearing distance.

“Happy New Year!!”

108 times they would ring in total. 108 times to symbolize the 108 human sins and to get rid of the 108 worldly desires regarding sense and feeling in every Japanese citizen according to the Buddhist belief.

That used to be Izaya’s favorite part on the celebration. It always amused him.

108 human sins and desires?

No, that wasn’t correct!

There were so many more, so many really!

Humans -a big percentage of them at least- were wicked and vile! And even the good ones sinned and had desires.

The number 108 didn’t even begin to cover it in Izaya’s opinion.

And even if they were only 108, they would not be cleansed or forgotten by ringing bells!

If things were that simple there would be no humanity left! Everyone would be a godly being like that!

And to Izaya’s opinion a human could never be anything other than a human.

They could be godly or beastly as they wanted but at their cores, they’d remain the same pathetic mortal beings.

“Izaya-kun?”

“Boy? You spaced out there.”

Izaya raised his head to see the elderly couple hugging each other.

“Oh, gomme~ the sake must have still had an effect on me! Happy New Year, Kato-san, Mayumi-san!”

“Happy New Year Izaya-kun/boy!” the both replied totally in synch and lowered themselves on the carpet towards him, the old woman hugging him softly and his boss patting his back a few times.

This time he hugged the elder woman a bit more readily since he had been expecting it and bowed his head respectfully to the other man.

“Ne, boy? Would you like your presents now?”

‘Presents.’

So, they had got him a present -no presents Kato-san had said, plural.

He hadn’t received a present since the time he was still raising the twins and they gifted them with badly drawn sketches and half-melted sculptures.
It felt weird and slightly uncomfortable and at the same time warm and comfortable.

“I’d like that…” It came out too soft and a bit pathetic but he couldn’t help it. His cool and composed façade always wavered at moments he was caught of guard.

“Actually Boss-san, would you mind bringing over the bad I was carrying with me when I arrived so we’ll make a proper exchange?” he was back to being collected again.

“Sure, I’ll be back in a minute!” Kato-san said and literally sprinted to the other end of the house.

When he returned, he was carrying Izaya’s bag along with some packages.

He gave the larger one with an overly cheerful wrapper and a smaller one equally cheerfully decorated to Mayumi-san and kept for himself the two neutral colored small boxes.

“Shall we?” Kato-san asked and the others agreed.

They gathered around the coffee table in the living room once again - the show was apparently over now but the TV still playing in the background and still being ignored by the small group.

“This is for my beautiful Mayumi-chan and this is for you annoying little brat!” Kato-san said passing the two neutral colored boxes one at his right and the other at his left side.

Izaya was fairly curious what the other had gotten him. He opened the box and stared inside for a moment. Then he raised his head and looked at his boss again amused.

“I told you, you need glasses, didn’t I?” the other smirked at him looking all smug.

He stared bag at the dark red framed prescription glasses in their case. He took them out and inspect them a bit. He could see that they were of a good brand and their material looked solid. They were quite well refined. Maybe he wouldn’t choose them in red for himself since it wasn’t as discreet as he’d like but on the other hand it was a gift given to him by the least discreet person he had the luck to have met. He would treasure them he knew that already!

“Thank you so much Boss-san!” he tried to infuse his words with all his genuine emotion so the other would know he was being serious. “Hmm, you can be pretty thoughtful apparently! I’m really surprised!” he was teasing right now.

“It’s just, this eye problem of yours is affecting your job- which means it’s affecting my job! I need you in top form you know!”

Izaya peaked a look at Mayumi-san who raised her arm towards him to let him see a golden bracelet wiggling around her slim wrist smiling widely.

“I had seen it a while ago in a catalogue!” she explained beaming and then turned to her husband “How did you know?”

“Well, you had folded the tip of the page, it wasn’t really difficult to guess!” he grinned at her who was blushing like a schoolgirl.

“Izya-kun, make sure to book an appointment for an eye check and replace these lenses with prescribed ones. These ones are just for show now, won’t do you any good!”

“Hai!”

They moved on and then it was Izaya’s turn.
He was a bit anxious really since he wasn’t one to do thoughtful gestures and agonize over things that relate to social norms so he didn’t have much experience in giving gifts -let alone receiving.

However, seeing the couple’s reactions he felt pretty satisfied with himself.

Mayumi-san was holding her silver Japanese hairpin with the bouquet of white pink blossoms and the white leaves that ended to three long silver chains with even more cherry blossoms and leaves on them like it was something precious.

It was a bit Izaya had to admit since he put a lot of effort and money to make sure he would give her a hana Kanzashi of a good enough quality that would survive in the distant future.

Moreover, he thought it would suit her whether she dyed her hair black right now, or if the left her in their natural state since the hairpins pink shades wouldn’t go unnoticed either way.

“Ohh Izaya-kun that is such a beautiful hairpin! I will wear it tomorrow to the first shrine visit of the year!”

“I know it’s not the correct season for cherry blossoms, but I thought you could wear it during the spring festival also.”

“I will most certainly do!” she said still tangling her fingers in the silver strings.

A look to Kato-san and he could see the disapproval on his face while holding his own gift eyeing him with the typical raised eyebrow.

‘He loves it!’ Izaya thought absolutely gleeful!

The harder Kato-san was scowling the surer Izaya was that he liked his gift deep down.

“Am I not being democratic enough with you already, asking for your opinion and all?”

“I am not really sure what are you talking about Kato-san~!” Izaya shrugged a bit purposely making sure to put a bad performance.

“Bossy Boss-san? Really now?” The man waved in front of him the silver quill with the calligraphic engraving that spelled exactly that: Bossy Boss-san.

Mayumi-san couldn’t resist taking the quill from his hand to check the engraving, all the while hiding her mouth with her palm. Kato-san turn to her to retrieve the pen from her hand gently while pretending to be utterly unamused by her laughing at him but Izaya knew that seeing Mayumi-san laughing with the little stunts Izaya pulled here and there all night and her interacting so much had the other man over the moon.

“Oh! I think the engraver might have misspelled Kato-san! You are a known democrat after all~!”

“Of course I am! That’s why you’re also joining us for the first shrine visit of the year tomorrow!” Kato-san grinned.

“Eh? I am?”

He acted bit more shocked that he actually felt. He knew from the moment he had accepted this invitation that he had practically signed off his free will for an indefinite amount of time.

“Obviously you are going! Maybe the gods will grace you with some sense this year!”
“Bossy!~”

“Did I hear something?”

“Hai Boss-san!”

Mayumi-chan had stopped trying to stifle her giggles a while ago and she was wiping the tears of mirth from her big dark eyes.

“It would be nice to spend more time together Izaya-kun!”

“Talk about your self dear, I’ll be overdosing on tranquillizers, I can see it coming!”

“Eh?! Are you a medium boss? Tell me my fortune, tell me, tell me~!”

“Oh, I see you standing right there at the unemployment office Izaya-kun!”

“Kato-san hidoii~!”

“Will you both stop acting like primary schoolers and let me give you both my presents sometime?” Mayumi-san interjected again and passed her colorful packages to each man.

Honestly, he wasn’t sure what to make of her gift when he opened the larger colorful package.

Kato-san’s apparently was a dark purple tie with some diagonal lines here and there. As an office worker it made sense really.

“So, you would not wear the green one all the time” she had smiled sweetly at Kato-san but Izaya could tell the message was “Stop wearing that green tie, it looks bad”.

Did it? Izaya couldn’t really tell because in reality his own fashion sense -if he had one- was peculiar.

Before he had started working as an editor’s assistant in Osaka his clothes were all the same -both in color and in style. All dark and simple.

Not that now he was being overly fashionable but still working in an office required a certain dress code that he was obliged to follow.

Anyways, he was expecting his gift to be something along those lines. A shirt maybe since his package was bigger that boss-san’s.

He was surprised to see – was that pajamas?

He raised his head and saw the elderly couple looking at him expectantly to measure his reaction.

“Arigato Mayumi-san! Your gift is very thoughtful!” he smiled to her grateful even though he was still a bit baffled.

“I already washed them and they are ready for usage.” She smiled back at him.

‘Oh! It’s because I’ll be staying the night’

Kato-san had announced to him the previous days that since they would spend both celebrations together it would be better for him to stay the night since there was a bit of distance between Bunkyo and Edogawa thus Izaya would hardly got any rest between the two days.
He had never had a sleepover in his life before!

Never say never, didn’t they say?

When Shizuo re-entered the apartment, he was back into the crazy-land!

Karisawa jumped him again out of nowhere.

“Shizu-chan! You don’t understand! You are meant to be together! You are the number one couple in Ikebukuro!”

“Me and Vorona? Couple?”

Karisawa Erika was spotting a completely changed mindset from before.

With the way she acted literally 10 minutes ago he would think that she was completely against the idea.

Not that it really mattered what Karisawa thought.

Vorona was his kouhai and friend anyways! He couldn’t be a couple with her.. that would be weird!

When Karisawa heard the words that left his mouth she went back to being livid.

“What? NO! Never! Your one true love can be only Iz-mmhhh”

At that moment Kadota’s hand had maffled her shrill voice and him and Walker were back to drag her away from him.

“Erika, stop harassing Shizuo-san. Let’s not upset him today.” Walker was laughing uneasily and Kadota mentioning something about furniture rearrangements and coffee- ‘Thank god!’

What's the deal with Karisawa today? Is she bipolar?

Good thing he had grown a bit more patient and he didn’t get angry as easily as before.

Besides being angry at a drunk person is stupid. He would ruin his mood for nothing during a special day!

A few seconds after the trio disappeared to the kichen Shinra’s voice was booming the same room.

“No way! Everyone knows that me and Celty are the number one couple of Ikebukuro Erika-sa-AAAah Celty~!”

‘Such weirdos!’

At that moment he heard the bells.

‘Midnight’

“HAPPY NEW YEAR!!” everyone started yelling and cheering in excitement the previous “rivalries” of the night forgotten, gathering all in the living room, hugging and wishing well to each other.

Shizuo hugged only Shinra and Celty but exchanged wishes with everyone.
His phone rang with another text message.

His heart warmed in happiness. Usually he was the first to initiate contact with his little brother but this year he beat him to it.

[Happy New Year Nii-san. Be happy this year. See you in a couple of days.]

[Happy New Year Kasuka! You were really good at the show today! Wish well to Ruri-san from me! See you on the 3rd!]

While they others were still going at it exchanging wishes and all, he just sneaked closed to the window staring at the fireworks, the others soon following him to watch them too being all “Oh” and “Ah” at the beautiful spectacle.

Shizuo muffled them and concentrated on the ringing of the bells.

How many more till the 108th one?

He had always loved hearing the bells.

108 bells for 108 human sins and desires to be washed away according to the Buddhists.

These bells would carry away his mistakes of the past, as well as his desires.

He hoped they would at least for then he would be finally free and happy.

He heard that voice in his head just then. Or maybe he didn’t, he wasn’t sure.

‘If only it’d be that simple- Ts! protozoan!’

What he was sure though was that the pest would say something along those lines.

It wasn’t spiteful this time though, more like teasing, if not a bit exasperated.

‘I know.’

He replied to it.

And he knew, really! Bells ringing wouldn’t be enough to save a torn and corrupted soul, he knew that better than anyone.

‘Still it would be nice for that to be real, wouldn’t it?’

The voice was silent now.

‘Who cares? It’s not.’ he knew it would say that, but he liked to imagine that instead it would offer him something like a ‘Maybe’.

Probably because that voice was always right.

Shizuo wasn’t sure why he felt that need to really.

Maybe because the pest was a part of him and he had grown to accept that. Not the actual pest of course, only the thought of it -much like an imaginary friend, even though it was in fact an imaginary enemy.

Still it was cutting him some slack lately and while unbearable, it had given him at least for today
what he was aiming to reach for so long: peace.

Maybe that was why he reached back to that pest and that annoying voice first this time instead of waiting for it to say something again.

As a thank you for being quiet just for today and to allow him to make another step towards his bettering himself, or maybe because he knew for some reason that if the other was still alive, he would have chosen solitude that day. Maybe for both reasons, or maybe it was again his guilt tricking him to do so even though it wasn’t tearing him apart at this moment.

He didn’t know why.

But he thought it anyways.

‘Oi, Izaya?.. Happy New Year.’

……………………………………………………………….

“Oi boy! Would you like a tour of the house now that we all exchanged our gifts? We didn’t forget that we haven’t shown you around yet.”

“Em..Sure! Just give me a moment to get on my chair, ne?”

“Of course, take your time Izaya-kun! Mayumi-chan lets clean up a bit quickly!” Kato-san offered and kneeled down to gather the cards and pack them while Mayumi-san took their tea cups to the kitchen.

Izaya knew what they were doing. They were casually ignoring the fact that he had to push himself back onto the wheelchair and occupied themselves with something else so he wouldn’t feel them staring or like he kept them waiting.

He was quite grateful that they didn’t offer to help him either – that would make him feel like invalid. He was sure they both had grasped as much also.

Izaya turned a bit around to grasp the sofa and pushed all of his weight on his arms. He was glad he managed to lift his body with the first try and didn’t make a fool of himself. He turned a bit and landed on the sofa gently. From that point he brought his wheelchair close and rearranged his body and legs accordingly.

“All good?” Kato-san raised his head a few seconds after holding the deck along with the pens and papers they had used to keep the score while they were playing.

“All right!” Izaya replied smugly even though his arms were burning a bit.

“Great! MAYUMI-CHAAAN!”

“Coming!” came her voice from the kitchen and she was there a moment later.

“Shall we?”

They walked -and wheeled- together for a couple of minutes. The dining room and living room he had already seen so they showed him the quite large -and messy as expected- kitchen on the other side of the room and then took him down the hallway where three doors remained two on the same side and another on the opposite. Straight ahead was only a door that lead at the backyard.
The single room on the one side was as expected a quite specious western style bathroom. The door opposite from it led to the couple’s bedroom which Izaya could seen was heavily influenced by Mayumi-san’s taste since it was the most colorful room of the house and from a first look he could tell that Kato-san had barely any space for his own things in there, if he could judge by the zillion little colorful bottles and vases that covered almost every inch of the room -no wonder Mayumi-san was still so beautiful despite her years.

The final room as Izaya had guessed was a spare bedroom that served as a guestroom.

“What do you think Izaya-kun?” Mayumi-san asked him expectantly as she did with practically every room they had shown his show far.

“Go inside and take a better look!” Boss-san urged him.

He knew the man would keep insisting so he wheeled a bit and took a look around. He knew the old woman was expecting an answer still.

It was once again a room Mayumi-san had put some effort, he could tell. Not nearly as colorful as the other bedroom thought.

This one had basically several shades of blues and greys and a couple details with some orange to lighten it up. It was quite simple really with only a couple of furniture: a double bed with fluffy pillows and duvet much like the other room - a pair of towels and a new toothbrush resting on top of it- that was directly in contact with the wall, a and a bedside table with lamp tuned on and a glass bottle filled with water and an empty glass being turned upside down right next to it and chest of drawers on the other side of the room next to a body length mirror.

“That’s a lovely guest room Mayumi-san. I’m sure it will be nice staying the night.”

“Guest room? That’s your own room, brat!” Kato-san interjected seemingly exasperated with Izaya’s inability to catch up fast enough.

‘I have a room? In boss-san’s house?’

Now that had him baffled. He turned his wheelchair so he could see the couple and stared at them enigmatically.

“That’s my room?” he asked very slowly.

“Hai.” Mayumi-san replied softly.

“But-” …’I don’t understand’

“It’s not like we’re giving you a house key or anything. We know you want to live on your own and be all an independent adult, boy. BUT, the fact remains that sometimes with working overtime or at Jajangmyeon Fridays we return quite late. And you have to do an hour-long trip from Edogawa to Chiyoda and back every day as it is, so we really doubt you get enough time to rest during the week, because obviously you never listen so-.”

“Kioshi, don’t overwhelm him!...Just know Izaya-kun that whenever you need to, there is always a place for you here. We know each other for so long -you are not just Kioshi’s employee, you are a member of this household too.”

“I couldn’t have put it better Mayumi-chan!”
This was so bizarre he didn’t know how to react. Being given a room to someone’s house, being called a member of a household. This was totally unexpected!

No one had ever liked him enough to give him anything, let alone a room of his own in their house!

Sure all three of them were starved from some sort of normalcy when it came to having a “happy” family and all three of them used their dynamic to fill the holes their pasts had left them with even though they knew very clearly that they couldn’t disregard the fact that they had their actual blood related relatives that should use that holes in the first place— said relatives being dead or alive it hardly mattered, so they wouldn’t unintentionally use each other.

But while they weren’t a family to each other and they all understood that, they also understood that they were definitely more than colleagues, acquaintance or friends. Izaya was pretty sure that the elderly couple shared these feelings also.

“Kato-san, Mayumi-san...”

Izaya looked at them as openly as he could and willed his voice to be steady and strong.

And then bowed as much as the wheelchair allowed his hands holding the armrests of the chair as hard as he could so they wouldn’t realize how bad they shook.

“Thank you so much for the kindness you have continuously showing me! I will gladly accept this room!”

He was being ridiculous talking all formal suddenly and bowing like that -hell, he had never bowed to any human before! - but he wanted to be sure he could convey his feelings properly to them.

He was hardly able to make his genuine feeling known to others -unless they were negative that was – so he tried his best.

“You are very welcome Izaya-kun.”

“Come on now boy, enough with the bows, lift your head up!”

But Izaya shook his head from side to side and made sure to keep it low because everything inside him hurt and was warm and fidgety and his eyes stung badly and he didn’t have enough time to analyze where such a strong reaction was coming from and if he couldn’t analyze and get to the bottom of it, he had no control over it.

Thankfully Mayumi-san was better at reading the atmosphere and her handlings were way more refined that Kato-san’s most of the time.

“Izaya-kun, how about me and Kioshi go to the living room to let you explore a bit your room at your own pace and then you come and find us when you are done. We can hang out a bit longer and then head to bed since it’s getting late. Is that okay?”

Izaya could only nob still not looking up.

“Great. Kioshi, let’s go” she said in a tone that left no room to protest.

Before the couple left, he felt one soft pat on the back of his head and he knew that was Boss-san’s way to comfort him.

When the elderly exited the room and he raised his head he was grateful his eyes had dried but he
was panting like he had just run a marathon.

Well, he had issues! That much he knew.

He had suppressed his feelings so long and so much that whenever something triggered anything related to his issues or ignited anything positive in him, he completely lost his shit and didn’t know how to react.

The worst thing about self-reflection was that it had started to make him transparent to his environment too and that would happen at random moments when he hardly had the time to get a grip - exactly what happened just now.

Man, he was so embarrassed now, what would Boss-san and Mayumi-chan think about him acting like that?

Nothing. They wouldn’t judge him, something inside him said.

He should also compose himself and head to the living room, he shouldn’t waste time to examine his feelings right now. It wasn’t every day that he had the chance to be a part of a house hold, he had to make the most of it; that same something scolded him.

He heard that something.

Cause now it was New Year’s after all!

When he returned to the living room to find the elderly couple it finally hit him

‘This house has no stairs..’

Boss-san was right - he wasn’t as perceptive as he believed himself to be at times!

They continued playing and chilling for quite a while after midnight.

Eventually most of the other guest left, him being the last to stay back.

Celty had suggested him a sleepover since she wanted to hang out more just the two of them and the house was too warm and cozy for them to take Shooter to drive them to Shizuo’s home no matter how fast that trip would be.

Shinra had passed out a while ago on a couch and was currently drooling on the pillows his glasses barely remaining on his face.

Him and Celty were currently curled up at the other couch sharing a blanket with Shizuo holding a cup of warm milk with too much sugar, talking - and typing - quietly so they wouldn’t disturb Shinra.

[Today was fun, right?]

“Yes. It was nice. I had a nice time.”

[Are you happy?]

“I am at this moment.”

[I am sure you’ll get there, period:)]
“Thank you Celty. I’m starting to think so too.”

[I’m glad to see you like that. I’ve been worried you know.]

“I know. Sorry.”

[I’m not saying that for you to feel bad. I was happy to see you like that today. You are getting better at controlling your temper too! You were very patient with Erika today!]

“Karisawa was drunk. Didn’t you hear her saying me and Vorona should be together and shit?”

[Vorona?????? Isn’t she in Russia?]

“Yes. She told me today she’ll try visit by the way. Anyways Karisawa went psyco on me when Vorona texted me earlier!”

[I think you misunderstood her...! I don’t think Erika meant anything like that for you and Vorona.]

“Oh! What was this all about then?”

[Don’t think too much of it... She had a lot of alcohol tonight!]

They enjoyed a bit their comfortable silence neither speaking for a couple of minutes -Shinra’s occasional snoring the only sound to break it.

Whenever it happened him and Celty turned towards each other laughing a bit at his expense- Shizuo was sure she was laughing as well from the way her shoulders shook.

After a few minutes he broke the relative silence.

“Hey Celty...What’s your resolution for this year?”

[Live happily.:) Keep loving Shinra, having fun with you and our friends, become a better person... Time flies fast, you have to make the most of it right?]

“That’s a beautiful New Year’s resolution.”

[What about you?]

“I’m not sure. Just be peaceful I guess.”

...

“I just want this moment to last a bit longer really..I’m not sure what my resolution will be but do you wanna know what I wish for this year?”

[You know I do!! ;)]

“I want to feel everyday as I felt today.”

Celty stroked his arm and cuddled closer to him assuring him that everything would be alright.

They never went to sleep in the end.

They just stayed up, whispering and typing about their feelings, their aspirations, the past, the future, their fears, their hopes, random things, everything really.
The sun began to set—the first sunrise of the New Year—and they almost failed to notice.

“Shall we wake up Shinra to see the first sunrise together?”

Celty nodded excitedly to his suggestion and both went to shake him awake.

“Shinra? Wake up.” Shizuo shook the doctor gently.

“Mhmmm... Celty... luv you...”

Jeez, Shinra was—well Shinra even is his dreams!

The bespectacled man was hugging the couch pillow still—drool everywhere and mumbling incoherently—his glasses crooked and half fallen from his face.

“Wake up Shinra. It’s the first sunrise, you’ll miss it this year too and you’ll whine after!.”

“5 more minutes Celtyyy...”

Shizuo didn’t want to shook him harder—it was a miracle Celty had not punched the other awake yet.

He had a more effective tactic though.

“Okay then, me and Celty will be watching the sunrise together then. The two of us.”

Shinra bolted up like he had touched a live wire the moment the last word left Shizuo’s mouth.

“NO! I’m awake! I’m Celty’s beloved fiancée! Celty don’t hit me my darling!”

“You are a mess Shinra” Shizuo couldn’t help himself but laugh, bending down to help the other sit upright.

Celty made some instant coffee for her fiancé who was still half-sleeping and once she returned and gave him the cup also joined them at the couch.

They put Shinra in the middle to make sure he wouldn’t worry too much about them Shizuo and Celty running away together riding Shooter in the sunset or some shit in that intoxicated and delusional brain of his and the three of them turned their gazes towards the balcony.

Honestly the whole night was abnormal and freaky and weird as fuck! It fitted Ikebukuro and its residents quite well. And then it was quiet and familial and comfortable.

Shizuo had enjoyed every second of it!—Even though he didn’t let it show much with his aloof attitude.

Seeing the first sun of the year rising though glass with his friends after having a lovely and peaceful day he realized he had found his New Year’s resolution.

‘If I can’t get better, I at least want to remain the same this year.’

Little did he know gods would mess with his resolution again this year.

Chapter End Notes
I'm not really sure what to write here so that's a first! xD
I'll just say that while I don't think that parental neglect is the sole reason Izaya is such a jerk in canon -I have two amazing friends who had experienced it severely and they are the most kind-hearted individuals- I do know for a fact that it has at least some impact on certain things on a person.
Also my personal headcanon is that Izaya has so many suppressed feelings about so many things that if he'd ever tried to explore them and put actual effort to deal with them the moment he'd encountered something to trigger them he'd lose his shit :P
Hello everyone! :) 
I'm back already with another long chapter!^^
I think this chapter addressed lots of things and turned out quite interesting! :) 
I also felt like writing lots of dialog so you'll find three-four different dialogs here!
I'm not sure what to write as of now other than I hope you will like as much as I do and 
that now I'm finally going to bed, yay!m/ I pulled an all-nighter to write and edit this 
because I was getting too much into it and I feel like a zombie now, lol! (XoX)

See the end of the chapter for more notes

So. Tokyo.

Well honestly Tokyo didn’t say much to him these days.

He missed Osaka!

Everything felt so easy there -so safe.

He was never one to appreciate safety -actually quite the opposite- but obviously things have 
changed since he ended up crippled and defenseless.

Moreover, the life in Osaka was slower paced and less hectic than in Tokyo -something that when 
you live like a normal person, you come to appreciate.

You could see it in the way humans navigated in the road; their steps being smaller, less rushed as if they had more time to take a break and simply exist. They were a bit louder and easier to speak to and expressed themselves in a more forward way which also made them slightly obnoxious at times- much like Kato-san.

Not to mention that the transportation was way less complicated in Osaka as they were fewer train lines, the roads were a bit wider and he didn’t have to worry about running down a stupid rushing imbecile with his wheelchair.

Osaka was also way more affordable in terms of rent, groceries, utilities -basically everything, while it was perfectly fine to try and bargain the price with the sellers there, which was extremely amusing at times and also made it easier to save money which you have to, if you were nowadays a law abiding citizen and therefore you wouldn’t make a shit tone of money by selling information to the yakuza for example.

Now, don’t get him wrong, Tokyo used to be his ideal city because it had everything he used to love -along with everything he had loved to hate.

It was a massive metropolis full of life at every hour of the day with lots of hustle and bustle and millions of humans of every kind, making it way easier to find the most amusing and eccentric ones -way more so than the ones in Osaka!

It was quite easy to lose yourself in the crowds and since Tokyo residents were a bit quieter and
more reserved and needed their space and time when approaching someone it suited his general disposition better and also made it more challenging to try and interpret their actions and motives.

Tokyo had also higher salaries and better job opportunities for legal professions that was for sure -his new salary was proof enough- not to mention it had way more things to see and do.

However, he still stood by what he had said to Boss-san.

Tokyo was dangerous and held so many negative and painful memories that even the things he used to enjoy left boring.

He had arrived in Tokyo by the end of November with the elderly couple.

Now it was mid-February and his opinion haven’t shifted much, though it wasn’t as unbearable to be in Tokyo as much as his first month.

Living in Tokyo was a huge pain in his ass still though; he felt alert and uneasy almost constantly.

The only period he had truly relaxed properly had been the New Year’s holidays.

The memories of those few days were the nicest he had in Tokyo since he could remember himself!

Boss-san, Mayumi-san and his room in their house in Bunkyo were the only good things he had here; no matter how much he wished to disappear from Tokyo once again, he wouldn’t run away from them.

That was the only reason he refused to let his paranoia get to him and tried to do his best in Tokyo.

Sometimes he could fool himself enough to believe that nothing bad would happen; they would stay in Tokyo for a couple of years till Kato-san retired and then maybe they could go back to Osaka -or maybe somewhere completely new, in another region, since Osaka wasn’t very good for Mayumi-san.

Or if Izaya had worked enough with himself enough and learned how to be a normal human, he could go by himself to a nearby region and visit them often!

Though he preferred it if it was the three of them together somewhere, since he could make sure to keep an eye on the elderly couple to make sure everything would be okay.

It helped him fooling himself with such thoughts.

It also gave him something to hope for which was useful considering moving to Tokyo and readjusting to his new reality had been a bit troublesome from several aspects.

At the time he was preparing for his relocation to Tokyo, he had so many things he had neglected to take care of that he positively gave himself a migraine his last few weeks in Osaka.

Housing was one of the first problems he had to face once he had decided to move back in Tokyo.

For one, he wasn’t sure if he still had the ownership of his house in Shinjuku considering he had run away with just the clothes he was wearing at the time, wallet and keys and he had never got back. Disappearing like that -and with no intention to return- he had neglected all of his legal responsibilities towards the local government for over a two-year period which basically meant he had disregarded paying his Fixed Asset Tax, City Planning Tax and Residential Tax for all of this time.
This at best meant that he had been fined with several thousand yen and at worst that a seizure of his assets by the government had occurred with him never knowing, which quite literally translated into him losing his house in Shinjuku.

Not that he planned to go back to Shinjuku – he didn’t have a death wish!

Let alone the apartment was so massive that he wouldn’t be able to sustain it with his current salary.

And of course, he would never be able to justify owning an apartment of that size in Shinjuku of all places to Boss-san and knowing the man he would give him the third degree about it! No man at Izaya’s age could afford to rent, let alone buy an apartment in that area like that unless he was either a keiretsu heir, a filthy rich expatriate or he made dirty money.

Not to mention there were stairs to reach the bedroom and bathroom which very obviously he couldn’t climb.

All in all, this house came together with several unresolved issues.

But still the idea of losing it hurt a bit since he had really liked it, but he tried to squash this feeling.

If the opportunity arose maybe he would go check with it just to find out if it was still his, but if it didn’t it wouldn’t matter anyway.

He had decided at that point that his only concern should be to just make sure that he wasn’t in debt with the state once in Tokyo.

Another problem that he had needed to address at that time was his status in Tokyo.

Had he been reported as missing?

Had he been declared dead?

Both things were equally mortifying since it not only meant that for sure he would have lost his property but also that he could have encountered trouble with law -for sure!

At least if he had been reposted missing, he could play maybe the amnesia card -though that card had numerous holes on it for several reasons that affected its credibility- if he needed to sort things out with the legal institutions in Tokyo, but if he had been declared dead that would be a hell of a problem!

Especially considering that he would have been practically wheeling around using a “dead” person’s documents and bank cards during his transactions for so long.

When he had thought about it more calmly though, if that was indeed the case wouldn’t he have encountered at least some minor trouble while in Osaka? Something that had never happened so far!

Damn, he had relaxed way too much these past years!

It wasn’t in his nature to neglect situations that could lead to trouble like that.

However, it was in his nature to postpone things that had him already frustrated and avoid his problems…

Still the thought had scared him quite a bit because really, he didn’t want any trouble, he just wanted everyone in Tokyo -and in general, with two very obvious elderly exceptions – to leave him the fuck alone!
During the days he was having these thoughts he had been positively fuming; he had almost blown
up in his asshole of a colleague Kinosuke’s face when the man had tried to patronizingly give him
editing advice.

As if he needed any! The fact that the other had lost the winter bonus too to Izaya despite his
connections in Asahi spoke volumes of who was the better editor assistant at that time. He had sort of
said that.

Anyways, Izaya couldn’t help himself those days and had decided to do something he had sworn to
himself of not doing again.

He had hacked a couple of websites such as the citizen register of the local government in Tokyo and
also couldn’t resist to take a look in the police’s files regarding missing persons for the past couple of
years to check what his status appeared to be in order for him to decide a plan of action -or at least
change his information to “alive” in the registry if needed!

It was a piece of cake to do so really, he could break every password and access every document
leaving no trace behind. The only thing he had to do was break down some algorithms and solve
some others. He didn’t even need to use coding in order to hack both systems.

Well, hacking to Izaya was the same thing that riding a bicycle was to others. He could never forget
how to do it, it was that simple!

He had been quite surprised back then to see that there had been no reports declaring missing nor
dead even after his long absence.

In fact, he had appeared very much alive and kicking and there was no file for him in the police
regarding evidence of any legal activities -well he had been very much to blame for the later as he
used to work his magic in the past for that, but still everything appeared to be the same.

He had felt a bit weird after he had closed his computer that night.

In fact, he had been bothered by several things.

First and foremost, he had been annoyed at himself and that was his biggest issue.

Could what he had done just now be considered a step back -or several- from all the progress he had
made these past years?

Was he already going back to his old ways?

Had he actually changed at all or was he kidding himself?

If he could ever walk again, would he go back to how he had used to be?

Would he become isolated and angry at the world again?

Why the fuck did Tokyo brought the worst out of him?

He hadn’t been able to answer either of those questions at that time, he had trouble to answer them
even now at times- and this irked him even more!

He had tried to reassure himself at the time, thinking that in fact he hadn’t done anything in the end.

It was only self-preservation that had made him want to take a look and just “fix” something if that
was wrong.
If he had wanted, he could have done a lot of shit with some things he had encountered in the confidential files of both systems yet he hadn’t done anything and he didn’t intend to!

He wouldn’t mess with information again he had vowed -at least not in the way an informant does, and so far, he had stick to that promise.

And if he ever went back to his informant job, he had decided to do so temporarily and only if he would have a very good reason for his actions.

“Can’t you just change?” Celty had asked him once.

“Sure, If I feel like it.” He had replied to her back then.

He hadn’t lied.

And lately he was finally feeling like it; he had been given reasons to try.

So no, wasn’t turning all wrong again so he wouldn’t be left alone this time.

Alone.

That word also irked him a lot.

He didn’t know why he had been surprised no one had even declared him missing at least, despite him being away for so long.

In fact, it further strengthened his belief that indeed no one in Tokyo gave a shit about him.

Old news really.

Sure, he was to blame for that -even though he wouldn’t admit it to anyone other than himself because his ego was not just bruised, it was stepped upon several times- but still…?

At least their indifference worked on his favor in this case so, for once he should have been grateful to them maybe.

The next thing he had researched upon had been his new colleagues at Japan Times.

He had wanted to check if he had ever messed with any of them just to be sure to avoid them.

Though he had decided against hacking the files of the human resources department. He had rationalized that since he mostly used mostly Internet to collect his information and had Nakura posed as him most of the time, it wouldn’t be much of a problem.

Besides he was pretty confident regarding his memory -he worked with information after all- and he was sure if he had ever encountered a reporter he would have remembered.

Well, he had an encounter with that freak girl Niekawa Haruna’s father, Niekawa Shuuji, who was a reporter himself. However, a simple Google search had revealed that the man was currently a freelance writer and his topics of choice did not exactly align with Japan Times’s style so Izaya didn’t think he had to worry much about him uncovering his past as an informant even if they ever had an encounter again.

It wasn’t as if the guy had it out for him or anything and probably, he wouldn’t even remember his face after so long.
Besides they hadn’t been acquaintances or had much contact.

Finally, he had to do a thorough check with any information regarding himself being scattered around the internet.

He knew for a fact there were videos uploaded with his and that person’s fights taken from different angles and showing different fights that had happened.

There were also lots of other information regarding his activities in several forums and he had stupidly stirred the conversations up at times for his amusement.

And now his stupidity could bite him on the ass!

He had refrained from logging into the Dollars chatroom and instead searched into sites and forums that could be accessed without having an account or needing a password just to get an idea.

Hmm..It had appeared at time that people had started to doubt his actions; his existence in general over the course of time.

It made a bit of sense considering a lot of new faces must have arrived in Tokyo the past years while old left taking the truth with them.

He had become sort of an urban legend for lack of a better term -he was more of a name rather than a person.

It had been for the best really!

The other good thing was that most of the videos online had been either deleted -which was a bit of a surprise honestly- or they were of a terrible quality or such a long distance that no one could really distinct the characteristics of either of the two opponents.

He hadn’t watch them all because he felt nauseous and his legs hurt so bad he had doubled over the desk eventually but at least he had figured out those videos weren’t a reason to worry either.

Based on the comments there it appeared that most were disbelieving of the video claiming it was fake, that the quality made it even more questionable or that they were stunt actors since no one apparently could lift a car since it wasn’t possible or parkour like that unless they had some sort of training at least.

Good.

Most things had appeared to work in his favor in Tokyo which wasn’t usually the case.

Let’s see how long it will last, ne?

That meant that Izaya was relatively safe from anything or at least he could work his way around troublesome situations.

All he had to do was keep a low profile like he had been doing all this time, make sure he avoided anything suspicious or shady and remain a law-abiding citizen.

He had though at the time that he could pull through like that.

Besides he had been literally just a wheelchair bounded office worker, nothing particularly unusual or special so that surely wouldn’t draw suspicion.
With his formal appearance and serious and professional attitude when in public, and of course his pretty bad physical condition no one could imagine him parkouring in Tokyo roofs or having yakuza connections, let alone carrying switchblades or stabbing people.

Even to himself it had felt sort of like this distant memory one can’t help but start doubting if it was ever real.

That had been perfect actually! The more trouble he had to associate himself with those memories, the easier it would be to convince someone that might get suspicious of him that it was all a big fat misunderstanding and probably someone misinformed had spread the wrong rumor!

The issue with his house was a bit of a problem still, but he would check into it just to make sure there was no court order for him or he didn’t have debts in case he still had the ownership.

However, he would have to look into those things when he arrived in Tokyo and if he found a way to sneak to Shinjuku unnoticed.

Which lead to his overall conclusion.

The only ones who could literally fuck him over and reveal his past were the ones he had interactions with or those who hold animosity towards him.

From those he had to make sure to stay as far as possible.

He had already known that, but the more he had thought about it the more sense it made.

He didn’t have a lot of enemies that would harm him which was good -although the few he had he was sure hated him with a passion- however there had been others who disliked him or simply some who could unintentionally cause him problems with their stupidity.

At least those people where mainly in Toshima and Shinjuku.

Izaya had no business there.

The wards he actually had business to be were Chiyoda and wherever him and the elderly couple choose to relocate.

However, this had led to his next course of action: Choosing a ward.

Kato-san and Mayumi-san had chosen Bunkyo eventually, since they said it was quite peaceful, it was very close to Chiyoda and the living costs were lower than living in the central part of Tokyo.

Kato-san had told him that him and Mayumi-san had found a pretty specious house to rent there that apparently “suited the family’s needs”.

Boss-san had mentioned in one occasion off course -though thankfully he didn’t pressure him since even him probably understood that this was a big thing to force on someone- that Izaya could move in with them and that the other man and his wife were perfectly content with that but Izaya had politely declined.

He had been grateful to hear it, even though he wasn’t surprised, but he wasn’t used to live with others therefore he didn’t feel comfortable with the idea, and being completely independent since a young age he knew that staying with others meant that he would have to adjust his habits to them something he found very difficult to do. Moreover, he liked having his own space to relax and his eccentric habits and occasional night terrors would probably make the couple regret suggesting it in
the first place.

However, he had promised that he would visit often and maybe stay with them once in a while, something that judging by the sparkle in Boss-san’s eyes had made him very happy to hear which was good!

Honestly Bunkyo was quite a nice ward to live in and was less hectic that the central wards.

The only downside Izaya could think of was that Bunkyo was right next to Toshima, meaning Ikebukuro was literally a breath away which automatically made Izaya a bit uneasy choosing it for himself.

It would be like he was asking for trouble!

Izaya had decided to stuck with his original plan: Go as far away from Ikebukuro as possible.

Therefore, he chose to relocate at the exact opposite direction of it.

He hadn’t been kidding when he had said to Boss-san that Edogawa and Ota were two of his options.

Apart from being away from Ikebukuro they were quite cheap to live to which was a huge plus.

He had found apartments there as cheap as ¥45,000 yen per month which was nothing considering the monthly rent for a 30cm² apartment in Shinjuku could easily surpass the ¥150,000 yen.

In the end, Izaya had settled with Edogawa.

He preferred it from Ota because it gave sort of quiet and a bit of relaxed vibe that reminded him a bit of his peaceful times in Osaka.

There were lots of humans there of course but not to the point that it would get troublesome for him to navigate around with his wheelchair and there were quite a few quiet spots for when he felt the need to be left alone and self-reflect, something that he had figured out with the years that it suited him better to do outdoors rather than indoors because it was harder for him to get into a depressive mood as fast.

Moreover, he was used to be dragged outside by Boss-san after work and he had grown to be appreciative of the wide clear spaces.

There were still humans to observe there if he was in the mood and they were easier to avoid if he wanted to.

That was another thing he liked about Edogawa, it had a lot of spaces like that.

He hadn’t found any eccentric humans that were particularly fun to watch there, but Edogawa was still a part of Tokyo so he had faith that he would encounter a few at least.

His favorite spot so far was the river sides of Kyunaka river. It was exactly the mix of quiet and noisy he had grown to enjoy. He could observe lots of humans from there but also not encounter a soul if he chose to go there at the right hour. Also, the best part was that the river side was a well-balanced mix of an urban and rural setting with numerous massive buildings in a short distance, sort enough to give him the metropolis vibe he liked but not enough to give him the Tokyo vide that made him uneasy.
He had been quite lucky and had found a nicely furnished and spacious enough studio barely 10 minutes away from Kyunaka river for around ¥80,000 which was in a decent condition because despite being old it was at least recently renovated on the inside, was in the ground floor so he didn’t have to take the stairs to reach it and the absence of unnecessary doorframes made it easy for him to navigate without bumping on them.

It wasn’t much, certainly less than his apartment in Osaka and way less that the one in Shinjuku, but it was only a few minutes away from Hirai Station which was another plus and it being smaller made him feel less lonely than he felt in the other two if that made sense.

He had hoped this didn’t meant that aging made him humbler because he would be absolutely disgusted with himself.

What would be next? Becoming a saint?

Nah, he was pretty much the same arrogant ass most of the time, learning to adapt to a situation and paying better attention to his feelings and needs didn’t mean anything special. Everyone does that!

The other good thing was that Boss-san apparently approved the house especially since it was closely located to the train station.

Boss-san and Mayumi-san had helped him move in the studio since he was unable to do basically anything and he would have to hire help and movers.

Not that he had much.

In fact, the only things he owned after two years in Osaka were his computer, his clothes and some beddings and household items that he needed at time that his past house didn’t already include.

Still the couple was nice enough to arrange everything for him while also making sure the studio was spotless from top to bottom for him to live in and to help him avoid the cost of hiring help.

He had felt a bit embarrassed and angry at himself having two old people scrubbing the floors while he quite literally just sat around being useless and doing almost nothing because well - he couldn’t do much which was one of the worst things about being unable to walk.

At least he was glad the studio was smaller than his previous apartments so luckily it hadn’t taken long to be cleaned.

He had tried to help as much as he could -he had functional hands at least- though the best thing he could do was dust the middle selves of the cupboards and arrange his clothes to the drawers since these were the only things within his reach.

Still Mayumi-san -the expert housewife she was- had come up with several little tricks so the things in the studio would be arranged within his reach leaving the top selves empty and using storage boxes she had bought her self to store things he needed to use that could access directly.

At the end the three of them had explored a bit the city and Izaya had treated them lunch at a restaurant nearby Hirai Station. They had a nice time as usual and spent their time discussing how their first day at work would go, what their colleagues would be like and more.

He hadn’t had sashimi or fresh sushi for quite a while since Kanto and Kansai regions had some culinary differences, so it was nice to finally enjoy ootoro and nigiri after so long of eating frozen ones or even worst, pressed sushi of pickled fish -oshi-zushi- in which Osaka specialized- that tasted too strongly for him.
Boss-san was happy with everything as long as you put some alcohol in front of him and Mayumi-san also enjoyed herself, eating quietly while listening to the two men chatting and interjecting here and there.

Though a tipsy Boss-san mean that the man eventually had started bashing him about him not listening and how much the location he picked would trouble him when he had to commute to work.

Izaya had hated to admit that the man had a bit of a point.

He had realized early that he had to wake up at least two and a half hours earlier to get to Chiyoda if he wanted to have time to drink his coffee and get dressed with how slow he was at getting ready and of course to wheel to Hirai Station -which thankfully wasn’t that far- to catch the train for the Chuo-Sobu Line and then get down to Yotsuya Station in Chiyoda and from there wheel once again to the Japan Time’s building to Kioicho.

While the whole trip was supposing to take him around 30 minutes with how crowded the train could be in the mornings and how fast everyone was moving around him it always took him way longer to arrive at the office.

The times he had missed the correct train just because it was too crowded for him and his wheelchair to fit to the wagon were more than a few.

When that happened, he usually had to change trains which again he hardly has time to do so considering he couldn’t exactly run from one platform to the other within seconds which could end up being very frustrating.

In general, he indeed lost precious time to transportation which was exhausting and spend the largest part of his day at work but that part he really enjoyed and then hanging out with Kato-san who was growing extremely agitated over his inability to find good jajamyeon or dragged him around Chiyoda to various places since they usually worked for a standard 8 hours without overtime which was an improvement.

Even though his life was adjusting once again to Tokyo’s fast pace and even though he looked twice behind his back at times -because better be safe than sorry- he was starting to believe that he would survive it!

His job now which was quite literally his only source of pleasure other than the company of his two humans was more challenging and now he had some authority which made things more fun.

Boss-san’s boss, Kajio-san, looked like a sane human so far unfortunately, his colleagues showed the distant politeness he preferred and didn’t drive him nuts with their stunts like Amata-chan and the jerk Kinosuke, therefore he was a bit more open to socializing with them even though he didn’t plan to get friendly with them any time soon.

The other good thing was that probably no one had encountered him before he was pretty sure about that.

Also no one there had given him reason to believe the opposite, everyone was literally worshipped the ground he was wheeling and were all “Editor Orihara-san” and bows here and there, since within weeks it was apparent that he was way more capable to be Front-Page Editor and direct his subordinates -because now he was in charge of the lower rank employees- than his predecessor could ever do.

Apparently, that man -Matsuyuta Gin he had heard was his name from what Kato-san had found out
from gossiping as usual- had resigned himself over the phone after he had stopped coming to work for a few days without giving notice to anyone for whatever reason and then never reappeared again leaving everyone at loss!

Izaya knew when something was fishy and he was pretty sure that the man had been involved with some questionable shit he couldn’t get away from and had chosen to disappear. Or someone had made him disappear…

Either way it was not Izaya’s business.

In fact, that man had done him a favor since now Izaya had taken his job and was ripping the benefits of his role so he was quite pleased with the way things had turned out!

While Kato-san was a few more ranks above him now than before, becoming a Managing Director and all, and Izaya wasn’t reporting directly to him anymore but instead he was working closely with the Editor in Chief, the man was so unbelievably proud whenever he heard something positive being said about Izaya that someone would think the praise was directed to the old man instead of Izaya himself!

Well, in a way, it sorts of made sense because the only reason Izaya had gotten somewhere with his life was because when Izaya screw it up barely three months after starting at Asahi, the other had declined his resignation.

They had come a long way in less than three years which was saying something!

The first couple of months one could very well tell that there was some dislike from both sides since Kato-san would degrade him all the time and Izaya would respond to his attitude with animosity.

In fact, in the middle of his third month in Asahi they had gotten in a row and probably half the Paper had heard their screaming match.

Izaya was still dealing with a lot of things at that point; his useless legs, night terrors, self-loathing, depression, monetary issues. There were too many really.

The only reason that he had been trying to earn some money to ensure his survival was because he had been too much of a coward to end it all himself and he didn’t want to make his shitty life even shittier.

Kato-san really wasn’t helping at that point much.

After their initial introduction during that fateful interview nothing happened much between them apart from the older man reprimanding him almost at a daily basis.

The way he reprimanded him after they became closer had changed considerably from the way he screamed his head off at him. Or maybe Boss-san had changed. Or he had changed.

He still remembered it clearly though.

That day the old man barged into his office ready for the kill instead of wanting to gossip about random things.

“Orihara-san, I don’t know what you were doing in your previous job but we have rules here- the deadlines exist for a reason. What did I specifically told you I demand from you when you were hired?”
Boss-san’s way of speech to him hadn’t really changed from back then but the whole coldness behind his attitude had been long gone.


“Exactly. Now I do not see success here Orihara-san. You are not going to receive any special treatment. Didn’t I stretch there will be repercussions if you break my rules?”

Now that he remembered Boss-san’s ‘no special treatment’ moto he couldn’t help but laugh a bit. Izaya was probably the only employee in Japan who was under ‘special treatment’ 24/7.

“You did.” He had exhaled both tired and indifferent.

“Then why did you fail in something as simple as a deadline? Do you understand how much trouble this caused to your colleagues?”

“I apologize, it won’t happen again.” He had replied in a tone that meant “Whatever you old butt…”

“I didn’t ask for your apology I asked why you were late to deliver. And I expect your honest answer!”

“I couldn’t sleep.” He had said and he had been honest though he wouldn’t elaborate further.

“You couldn’t sleep. That’s your excuse? How exactly does this relate to your job Orihara-san? You’ve came late more than once, you are missing deadlines- Do you think you can do whatever you want? You are not even trying!”

“I’ve been doing your bidding for months and you are keep treating me like your stupid little servant ordering me around and screaming at me! Why the hell did you hire me in the first place if I am so below your standards? You know what -I’ll see myself out.”

Izaya had literally blown his lid at that point and had been acting way out of character, his calm and collected persona going to hell, but honestly, he had been livid. He had bottled up so many things those horrible months and he had been angry at everyone! He had hated everything back then, barely a while since he had been discharged of the hospital where he had spent almost half a year as an invalid and unable to go back to how he was, but most of all he had hated that he was being condemned by his most hated enemy from all people to live such a joke of life where everyone was looking at him like a weakling and a pity case.

Well, he had been a bit of a pity case at that time to be fair.

“You are not used to having a boss are you Orihara-san?”

That had been the first time he had encountered Boss-san’s curious tone and raised eyebrow.

The sudden change in topic had startled him even though he didn’t show it honestly, he didn’t see a point prolonging the inevitable so he refused to answer to make the other get on with it faster. He just wanted to take his things and fuck off.

“…..”

“To God everything is beautiful, good, and just; humans, however, think some things are unjust and others just – that’s what Heraclitus wrote. We can’t have everything going our way all the time, you know.”
“Nothing is just. And there is no proof that God exists.”

“Were you really doing your best all this time?” Kato-san had pressed. It was also the first time the man had shown any interest in his effort.

“It doesn’t matter, does it?” Izaya had snapped because really was there a point to prolong the inevitable? He was ridiculed enough as it was.

“Answer me Orihara-san.”

“Yes I was.” He had said not even looking at the other anymore. Instead he had turned towards the window.

“Do you really want this job?”

“I need it, otherwise I wouldn’t be here.”

“Very well. Your resignation is not accepted then.”

“What the hell are you-?”

“I said I’ll drop the matter this time. But I expect a change in attitude. You have to learn to control your big mouth and take both scolding and criticism if you care to make it here!”

“Why not fire me since my attitude and my big mouth bother you then?”

“You need the job. I need an assistant. Need is a stronger verb that want, isn’t it?”

“Obviously. A need highlights a deep necessity for a human in order to thrive, otherwise the human will undergo mental or physical suffering. A want is a choice. A human will continue living whether their want is satisfied or not.”

“You are an interesting person Orihara-san.”

“These are just etymologies. I’m sure you already knew the difference of the two since you brought it up first.”

“Not that. You always say ‘human’ instead of ‘person’ as if you belong in a different species yourself.”

“…”

“So are you going to take back your resignation or not? I said I won’t accept it.”

“Since we both have common interests I suppose I will…for now.”

“I can’t guarantee we will like each other Orihara-san. But we are here to work not to get along. However, I will cut you some slack from now on if you make an effort. BUT, a deadline is a deadline and I won’t handle delay again for any reason! Life begins at the end of your comfort zone Orihara-san.”

That had been the first sort-of-advice the man had kind-of given him at that point while exiting the office.

He suspected that Boss-san’s opinion on him started to shift sometime during that fight if Izaya’s speculation had been correct—much like Izaya’s opinion on Boss-san had shifted during the ‘umbrella
incident’ months after.

As Boss-san had promised he was more tolerant with him from that point and slowly he had started to encourage him a little.

From that point Kato-san had also started showing tiny sings of care towards him which gradually increased more and more till the point that Izaya had started to respond positively to them after he was sure the other didn’t have any alternative motive which lead to that point.

And almost three years later, barely a month after they had arrived in Tokyo he was sitting in his new office in Kioicho, Chiyoda enjoying a small break from a job he really liked -though being an informant-broker would always be his favorite “occupation”- while one of the few humans he honestly cared about had been scolding him for ten minutes regarding his choice of a personal assistant.

Since they would be working directly with their assistants, they were given the choice to choose someone whose skills would fit their demands. Kato-san of course had chosen a secretary that was quite possibly a machine since the woman was doing everything perfect to the last detail and her qualifications probably were better that the Paper’s Publisher.

Izaya on the other hand had decided on a more unorthodox way of choosing his assistant. He had just reviewed all the candidates and deliberately picked the one who had literally no chance of being hired almost well- everywhere!

“Izaya-kun what were you thinking, really?”

“Come on now Kato-san, Jo-san is not terrible!”

“Izaya-kun this girl doesn’t know how to use the phone correctly! She threw coffee all over her laptop the other day!”

“You are over reacting Kato-san~! It wasn’t that bad; the laptop was working fine after she dried it!”

“You are enjoying my frustration, aren’t you?”

“I do~! But Jo-san is a good assistant, sure she is not as well-qualified as Hora-san, but she is making an effort.”

“Izaya-kun – tell me the truth now! Did you hire this girl because you like her?”

“NO! For heaven’s sake Kato-san! I’m a professional!”

Oh, how he didn’t like where this conversation was going...

He could hardly navigate between his various issues, his job, Boss-san and Mayumi-san; he didn’t have time to think about adding other things to worry or care about in his life.

In fact, even if he had time he would not.

He was perfectly content with how his life was right now.

Still he understood that Boss-san was probably more worried about his inexistent social life than curious.

“Are you sure??”
“Yes, I am very sure, thank you!”

“She is a nice young lady around your age though…if you overlook her general inability to do anything correct of course. And she seems to think highly of you. Just saying, you know…”

“She is a clumsy pink overly girly girl Boss-san!”

“Is this bad? That she is girly I mean? Do you like mature women like Hora-san then?”

“Why are we even discussing girls? You are a married man Kato-san! What would Mayumi-san say if she heard us right now? And we are at work! GET A GRIP!”

“But we’ve never discussed this matter properly before, you always ignore the topic~!” the older man pouted!

Freakin’ pouted, could you believe that?

Apparently that notion that people who are very close to each other influence each other’s personality to a degree was in fact very correct in Izaya’s case too, since for once he was doing the scolding and Boss-san was doing the whining!

Oh, how roles can be reversed in an instant!

“And we should keep it that way. Let’s change the topic or you can go back to your office Boss-san, I’m sure Hora-san is missing you.”

“Oh! I see..Izaya-kun! I really don’t mind you know, you can talk to me! The times have changed! No one will judge you!”

“What are you-? Oh! No! Absolutely not! Stop it already!”

“For real??”

“Yes, for real!! Is this your idea of torturing me today?”

“I was just curious why you hired an unqualified person and gave them responsibility; can you blame me really?”

“You always have something to be curious about! And then the conversation goes way off track naturally.”

“Well, curiosity is the nature of our job! And you had better options for a secretary and we both know it. I don’t see why you did it…”

“Well, that’s easy! It’s funnier if the secretary is unqualified! In fact, if I found one who hated me, I would probably hire her in an instant -no references!”

“You’re thinking process never ceases to astound me Izaya-kun.” Kato-san was obviously unimpressed with Izaya’s logic and didn’t even bother to hide it. In fact, he made sure Izaya got the message.

“What? It makes everything interesting!” This bit earned him an eyeroll. “Besides-“

“Hm?”

“You hired me. Hora-san is better qualified than I was at that point.”
“You were still very intelligent though!”

“Yes, but I failed and you still kept me around.”

“You didn’t fail Izaya-kun, I over reacted back then! You know how I get with work! Besides I didn’t know you well enough and I was fast to make judgment.”

“I was pretty fast to judge you too. And I should not have screamed back at you. You are my boss.”

“Weren’t you screaming at me a minute ago to get a grip?” Kato-san asked amused.

“That’s different!”

“Besides I’m not only your boss, you can scream back at me. But you better not make a habit out of it -or else.”

“I’ll keep that in mind... Why you kept me though? I still broke your rules.”

“You broke a small one!”

“You are not going to tell me then.”

“I just told you. You always have to doubt me, don’t you?”

”Weren’t you just saying that curiosity is the nature of our job?~ You know -joke aside, I thought I should do what you did.”

“Hire Jo-san and scold her at every moment till you destroy her morale and she quits?”

“Tempting as it sounds no. Jo-san is from the countryside and she is not very skilled. I was thinking, I should do a good deed, since basically I am your good deed, ne?”

“I don’t think anyone has ever managed to make me as much proud as you do Izaya-kun!”

“Come on now Boss-san! You have Hideki-kun too to be proud of!”

Izaya had purposely chosen present tense when he had referred to Boss-san’s son. He felt that past tense would upset the man.

“Yes. Of course.” Boss-san said laughed quietly and smiled a bit obviously caught off guard.

Was that the wrong thing to say? Did he make Kato-san sad? He was aiming for the opposite reaction!

Izaya had to think fast and take the conversation to lighter topics.

“So, you know Boss-san, Jo-san told me the other day that in order for her laptop to dry completely she put in in a tank of raw rice in the cafeteria’s kitchen. I’ve never heard that before but I guess it worked! I guess rice serves several purposes other than being a cooking ingredient, ne?”

Yeap, that gave him the right reaction!

“Izaya-kun, with the way Jo-san’s brain works we are lucky we didn’t find it’s pieces in the curry last week! Be careful cause she might also poison your coffee by accident!”

“If it’s by accident it wouldn’t be fun~!”
He couldn’t help but think of Namie-san with the whole secretary conversation today.

He sorts of missed her. Namie had been a good acquaintance of his even though he wouldn’t go as far to call her friend or anything of sorts. Sure, she was a right bitch most of the time and a terrible human being who would say things at times that hit too close to home which would aggravate him to no end, but they matched each other pretty well in terms of intelligence, intellect and morality.

Moreover, she was resourceful and knew how to do a job efficiently, even if said job was anything but legal, unlike Jo-san, his blushy klutz of a secretary who had this weird adoration for anything pink, glittery and childish that some would call cute and he would call cringy.

That woman was stuttering half the time being all “Ano” and “Eto” and couldn’t even do a Google search without getting 30 viruses in that poor laptop of hers that he had to fix almost every other day, because she would go to him ready to burst into tears and shower him in apologies and “thank you”s.

Eccentric hadn’t he asked for?

There you have it!

A knock on the door alerted both men and turning his head he saw his mess of a secretary.

Speak of the devil.

“Editor Orihara-san- oh! M-managing D-director Kato-sama. Ano..I -em- I apologize for the interruption.”

“It’s okay Jo-san, we are having our break. Is there anything you need?”

“Eto..The new intern- he just emailed me his article for you. To revise. I -em- printed it for you -to make changes?”

Should he tell her really that she didn’t have to print the article for him to make changes on it and was just wasting paper and her time?

Kato-san who was eyeing him with a mix of amusement, awaiting to see him being the “boss” for once, would have probably said just that in the least tactless way possible and make her feel like an imbecile. That was his charm!

Izaya would have said so himself too in the worst way possible if he had Namie in front of him - though Namie would have already know it was a waste of time to do so- but apparently, Jo-san was thinking that she would help him with her not very useful initiative and he could tell she was trying to make his life easier -even if she did the opposite in reality- something that he couldn’t say very often about Namie.

“Thank you, Jo-san,~! You can leave it on my desk. Would you mind also forwarding me his email too just in case I lose a paper?”

He would obviously do the changes on the document directly and send it back to the intern, but she didn’t have to know that.

“O-Off course!”

The klutz squealed and when she run literally into the office she tripped on her own legs and send the papers on the floor.
'Namie-san, where are you now, ne?'

“I-I’m so sorry!”

She practically screamed and start gathering the papers with Kato-san’s help, who had apparently decided to accept Izaya’s handling of the situation and refrained from scolding her—although that was probably because he was still touched after hearing Izaya’s reasoning for hiring Jo Kimmi.

When he finally took a look in the papers, he was a bit startled.

‘1,3,5,7- ?’

“Oh! You printed both sides of the pages I see!”

If she presented documents like that to someone picky like Boss-san that could earn her a scolding for sure!

“No..did I do a- a mi-mistake, Editor Orihara-san?”

“It’s okay! This is just for revision but in the future try to print each page separately so if I highlight something it won’t mess with the letters on the back okay?”

This earned him an uncertain nob along with a long “Ano…” and he was pretty sure he knew what was going on.

“Ne, Jo-san? Can you go and bring your pink fuzzy notebook with the sparkly unicorn? It’s the one you are keeping personal notes, right?”

“Hai!”

She screamed and bottled out of the door.

“Jo-san, please refrain from running, we wouldn’t want you to hurt yourself by accident!”

That was Kato-san calling after her.

Izaya was pretty sure what was left unsaid from the sentence was: “or hurt someone else”.

“Hai Managing Director Kato-sama!” she shouted as she was searching in the drawers of her desk to find her ridiculous notebook.

“Oh you found it? Good! Now write down what I will tell you. When you press Print on a document you will see a tab saying Settings on the left okay? You will go there and change the Print on Both Sides option to Print One Sided. You just click into the little box next to the sentences. And If I tell you otherwise you will change it back to how it was before. It is very easy. Go do some practice, ne? And please remember to clip the pages together so we won’t lose any!”

“Hai! Thank you, Editor Orihara-san! Ano..Call me if you need anything! Goodbye Managing Director Kato-sam- ouch!”

Jo-san was expressing her appreciation while holding tightly her pink notebook and walking backwards while constantly bowing which very obviously had led her bumping on the doorframe while exiting the office.

Izaya praised himself for only laughing internally. Boss-san was turning read trying not to snort at her.
After she had closed the door both men waited a few seconds looking discretely at the glass to make sure she was seated at her office and couldn’t hear them.

Izaya couldn’t resist teasing Kato-san a bit then.

He raised his hand and childishly started to wave to Jo-san’s back with a big grin on his face.

“Bye-bye Jo-san~! Thank you for not dropping by five minutes earlier when Boss-sama here was asking me If I plan to procreate with you or if I’m gay~! That would have been awkward~!”

“If anyone told you that you are funny, they lied.”

“Then you have a terrible sense of humor since you are laughing at my bad jokes!”

“But seriously, Izaya-kun, you are very kind hearted! Unnecessarily, if I dare say so!” Boss-san applauded in awe.

“Well I don’t make a habit of going around shouting at girls till they cry Boss-san! What kind of man I would be? I just used to step on their self-phones! Besides, we both agreed that we have to be nice to our secretaries, they are the ones brewing our coffee!”

And that’s a small sample of how days passed by in Tokyo for the three first months.

Now it was February already; the cold was a tiny bit more tolerable and the days were sunnier and slightly longer for the most part.

Most importantly though everything had been good so far!

Izaya had been adapting quite well in the office and in Edogawa, he hadn’t encountered any trouble at all in Tokyo and was even enjoying himself a bit.

His favorite time had been the New Year’s holiday! It was probably the nicest memory he had from the past decade and even if bits of it had faded slightly -because unfair as it was it is easier for humans to recall accurately their worst memories rather than their best; funny creatures indeed -he had his treasured red-framed glasses to remind him that it indeed had been real and he could relive that weird warmth in his stomach that he wouldn’t dare to call happiness for fear he was mistaken and this was some other feeling instead.

Sure, he was still a bit paranoid and avoided the central wards at the night, often looking over his shoulder when outside and rushing to lose himself in the crowds while sticking only between Chiyoda, Bunkyo and Edogawa.

He hasn’t even approached Shinjuku to check his old house yet but he didn’t want to risk sneaking in and everything going to hell if something went wrong.

It was a big risk to take just for the sake of a house that probably didn’t even belong to him.

In fact, if he had lost it, it would be convenient in a way since he had decided that at least wouldn’t have to worry about all those delayed taxes.

Ikebukuro was obviously a red zone he would never cross since that was the only place that was truly dangerous.

‘Stay out of Ikebukuro!’

That phrase was repeating itself like a mantra in his head and also was a form of reassurance that he
would stay out of trouble.

Stay out of Ikebukuro it was.

Not ‘Stay out of Edogawa or Chiyoda or Bunkyo’.

There wasn’t a rule about those places so it was okay.

Besides, that person had nothing to do with those districts.

He was like a mad dog peeing on the borders of Ikebukuro to mark its spot. Because that person hardly ever left that spot, he had to “guard” his place, right?

All in all, Izaya had been very careful with his actions not to draw attention to himself and the places he was going.

He took however some extra precautions just in case.

He would shower thoroughly every morning before leaving his house, which was very troublesome because with his slow movements he took so long so he couldn’t enjoy his few hours’ sleep and he felt extra cold when outside, and then he would bathe in cologne to make sure he doesn’t “smell” or better yet “stink”.

Not that he ever smelled funny or anything, Izaya had always been a bit of a hygiene freak, however that person always screamed at him that he “stunk” and that he could figure out where he was based on that non-existent sent of his! And the thing is that times and times again it had happened making Izaya even more paranoid that maybe the other wasn’t kidding when he claimed he could actually detect him from that smell.

Boss-san though had disapproved his sudden heavy cologne-wearing habit to Izaya because it got him nauseous in the mornings but if that was even partly true and Boss-san wasn’t teasing him, Izaya would prefer thousands of times over having Boss-san throwing up his morning coffee on him, then him having every single bone of his body obliterated!

He would also check regularly the various Tokyo forums just in case someone had seen him and no one had ever mentioned anything about him for a long time and were focused to more hot topics like the Headless Rider and the colorless gangs.

Besides when Izaya was moving in the central Tokyo he was basically wheeling his way back and forth from the office to the train station and the opposite which was roughly a fifteen-minute distance, and maybe on Fridays roaming around a bit in Chiyoda with Boss-san a bit during dinner time but nothing much.

Lately him and Boss-san had started hanging out at Bunkyo more too -which was a bit worrisome considering how close to Toshima it was- since after they had their “boys time”, like Mayumi-san called it, they could spend some time with her too at home and he had his own room to stay the night. Usually he would go back to Edogawa on Saturday mornings and spend the rest of his weekend there which was probably the safest time he had.

He had nothing to worry really, he should get his shit together!

However, apparently everything can go to hell in the span of no more than fifteen minutes…

These traitorous fifteen minutes he needed from the train station to the office.
These fucking fifteen minutes!

It would be funny how fast everything changes for relatively good to crap in the blink of an eye and how a human can go from experiencing a relative contentment to horrific terror when they least expect it.

It would be hilarious in fact -if he wasn’t the person who was currently feeling that his heart had stopped -and Izaya would swear later that at that moment it actually had stopped.

It had been a perfectly normal morning!

He had done everything correctly! Woken up, drink coffee, shower, get dressed, bathe in cologne - he had, hadn’t he? – take his briefcase, go to the Hirai train station, catch the train of the Chuo-Sobu line, get down at Yotsuda station -how he would regret not missing that train later when his mind would regain functionality again- and wheel to the Japan Times headquarters.

He wasn’t even looking in front of him while wheeling, too distracted observing the humans who were rushing right and left around him.

Then while he was approaching the building, he felt eyes on him.

It was a bit surprising really, because in Tokyo -on contrast to Osaka- no one spared time to pity-stare him or something since everyone was in a rush to reach their destination.

Still he didn’t like being stared at, it was uncomfortable, so while he though about ignoring the asshole and going to his way he raised his head and locked eyes with them in a challenge to pass them the message that he didn’t appreciate treated like a specimen because he couldn’t walk.

And that was the moment everything came crashing down on him, he felt like the carefully constructed and heavily guarded crystal bubble he had built for himself that was now his life fall and scattered to millions of tiny fragments in front of his useless legs.

He didn’t even have time to take a proper look on the other, their eyes being locked an neither moving a muscle, even though they stayed like that staring at each other from a distance for what felt like ages.

Honestly in that moment he couldn’t do anything; talk, move, breath, feel.

He could just stay frozen at his spot, eyes locked with the person’s barely ten meters front of him, standing basically a bit further from Japan Times, and do nothing.

He could think though.

His brain had started screaming at him so many different things all together he felt his head would explode!

’No, no, no!’

’Please tell me this is not happening!’

’How did he find me?’

’Not now!’

’I’ll lose everything.’
‘I don’t want to die!’

‘I can’t run!’

‘I’m helpless!’

‘Kato-san? Jo-san? ANYONE!’

He saw the other opening his mouth and saying something. He didn’t scream at his though and with the distance he couldn’t hear correctly.

One part of it was had been his name though, he could tell that much.

As for Izaya himself, he couldn’t voice any of his thoughts.

The one and only thing in his brain was this one word he had successfully deleted from his brain almost three years now.

The word he hadn’t though -let alone voiced out loud- that felt so alien in his brain he couldn’t imagine how it would feel on his tongue.

The word that was associated with so many negative emotions; pain, anger, jealously, fear, hate; he felt he would get drowned in all that inner chaos it created.

His brain hadn’t caught up with his tongue fast enough though, so there staring at the other standing right in front of him he said it.

“Shizu-chan.”

The moment he voiced the other’s nickname it was like the beast had snapped out of whatever trace he had fallen.

In a blink of an eye the other was in front of him, looking positively deranged and without wasting any time he had grabbed him from the front of his shirt and dragged him forward and towards him; he would have lifted him off the wheelchair completely if Izaya hadn’t hold on its sides for dear life.

Fuck, the blond had always been bigger than him in every sense, but right now with Izaya half sitting on the chair and the other standing tall and almost looming over him that beast looked massive, which made him appear more terrifying than Izaya had ever seen him.

Had he always been that scary?

Why was anyone pretending not to see what was happening right now and going on their way?

Why no one was trying to stop the other from obviously intending to tear him apart?

Honestly the fear he had felt at that moment had been almost as bad as the moment he had snapped after that fight and realized that he was bleeding everywhere and would probably wouldn’t survive the next couple of days. Even then though, he had managed to appear aloof and uncaring in front of Celty who had eventually found him and sealed his wound and Manami and Kine who had driven him away from Tokyo.

Now though he was frozen like a deer caught in the headlights.

Because right now he was currently staring his biggest fear quite literally in the face!
The only thing he could do was raise one hand and grab the other’s wrist trying to force him to let go.

Who he was kidding really, as if he could ever force the other to do anything he didn’t want to -and from the looks of it he wasn’t planning on letting him go any time soon!

Probably he was thinking of dragging him in an alley and snapping his neck!

The more Izaya’s brain worked in that direction the more he felt like he would start hyperventilating any time soon.

His sense of time had dulled, he couldn’t tell if hours had passed or seconds since the moment the other grabbed him.

It didn’t matter though, he had to say something, otherwise the other would not relent!

He didn’t have time though to open his mouth before the other’s voice spoke in anger.

“You fucking bastard! After everything you did-?! I’ll fucking kill you this time and make sure you stay dead!”

The fact that the blond wasn’t screaming at him and instead his voice was cold and calm made Izaya even more livid in his attempt to escape abandoning the second handle of his chair to grab that person’s hand to free himself since he could not be sure if the beast just spewed threats or was serious about killing him. If one thing that person was, that was unpredictable!


“The fuck? You have some fucking nerve flea, showing your shitty face here after years and expect me to sit back and watch as you fuck the city up with your schemes once again!”

“It-its not..Ik-Ikebukuro here!”

Izaya was half clawing to the offending hand for dear life while he was trying to form coherent sentences!

“Do you take me for an idiot? Why the fuck are you in Tokyo? I can’t fucking believe you’ve been under my nose all this time you bastard!”

“W-Who are you to tell me where I can or c-cannot go?”

What the was wrong with him? Why was he speaking like that all of a sudden?

And most importantly why the hell was aggravating the other when he should be smart and try not to set him off?

Was he that stupid?

“Did you expect a warm welcome and a free pass to ‘Bukuro after the shit you pulled? Do you expect me to spare you after you tried to suffocate and set me on fucking fire the last time?”

“Be-beating me to a bl-bloody pulp with that assassin is n-not enough then? Y-you almost..k-killed me!”

“Nice try flea, but I won’t fall for this shitty act of yours. Now, get the fuck up from that wheelchair
and go back to wherever you came from before I squash your fucked-up head with it like the disgusting bug you are!"

“I c-can’t! You st-stupid protozoan!! I c-can’t g-get up! A-aren’t you happy? Y-ou crippled me -y- you fucking monster!”

Yes, apparently, Izaya was indeed that stupid! He went and done it right then and there! He knew it the moment he had called the other a “monster”.

Naturally, he had to make a shitty situation shittier!

He just couldn’t control himself! But he wasn’t only terrified, he was angry as hell too! And he still had his pride if nothing else! He wouldn’t beg and plead that one-brain-cell asshole! He wasn’t that pathetic!

“What the fuck did you just call me?..You haven’t learned your fucking lesson huh, Izaya?”

At that point Izaya was pushed back to the wheelchair which the other had grabbed and pulled Izaya towards him effectively trapping him.

Izaya felt like a cornered mouse at that point, he was losing his composure faster and faster but he knew when he saw the blond’s balled fist starting to raise that this was it for him. He could just sit there and take whatever the other would throw at him, literally and figuratively!

“Le-let go!..I said let me go you mindless beast!”

He shouted in a final attempt to reason with the other although his choice of words wasn’t the best one obviously; thankfully he didn’t stutter that time at least.

He couldn’t help but close his eyes and retreat to the wheelchair’s back waiting for the pain.

Though the pain never came.

And then he heard it:

“Sumimasen~! Is something the wrong here between you and my Izaya-kun, bartender-san?”

‘Boss-san?’

Izaya opened his eyes the first thing seeing being his old boss looking like a midget against a giant having reached out for the other man’s arm and smiling all friendly and ready for a freakin’ chat!

“How the fuck are you?”

“Kato-san..”

Izaya couldn’t help but murmur in warning, feeling his stress levels skyrocketing at that point!

He didn’t want Boss-san involved with Heiwajima Shizuo of all people in any way!

The other was fuming and Izaya didn’t want him to take out his anger to an innocent human just because he associated himself with Izaya!

Moreover, he didn’t want the blond to open his mouth and start explaining how exactly him and Izaya knew each other!
There were too many things at stake for Izaya to lose if that happened!

“I have to ask you to please excuse my boy if he provoked you in any way. He is not the most sensible but, he means well I assure you!”

“Huh?”

“…”

Great! Boss-san now was in the parent-at-a-school-meeting mode with his worst enemy! The only good thing was that he had the other as baffled as he felt right now which effectively saved him a couple of seconds from the inevitable disaster!

Still Kato-san kept going and Izaya knew the other didn’t have any intention of leaving any time soon especially after he had witnessed part of the ordeal!

“I am sure it is all a misunderstanding however, please accept my apology on his behalf! As his boss I will take full responsibility for whatever trouble he caused you!”

“Kato-san..don’t-“

“Hush, boy.”

“Flea’s boss? The fuck are you two schem-?”

Oh, Izaya was very sure he knew were this was going! The protozoan had probably mistaken Boss-san for yakuza or something equally shady and he was about to inquire about it with the old man!

Izaya had to think fast to calm the other at least a bit before more damage happened, so his pride being damned he reached for the blond’s wrist, his trembling cold fingers closing around it in a weak grip and yelled:

“Heiwajima-san!”

Yes, that did it!

The protozoan had shut up when he had heard the formal way Izaya addressed him, though he pulled his wrist out of Izaya’s grip like he had been burned.

“Do not -fucking- touch me.”

Still Izaya ignored him and went on as normally as he could.

“W-we will catch up another t-time, ne Heiwajima-san?”

“Huuh?”

Good keep calling him like that and playing nice; the protozoan was too stupid to get what’s going on but at least he would shut up that way!

“Oh! You both know each other Izaya-kun?”

“W-we were classmates. In high school. Everything is fine here Kato-san, really.”

Izaya tried to smile as reassuringly as he could to the old man. At least his stuttering was ceasing now that Boss-san was here.
“Oh! I am very sorry bartender-san! I didn’t realize you were acquaintances with Izaya-kun! For a-”

“We are not.”

‘Shut the fuck up you fucking amoeba, for fuck’s sake!’

“ -moment there I feared he got himself into trouble! I guess boys are a bit rough when they express their acquaintanceship nowadays! It’s really interesting actually for a person my age to witness! Anyways, time is money as they say, so if you would excuse us, me and Izaya-kun here have a deadline to catch! Now Izaya-kun we better hurry up! Bartender-san!”

Kato-san bowed a bit being all smiles; seriously the guy could be a diplomat with his ability to play stupid and act respectful and friendly out of the blue, but Izaya didn’t doubt for a moment that Boss-san had caught the obvious animosity in the air.

How could he not, since protozoan didn’t do anything to hide his feelings. Why would he? He has nothing to lose!

Then Boss-san did something he hadn’t ever done before.

He walked behind Izaya, grabbed the handles of his chair and started pushing it towards the building casually, where the Paper was operating.

“Izaya -”

‘Just don’t say anything unnecessary!’

“Hai?”

“We will see each other again. Soon.”

Yes, that was very clearly a threat, Izaya could tell that much.

“I will be looking forward to it!”

Izaya replied with as happy a tone of voice as he could make looking back the other with a look that clearly said “Go die!” in an attempt to hide from him how shaken this whole encountered had left him.

Izaya knew he would need days, maybe even weeks, to calm down.

“Ne, Izaya-kun.” Kato-san told him after they entered the elevator when they were alone.

“Oh-hai Boss-san?”

“This old classmate of yours -he looks like bad news! I don’t think you should see him again.”

“Why- why would you say that?”

“Why are you talking like Jo-san boy? Anyways, that man’s vocabulary is vulgar! Also, the dyed blond hair- he must be a delinquent! Please keep your distance okay?”

“You didn’t even have to ask boss-san! Me and Heiwajima-san aren’t that close anyways.”

“Good. Keep it that way. I don’t want you to turn into a thug!”
But he knew that protozoan wouldn’t leave him alone so easily.

He didn’t doubt at all that now that the protozoan had seen him enter the building, he had put two and two together and he would make sure to corner him in the very near future.

Soon, he had said.

There would be no escape from the beast, Izaya knew that already.

He just had to calm his shit and be prepared for their next encounter.

He wouldn’t be all pathetic and whimpering in front of Shizu-chan of all people ever again!

That asshole had humiliated and ruined him enough as it was!

He wouldn’t be weak! He would not!

By the time he had reached his office and the adrenaline had left his system that suffocating feeling he had been uselessly surprising had hit him full force.

He sensed that he would pass out seconds before it happened.

‘It’s been years since I’ve missed a deadline. It’s your fault again, you, stupid beast’.

Chapter End Notes

He He hoped you enjoyed this chapter and both Shizuo and Izaya's first short-lived meeting! ;)

Don't be mad to Boss-san for interrupting them though, it was either that or Shizuo start breaking Izaya's bones (maybe :P)

I tried to surprise you a bit by not mentioning it before but I guess you knew it was coming because it wasn't exactly a state secret! xD

In the next chapter we'll see more about how Shizuo interpreted the events and how they will be coping (not) after their meeting.

As always feel free to give me your feedback and opinions if you have anything you feel like sharing!

Next update will be probably sometime next month! Goodnight! xD
Chapter 11

Chapter Notes

Hello! New month -new massive chapter!! (^_^)
I would have made this chapter even longer but I decided to break it to two chapters
cause it would be endless afterwards!
This time we get lots of Shizuo's POV & a bit of Izaya's too along with Izaya/Boss
bromance to lighten the mood cause I think this got a bit dark just like Shizuo's mood
right now! xD I just want to write Shizaya in fluff-land alreadyyy! (T0T)
Please let me know your thoughts, feelings, advice or constructive criticism on this
chapter!
Next one will be possibly ready by the end of this month cause I have lots of stuff ready
for it. 😊

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Have you ever felt that everything you know is a lie?

Have you ever thought that you know how the world works, and even though you don’t like it
you’ve grown to accept it -because really what else could you do? One cannot change how the
world works by themselves after all, unless you are willing to get torn apart and taint your soul in the
process that is.

But then, when you have finally started adapting to this terrible reality that your life is and when you
have finally started to believe that maybe-just maybe- it’s not that bad, and that maybe -just maybe-
you can survive it and even be relatively happy with those little things kami-sama has gifted you with
and with the even less things you have achieved by yourself, what would happen when you would
finally realize that in reality the world works in even more horrific ways than you originally
believed?

And maybe it was even good how it worked before and you failed to appreciate it as you should
have because you were too much of a greedy asshole to see it clearly..

What would you do then?

Would you say you saw it coming and go your way?

Would you stand there and stare that horrible reality in the eyes disbelieving?

Would you feel surprise?

Would you feel anger?

Would you feel fear?

Would you feel betrayal?

Would you feel sorrow?

What would you feel really?
Maybe none of them at all?

Maybe one or two of those things?

Maybe all of them together in a sick suffocating mix?

Wouldn’t you feel lost and confused and furious as fuck, for feeling so many different things all together at once, while seconds ago you were just peaceful?

And towards whom your feelings would be your feelings be directed?

Honestly, who would you blame?

The world because it deceived you?

That new reality because it revealed itself to you finally?

Yourself because you could not be unaffected?

A coincidence that may or may have not have happened at a different point -or even never?

Fate because you just really needed to blame something -anything- right at that moment?

Fate.

“Fate works in funny ways”, Tom-san have told him once during middle school, a day he was treating him some milk after school and then he had agreed, because it seemed to make sense and sounded kind of a cool adult phrase men with experience in life would say.

Funny?

Nothing about this was fucking funny!!

If that was fate then fucking fate could go and fuck itself because it was the biggest son of the bitch ever apparently!!

That is exactly the thinking process he would have followed and the conclusion he would have ended up to.

That is if Heiwajima Shizuo would have half a mind -and mood- to get all philosophic that god accursed moment!

Honestly that normalcy have been too good to be true.

It had lasted for almost what?

A month and a half?

He should have suspected earlier that his good days were numbered and not relax too much.

But he couldn’t help it! After New Year’s he just felt so much better!

He was gaining his life back after so long slowly but surely!

He felt so much calmer and he didn’t have almost any outbursts which lead to minimal unintentional demonstrations of his monstrous strength and thus, general destruction!
When had that ever happened again?

Debt collecting to the new wards was quite enjoyable even though he had to wake up earlier and commute with public transportation at times instead of walking as he preferred.

There were less scumbags than Ikebukuro and Shinjuku in the three new wards all together especially since there were vast business areas with a large percentage of foreigners, which was good because foreigners wouldn’t risk to be involved with too many illegal shit, since they weren’t very familiar with the Japanese law and all, making them more cautious.

So far at least he hadn’t encountered anything particularly dangerous or unusual. Mostly the same. A few gangs here and there who targeted business people and rich foreigners to steal money from maybe, but these people were not problem for Shizuo to deal with. Even those who didn’t know him in these wards -or only knew him by name- were quick to cut the shit out the moment the first punch flew straight in their faces, though most often than not he didn’t have to resolve to violence.

Thankfully the people who he was supposed to be collecting debts from were also gutless assholes that handed the money immediately and even those who were full of themselves at first didn’t need a full demonstration of his strength to hand him the money or politely beg him for some extra time -his large frame, height and deep growl were intimidating enough it seemed.

The other good thing about these wards were that they had everything! He was practically exploring more of Tokyo through his job now.

He couldn’t believe how many nice and peaceful places where all around Tokyo that he had never seen knew about before! At times he felt like a tourist in his own city funny as it sounded!

Tom-san would come meet him in the new wards every once in a while, if he didn’t have much work himself for them to relax together to a nice café and have some milkshake or desert -him at least, Tom-san was a coffee or soda kind of person.

That was the other best part!

There were so many bakeries, cake shops and cafes in those places with so many different sweets, some of them he had never heard nor seen before! He assumed that maybe they were so many new things to try there because these were stuff that the foreigners were familiar with in their countries so it was sort of a “tastes like home” kind of thing.

Still though everything was so new to Shizuo!

It was his personal reward if he did well and kept his temper while working, to visit a new shop each time and buy something delicious to treat himself for his good work!

It was a bit silly maybe for an adult to motivate himself in regards of his doing job -let alone maintaining his temper- with deserts but it worked for him just fine so he tried not to care much.

Well, sometimes he got a funny look or two when he entered a cake shop and would ask the employee for the cutest and most girly-looking desert -because let’s face it, the more adorable the yummier- he could detect behind the cold glass. He could often see the employees taking a quick look or two behind his back searching most likely for the girl he was “expected” to buy it for and well- saw either no one with him or Tom-san - which made things a tiny bit awkward.

To be fair it was highly unusual by social standards for a guy to order something “girly” like pink cat donuts, animal parfaits, rainbow cakes and unicorn milkshakes… Most of them probably would go at best with the manly deserts -which were usually all brown or black and looked sad and unappealing
in his eyes, or something traditional instead which was fine most of the time but not as sweet as he’d like. But still compromising his sweet tooth to avoid getting funny looks was stupid.

Anyways, his favorite desert places so far out of the three new wards had been in Chiyoda.

There was always the smell of freshly baked cake and whipped cream in the air that made his mouth water and helped him relax and feel at ease whenever he was there. The only thing that sort of mixed weirdly with the smell of Chiyoda was this other bitter thing, he couldn’t put his finger off.

The only other downside he could think of was that the new wards were pretty big to walk around, especially Minato which included more than 20 different areas! Thankfully, there were also a couple other debt collectors the company had assigned working in these wards so based on what Tom-san had said he would debt collect from only certain areas himself -usually those that were considered red-zones. Still he could spend an hour going from the one side of a ward to the other on foot at best; his salary was better now but still not enough for him to take the train ten times a day!

Other than those few changes in his quiet life everything was mostly the same.

The flea was there as usual but they were getting along a bit better now.

Well, his little imaginary enemy still interfered here and there, mainly at moments Shizuo would feel almost contentment just to remind him that he is a freak and shouldn’t get too comfortable; he had blood on his hands so he didn’t really deserve any peace or happiness.

Shizuo wasn’t too angry though because he already knew these things and he couldn’t ignore that he had murder a -not so innocent- human being even he wanted to, so really flea’s interjections were becoming a bit unnecessary.

He had been contemplating a couple of days after the New Year’s celebrations were officially over, what had made a difference during his interactions with the flea in his head during those days that made it less spiteful.

At first, he had though it was simply his good mood, or maybe that he started to disassociate the bastard in his head with the one in the flesh, but the more he was thinking of it he had come to the realization - It was sort of an epiphany really!- that whenever he gave up fighting the jerk the other shut his mouth up faster and took longer to bother him again.

It made sense in a weird way.

Apparently, his brain followed a pattern at the flea invasions.

The more he disliked the pest’s thoughts, the more he tried to repress the intrusion or fight with these thoughts, the greater the frequency of them he experienced and the magnitude of the damage they left him with. The very act of trying to resist and not have a bothersome thought guaranteed all the more its resurfacing.

He even had tested his theory a couple of times to make sure.

The flea would say something and he would angrily say to him to fuck off and the bastard would not leave and instead keep talking and talking until he was left with a headache. Then at other times the flea would be back and he would just let him say his poisonous piece while struggling to concentrate to whatever he was doing therefore ignoring the other and indeed the pest would fuck of after a while on its own!

After he had confirmed that fact, he tried to change course of action one for good, rather than using
his brain as a guinea pig for such masochistic experiments.

He would just accept that yes, okay, he had a flea-thought which wasn’t the best obviously but there were worse things in life to deal with like poverty, illness, death et cetera, so certainly there were bigger pains in ass than flea, so he shouldn’t let intangible things like thoughts tear him apart!

Honestly a lot of things Izaya said about him were true anyways even back when that pest was alive.

But even though he would never admit to the real flea that he had been right, he would accept whatever the one in his head mocked him with. All he had to do really was sincerely accept the mockery like he had done on the New Year’s Eve and just like that the flea would lose interest on him or at least be less of a pest when he chose to stay so Shizuo would tolerate him better.

It was that simple really!

And just like that his record had fallen to three horrible thoughts per day in a month! Three!

He hadn’t had three horrible flea thoughts per day even in high school!

That was amazing really!

His head felt so much lighter and emptier compared to before!

And then humorless asshole fate happened…

The moment everything went to hell after all of his hard efforts, he literally though he was going to end up straight to the asylum, because there was no – motherfucking - way!

Having torturous thoughts in his head whispering in the voice of his most hated enemy was one thing!

Seeing things too though?

That’s it, after suffering for so long from his guilt he had gone crazy!!

That had been his first thought at that time.

And that thought had terrified him right to his core!!

He felt cold sweat hitting him and his limps struggling to stay still and not shake like crazy at the prospect that his tired and weakened mind had finally snapped and he would end up spending the rest of his days alone and disconnected from reality with this illusion he was currently seeing as his only company.

Why now?

He had thought he was getting better!

He was healing he had been sure of it!

How the fuck could he relapse like that so suddenly and without even noticing? How was this possible?

Would it be too late for him to ask for help?

Maybe if his craziness was at an early stage, he would at least stop seeing stuff and be left with the
The voice, where was the voice?

It was as if suddenly the constant presence of the flea in his head had been violently extracted from it and he was all alone again in his head.

He knew deep down in that instant -and he would confirm it in the future- that after that day he would never hear that voice in his head again, because it had no reason to be there anymore.

Oh, how much he missed the voice right now!!

It was so much easier to deal with the voice that with hallucinations and only at that moment he had realized like the idiot he was!

Because that thing in front of him was a hallucination! It could not be tangible, right?

It couldn’t be!

It was only his imagination, but it-couldn’t-be-fucking-real!

Right?

Really now, that morning had started like usual and without any cause of worry and suddenly his brain had apparently cracked for no fucking reason!!

He woke up barely an hour and a half ago feeling quite well rested and peaceful. He had followed his morning routine -which wasn’t exactly a routine because he had never been one with a military logic and scheduling.

He just did what he felt each morning like doing, whether that meant get up quickly, cook a relatively nice breakfast -though he wasn’t the best cook embarrassing as it was for a single guy his age who lived a decade alone- tidy his room or shower quickly, or maybe relax under the warm bed covers for a while and then spend some extra time in the bathroom to tame his morning erection while dreaming of his soulmate, before getting ready to leave without eating or just drink some milk and smoke one cigarette on the balcony -just because old habits die hard. Anything really!

That particularly day he had chosen not to spend too much time snuggling with his blanket in favor of a longer shower and spending some time doing some quick chores in his house. He had barely the time to reheat some left-over steamed rice and natto while gulping down a bowl of instant miso soup, before eating as fast as he could taking his stuff and heading fast to the Higashi-Ikebukuro train station which was the closest one to his house to catch the train of the Yarakucho Line to Kojimaji.

Thankfully he caught the train on time and the whole trip was roughly twenty-five minutes so he would be there at least an hour before the office workers would start arriving to their respective companies, just like he had wanted.

He hoped to ambush a particular scumbag that worked in Chiyoda that the other debt-collectors had yet to track successfully.

Once he arrived to his destination, he took out of his inner vest pocket a long list with details of the assholes he had to collect money from that Tom-san had passed him the previous day.

It consisted of names, pictures, addresses, money sums and reasons for being in debt.
First on the list, his name highlighted with red ink a few times was some Matsuyuta Gin.

That guy was supposedly around his mid-forties and from what Shizuo could tell from the photo he had, he looked like those high profile people you would never consider they are scums -serious and professional looking. Apparently though he was a notorious bastard!

He had debts with interest that reached the ¥7,883,850 due to keep borrowing money to spend on gambling, exclusive clubbing and the red-light district at Kabukicho.

‘Ts! Disgusting piece of shit!’

The fact that he had to read about fucking Kabukicho in the morning made his stomach turn. It was a chain reaction really; Kabukicho was located in Shinjuku and Shinjuku reminded him of fucking fleabag!

Moreover, Matsuyuta Gin’s seemingly notorious lifestyle added in the mix that directed Shizuo’s thoughts even more to the pest!

Because Shizuo had always been pretty sure that the flea led a similar lifestyle to this guy -with the added yakuza dealings.

Why else that pest was wondering in Shinjuku at ungodly hours that no decent man would be out after all! Supposedly the other was “collecting information” but Shizuo never quite believed that. But at least Izaya could afford whatever shit he did unlike this bastard here!

Shizuo didn’t doubt that he would probably have to give Matuyuta a punch or two because he could very much bet that there would be no chance such a man would have that much money, let alone intending to pay back his debt and Shizuo probably would end up empty handed.

At least he hoped to locate him though.

Tom-san had been a few days before at this man’s house a newly built apartment in Roppongi.

‘No wonder such a scum would choose to live there!’

Roppongi was, if anything, one of the liveliest nightlife areas in Tokyo!

Thankfully, his sempai with his calm and friendly demeanor -on contrast to Shizuo’s rough and unpolished one- had managed to pick up from the neighbors that “only recently” they had become aware of Matsuyuta’s absence when a notice was stuck on his apartment door regarding several delayed rent payments.

“Recently” was good in Shizuo’s books; they still had a chance to get the bastard!

Surely, he would still go to his job or at least resigned formally giving some sort of “explanation” regarding where he would go! It wouldn’t necessarily been true but still they would have a lead!

No one in their right mind would disappear like that without taking care of such things because that would surely lead to someone looking for them or even a police report being filed reporting them missing!

Thankfully, the guy’s neighbors had also given Tom-san some information regarding his working place that Shizuo could only hope was accurate, otherwise he had woken up so early to run to Kioicho for nothing which would piss him off really bad!
In a small yellow post-it note that was stuck on the page regarding Matsuyuta Gin, his sempai had written the man’s work address and occupation.

Apparently that scum was working in a famous foreign newspaper or some shit -Shizuo didn’t read newspapers so he wouldn’t know really though the name sort of rang a bell- and was a big-fish-reporter there or whatever.

‘Front Page Editor, not Reporter!’ Shizuo reminded himself irritated.

He had to make sure to remember the title correctly because if he didn’t ambush the bastard at the entrance of the building he would have to go inside and inquire more about Matsuyuta’s whereabouts with his colleagues.

Appearing ignorant on the scum while requesting information on him could look very suspicious and make Shizuo appear as the shaddy one, while in fact it was the other way around.

After roughly ten minutes of walking he had arrived in front of a massive building that apparently housed a lot of offices and other companies.

The inside looked pretty fancy from a look he took from glass wall.

It reminded him a bit of the workplaces you see in dramas with the lobby with the well-dressed people and its swirly stairs and the big elevators and that massive hanging light with all those little crystals that were sparkling under the light which was hanging from the sealing.

The idea of going inside made him a bit uncomfortable honestly.

Shizuo was quite a simple person and he felt completely out of place in these types of environments. While he was not embarrassed about his income or job -in fact he was very grateful to have a job in the first place with his temper, not to mention he was never book-smart to begin with- he knew he would definitely get some stares from some of these people.

Still he maintained his general aloof stance that made him appear like he didn’t give a flying fuck in general, let alone feeling intimidated by the prospect of going inside.

He stood on his spot patiently and waited all the while scanning those few who had started to enter the building sporadically, in case he would find Matsuyuta already.

No such luck.

‘Still too early maybe..’

He breathed a bit the nice calming scent of Chiyoda though it was weak still since the freshly baked deserts got out of the ovens usually in the late morning.

As more time passed, Shizuo was growing increasingly agitated.

Now all the more people would walk in the building at the same time, squeezing together to pass through the glass door, so it made him anxious that he wouldn’t find that trash there.

The fresh sweet smell was a tad bit stronger now too; lots of people rushing at the few cafes left and right on the street to buy a last-minute breakfast before sprinting to their buildings’ entrances; others passing right next to him with paper bags filled with yummy goods.

However, that ever-there toxic bitterness also started to linger on the air and mix weirdly with
Chiyoda’s smell at some point without him realizing.

As he kept staring at the passerby walking towards his direction, as well as those who where coming from the same direction as him and passed him to continue their way, he couldn’t help but notice the small circle that those who were walking towards his direction were forming.

It reminded him almost these human-walls he had seen in pictures of protests, that formed to surround something in order to protect it from the world.

The only difference here was that these people were no protesters and most likely their only common interest in this case was to rush to surpass rather than protect whatever it was that was slowing them down that was in the middle.

Still, the scene couldn’t help but draw his attention.

That something he assumed was at a lower height and took some space if he could judge from the distance between the people on both its sides, though he couldn’t really see it.

That thing approached his direction steadily though it was far still.

He knew already that it wasn’t Matsuyuta since the man based on the description should be around 1.78cm and on the slim side so he wouldn’t take so much space to move and he most likely would be at least a bit visible among the crowds.

Still though his eyes always returned back to the moving obstacle every second or so after he checked the building’s entrance.

At the traffic light the crowd in front of the object cleared a bit, he could see that the “obstacle” was in fact a disabled person wheeling his way towards his general direction.

That guy - was it a guy really? He couldn’t be sure from such distance- had some balls to wheel through the crowd and be right in the middle like he owned the pavement and didn’t gave a fuck if he was causing delay to the others.

Shizuo hadn’t seen that many people in this condition, but from those he had seen it seemed to him that they tend to shy away from the world; always wheeling on the side of the pavement that was usually closer to the buildings rather than the road, trying to go unnoticed and not disturb any of the other passerby as if they were to blame and should apologize for their disability.

Honestly, he had been a tiny bit impressed looking at this person since he had never seen someone on a wheelchair having such an attitude!

Still, he didn’t want to look too much because he couldn’t help but feel bad about people like that. He knew it wasn’t nice of him to pity the other but still it was impossible not to feel weird.

Usually everyone ignored those people in the street; he could see it happening right at that moment with everyone rushing left and right not slowing down to spare the other a glance or step a bit further to help make space for the wheelchair to cross safely the pedestrian cross, acting like there was no one right next to them.

He wanted to call them assholes for that and be angry, but he knew it would be hypocritical for he was the same, trying to ignore the other as soon as he had spotted him.

But he couldn’t help himself!
Really such sights just made him feel like his stomach clenched uncomfortably and then based on how painful was the sight to him, he could spend the hours going back thinking about it!

Celty told him once that is was because he had high levels of empathy, unlike his doctor friend, but he hadn’t agreed with her -in fact he still didn’t agree. A person with high levels of empathy wouldn’t beat scumbags up almost at a daily basis even if they did deserve it and should control its strength and temper way better than him.

Anyways, his point was that it was easier sometimes for people to ignore painful sights and keep going to protect themselves from feeling bad, cowardly as it sounds, so even if it was a jerk thing to do, he couldn’t really blame the other passersby.

Not after he also averted his eyes from the disabled person who had just crossed the road and was moving towards his direction right now on the pavement.

Besides if the other noticed him staring too long, wouldn’t that be rude?

No one liked to be regarded with pity after all.

Still he couldn’t help but taking a glimpse at the other again out of curiosity.

Shizuo was starting to think that he was probably a masochist and tried making himself feel bad over every little thing, because really, he had no reason to stare again!

Taking a bit more time to observe the person as the other kept moving closer and closer, he could see that it was in fact a man. He suspected before, because the body occupied too much space on the wheelchair -though it wasn’t exactly massive, far from it- but now, he could also see that the shoulders were a bit wide for it to belong to a woman, the front too flat.

The man was young looking, how young he couldn’t tell though and he was dressed like an office worker.

With his pale skin and black hair Shizuo was mostly sure the man was not a foreigner though he would have to look at his face to be sure that he was indeed Japanese.

One thing was for sure though:

‘That’s not Matsuyuta.’

He got another look for a few seconds towards the door and once again a fast glimpse on that man.

Honestly, he couldn’t explain his behavior, that was the first time he literally struggled to tear his eyes from anyone!

Suddenly he started to come to the realization that from the moment he laid his eyes on that man -no, maybe even before he saw him- his instincts had kicked in, and not without reason, because truth be told the closer that man moved the more familiar, he looked -and not in a good way!

Sure, this was Japan, there were several millions of people with fair skin tone and dark hair color but still, every face was different!

And from all the faces he had seen in his life, it was the first time he had encountered someone looking even relatively familiar with that one specific disgusting piece of trash!

No, no he was going crazy obviously and he should control himself before he snapped and he took it
out to an unsuspecting bastard that was disabled on top of that because he was projecting the fleabag on him!

Besides this couldn’t be right! His mind was playing tricks like usual!

Izaya always looked like a stupid asshole punk trying to appear scary or mysterious or whatever the fuck was he going for with his all black clothing, stupid fury jacket, disheveled hair and overall unkempt appearance. He was a disgusting thug and did everything he could for the world to see!

This guy looked way more respectable and upright than Izaya did at his best day, in his nice clothes, with his hair properly combed looking almost as smooth and in-place as Kasuca’s always did and he even wore reading glasses -Izaya never wore glasses! The man in front of him really was like those people who socialize at seminars and book clubs over tea and cookies and donate half their salary in charity or adopt pets from shelters! This guy looked like a good decent person!

No, no! Appearances could be deceiving!

Just take a look at Matsuyuta! That man had the same “proper aura” from what he could tell from the photo he had seen and he was one big discussing scumbag!

Take a look at Celty without knowing her and you would have pissed your self because she was headless when in fact, she was kind and caring!

Take a look at Kasuka in an interview and you would think he was a happy-go-lucky bubbly person that couldn’t keep a straight face when his little brother hardly blinked at his everyday life!

Just because that guy looked decent there was no guarantee that he really wasn’t a scumbag!

The fact that the closer the other moved towards Shizuo, those facial features looked more and more similar to the flea’s couldn’t be just a mere coincidence!

Even worst, what if no one was there in the first place and his mind had conjured someone that potentially could look like the flea?

There was a fat chance he was hallucinating and going crazy just at this fucking moment!

He knew he had some history of mental instability over the past two and a half years. He didn’t need someone to diagnose him to know that something was wrong and his mind was struggling with sickness…He wasn’t stupid not to realize himself, he knew! He was just scared to hear it from the lips of a doctor and he didn’t want to talk about what was going on in his head with anyone, not even his dearest friends, let alone some stranger!

But what if what he had done was wrong and now he was going even crazier?

Seeing things after hearing voices was the next step obviously -one before he was locked away for good!

Because of course his fucked-up head would be conjuring an image of fucking flea in the middle of Chiyoda!

He had a lot of images of the flea in his head from the past years; high school student Izaya, informant bastard Izaya, battered bloody Izaya, dead Izaya. All of them gave him nightmares and tortured him when awake, even the most seemingly innocent ones.

From the looks of it, an image of Izaya looking how he maybe would look if he was normal, instead
of a fucked-up bastard was a new version his mind has chosen to torture him, though it didn’t make sense because Izaya being abnormal and fucked up was not Shizuo’s fault. That, and the wheelchair was so random too!

Still though if Izaya was a trick of his mind wouldn’t people pass through him instead of sidestepping from him?

So, could they also see him?

But if they could -could this person be really -really- Izaya?

No, be couldn’t be, he had seen Izaya that night, he was tired and bleeding all over the place and in pain and no matter how hard he tried to appear superior ha had given up to the point that was standing there waiting for Vorona to blow his head up with that gun while doing nothing even though her interference would ruin his plans! Moreover, he had known the more time that passed with Izaya not showing up to Shinra’s house for treatment that something bad had happened to him.

‘Fuck, fuck, fuck, fuck…!’

Shizuo should just calm the fuck down and breath- inhale-exhale and repeat - accept what his brain was showing him now and then after he found Matsuyuta and finished his job of tracking down the other bastards, he would go to Shinra and ask for a medical opinion on his condition or at least pump up his system with these powders the doctor thought he tricked him into taking till he overdosed hopefully.

Fuck he should have gone to some expert or something as soon as he had realized something was wrong, instead he left it too late and now he was probably far too gone!

Just like that, you wake up one day, you think everything is fine and your brain snaps and BAM! You are crazy!

Shizuo was left standing on his spot, his body and brain almost shutting down for what felt like hours –he couldn’t tell how long it took for the other to cross the road and approach but honestly, was it possible for someone to have so many terrifying thoughts in a span of seconds? It sounded unreal!

And then just a step before Shizuo would have a complete mental break down and let his paranoia consume him completely the other probably sensed someone staring at him and raised his head.

And that was the moment his overloaded brain cleared from all the shitty thoughts and fear to be filled with such raw anger that he started trembling and breathing like he was physically struggling!

That fucking moment he saw that eyes locking with his own and the other froze right there, barely ten meters away from him, staring him as if his plans had been exposed Shizuo knew!

He wasn’t crazy!

Fucking Orihara Izaya was standing right there in front of him -in the flesh!

He was sure now; because not even in his lunatic of a brain could get the flea’s eyes correctly!

So vicious and ugly that made the light brown look almost red whenever that pest looked at him!

Like a demon!

In Shizuo’s mind, Izaya’s eyes looked either their normal color or the glowing red of those Saika
zombies but he knew that neither colors were correct.

This one here though, yes! That was the one!

Yes, this person was Izaya, there was no doubt! No one else have ever looked at him with so much disgust and hate other than the shitty flea!

Still looking how the other was obviously petrified in his spot, not daring look away made Shizuo surer that this person was not a hallucination, because if he had been he would have open his mouth already and start with the insults and the superiority act like usual!

Fucking hell!

How the fuck could flea be there?

HOW?!

“Izaya... You are really- Izaya -right?” he half-said half-whispered staring at the other completely at loss.

While his voice was quiet, his anger was boiling under his skin however.

He had spent so long believing he killed the other only for that bastard to take a new identity and live in fucking Tokyo unbothered?!

The longer he stared at this piece of shit the angrier he became now!

Izaya had always been a disgusting piece of trash but he had no shame at all apparently!

Impersonating a disabled person! How fucked up his head was, really?

Because Shizuo was sure, Izaya was standing perfectly fine during that night, he was capable to hop on cars and fight him and he was so agile he had stabbed him more times than in any other fight, even after Shizuo had hit him with that steal beam! Yes, he was limping while he fled that building but nothing more!

Even when he had punched him and was pretty sure he had broken something, Izaya still managed to get on his feet -something there was no other human to have managed after receiving Shizuo’s punch!

The only moment he had lost his balance and almost fell on his knees was when Vorona had stabbed him...

Shizuo from everything he could recall he was sure that never, ever, the flea had sustained any other critical hits!

The only thing could he do now was start replaying over and over the fight in his head trying to recall every single detail he could.

The fight Izaya started!

The fight he had started after once again had fucked royally every one up!

The fight that he brought Shizuo down to his knees when he tried to suffocate him, while he was standing there and watching him, laughing at him, humiliating him, till he was bored and decided it was time to blow him up as if Shizuo was an inanimate object, not a living and breathing being who
could still feel physical pain despite his strength -let alone emotional pain from all the shit Izaya constantly said to him- so what if he burned him down to ashes?

Because no matter how strong he was, no matter how unbreakable his bones were and how impossible for his skin to scar was Shizuo knew he would never survive being blown to bits!

And Izaya knew it also!

That’s why he had chosen such a dirty method to fight.. Just to prove his point, that FUCKING SICK MOTHERFUCKER!

Thinking back these memories now that he had the pest in front of him only served to make him feel so unbelievably stupid above else which made him even angrier!

It was normal feel guilt for a man being brutally murdered -even though by his own hand- no matter the wrong doings of the other.

But to be such big of a fool to leave tokens to the last place he and Izaya had fought for years, since he didn’t know where else to pay his respects -his fucking respects to a bastard that deserved not an ounce of his respect- to help that piece of shit rest and move over to the other side?

He couldn’t help but think back then that if he also forgotten about Izaya, not only he would become a full monster himself, but then there would be no one else to remember the other!

There was none else to give a single fuck about him, no one even mentioned him anymore, not even his sisters!

Treating someone like they never existed even, if they deserved it, was the cruelest thing Shizuo could imagine being done to anyone, dead or alive hardly mattered, and since he was the cause of Izaya’s “death” he had thought it right to be the one to take such bargain and at least continue to remember him!

All of these thoughts now seemed so fucking stupid! He was so fucking stupid!

Izaya had always been right calling him whatever the fuck else he used to degrade his intelligence -because he hadn’t any in the first place!

It was easier to soften up a bit to an imaginary Izaya that was apparently within his control.

But, when you had the real deal in front of you, how the fuck do you forgive and forget and move on?

Fantasy and reality are not the same!

Fantasy’s job is to smoothen up a much -much- shittier reality after all!

That’s it!

He would grab that fleabag and punch his living daylights out till his hands grew tired to hit him!

He wouldn’t kill him but he really -really- wanted to cause that bastard pain at that moment, to make him feel even a tiny bit of what Shizuo himself was going through that instant!

He had seen the other open his mouth and saying something barely a few seconds after Shizuo had mumbled his incoherent sentence, still looking towards him flabbergasted.
Shizuo read his lips and new in an instant that the little prick had used that fucking nickname he always mocked him with!

That was the last straw!

Fuck him and his stupid nicknames, the flea had a lot of nerve trying to aggravate him and still playing pretense instead of getting up and running for his stupid life, or lives better, because that pest had more lives than a cat; he wouldn’t die no matter what!

Shizuo hadn’t even realized how fast he moved but in instance he was right in front of the other and had that little bastard grabbed from the collar of his shirt!

Surprisingly the flea only grasped his hand and tried to free himself, wiggling his upper body a bit, all the while making sure to keep the fucking chair close with his other hand, since Shizuo had almost lifted him off of it.

He didn’t even pull out a switchblade from what Shizuo had seen but he couldn’t be sure.

He was so livid when he had finally grabbed the other to the point that the pest could have stabbed him right in the eye and he was sure he wouldn’t feel a thing!

He wanted to scream so many things he didn’t know where to start really!

The distant past, the resent past, the revelation that the other was alive?

The first thing that came out of his mouth was:

“You fucking bastard! After everything you did-?! I’ll fucking kill you this time and make sure you stay dead!”

He didn’t even know what to say to the other, so it was easier to just go with whatever and threaten the other to kill him like usual since it was a familiar “ice breaker” that signaled the start of their fights usually.

He was surprised that his voice came out quite flat, he almost didn’t recognize himself with how calm and collected he had been when he was seething inside so badly!

All in honest, it was a good thing that he had achieved to have some semblance of control of himself over these past years and not fall into blind rage so he wouldn’t add more causalities to his list - though apparently that list had dropped to zero now.

He felt a tiny bit proud of himself for actually being able to think properly for a change when it came to that scum.

“Killing Izaya” had been the most traumatic event of his life, so he guessed it made some sense that he was extra careful to able to maintain his logic, now that again he would have to deal with Izaya - even if said carefulness was very heavily concealed under many -many- blankets of wrath that made him looked simply deranged!

The last thing he needed was to traumatize himself even further by not being careful when handling the other and then suffering even more later!

This wasn’t going to be the “screaming insults while chasing the bastard” type of fight after all.

He needed to be alert and reasonable no matter what the other would do, to make sure that he
wouldn’t kill him accidentally or damage him too badly the moment he started to beat the crap out of him!

Because that much he had decided the moment he realized Izaya was really there; he would make him feel even a bit of his pain properly, even if just this once, now that he was granted the chance!

While he expected the little bastard to start kicking and stabbing, abandon his pretense of being disabled and start with the cocky act the other just stood there squirming in his grasp and acting all panicky.

“Shi-Shizu-chan, wait..I c-can’t… -Le-leave me alone!”

‘Ts! Sick fucking son of the bitch with his stupid nicknames!’

How dare he stutter and yell and act all pathetic and afraid of him to make himself look like the victim?

Izaya in the past at least had some pride, this mess of an act was making him look like a complete fool.

Moreover, seeing him acting like a weakling, clinging on his hand and looking at him with his eyes almost popping out of their sockets like he was choking was all the more infuriating considering how smug and arrogant he acted during all the shit he pulled the last time they had fought!

And now he was back to fuck everything up once again!

“The fuck? You have some fucking nerve flea, showing your shitty face here after years and expect me to sit back and watch as you fuck the city up with your schemes once again!”

The bastard had dared to stutter at that, that they were not in Ikebukuro, as if Chiyoda wasn’t a part of fucking Tokyo!

As if someone like Izaya couldn’t mess with Ikebukuro from a distance if he wanted!

What if he was fucking with other wards all this time?

What if now it was Chiyoda’s time and before that he had fucked up everything in Shibuya or Minato or somewhere else?

Shizuo wouldn’t put it past him really!

“Do you take me for an idiot? Why the fuck are you in Tokyo? I can’t fucking believe you’ve been under my nose all this time you bastard!”

Of course, the flea instead of giving him an explanation about why he was in Tokyo he decided to act high and mighty like usual and scream at him who he was to tell him where to go!

The nerve!

Yes, that was more like Izaya now, acting like he owned the city.

“Did you expect a warm welcome and a free pass to ‘Bukuro after the shit you pulled? Do you expect me to spare you after you tried to suffocate and set me on fucking fire the last time?”

‘Ts! Why do you take so long to fight back you pest?’
Seriously the only reason Shizuo was dragging this and haven’t started beating Izaya up yet was because he waited for the other to make the first move and try to stab him and then get up and run away so Shizuo would have the excuse tear him apart.

Otherwise, if the other kept this up and Shizuo dragged a seemingly disabled dude in an alley for a good beating then someone would call the cops on him for sure, even though he could tell that right now and in such a public place no one would dare to get involved.

“Be-beating me to a bl-bloody pulp with that assassin is n-not enough then? Y-you almost..k-killed me!”

Ts! Izaya managed to look so pathetic the moment he voiced that phrase that he sort of reminded Shizuo that the pest wasn’t the only bad guy here..

‘Fuck him!’

He was the one who started the whole fight for fuck’s sake, why he was trying to make Shizuo look like the only bastard here?

The fact that his conscience nagged him, reminding him how Izaya looked after he had beaten him up the last time made him lose his patience.

He was going to keep up acting huh? They’d see about that!

“Nice try flea, but I won’t fall for this shitty act of yours. Get the fuck up from that wheelchair and go back wherever you came from before I squash your fucked-up head with it like the disgusting bug you are!”

‘Come on you little bastard just do fucking something!’

That was the first moment of the whole thing started that Izaya’s fear-stricken face had almost managed to persuade him that maybe the other wasn’t acting and he sincerely couldn’t defend himself.

Just a very quick glimpse showed him that Izaya’s lower body was hanging practically limp, his feet still on the footrests of the wheelchair and his kneed turned to a somewhat weird angle that someone who could feel their legs maybe wouldn’t be able to maintain so long without even squirming a bit with the need to stretch.

‘Could it be that he really-?’

But the next phrase that left Izaya’s mouth reassured him all the more that the asshole was pretending and was just too good of an actor!

“I c-can’t! You st-stupid protozoan!! I c-can’t g-get up! A-aren’t you happy? Y-ou crippled me -y-you fucking monster!”

Oh! That had done it! Shizuo was once again stupid falling right into Izaya’s theatrics!

The other was trying to blame him for his supposed disability -maybe it was even real but who cares?

Blaming him for something like that was a whole new level of assholeness!!

Shizuo had seen him walking and running and parkouring and he was fine and now he dared to lie in his face?
What did he want to drive Shizuo mad enough with guilt over that night to kill himself?

‘Of course, that’s what you want!’

Shizuo refused to believe that!

What he believed though was that Izaya had no limit to how much of an asshole he could be!

And above all else he had the nerve to call him a monster as if he didn’t know how much he hurt him every time he reminded him that he wasn’t normal!

Screw everything! He would beat him up right then and there, he had waited long enough!

“What the fuck did you just call me?..You haven’t learned your fucking lesson huh, Izaya?”

He just pushed him back towards the wheelchair and grabbed its sides to make sure Izaya wouldn’t escape and balled his fist ready to strike.

The pest yelled an insult or two more but eventually glued himself on the back of the wheelchair, surprising Shizuo when instead of attempting to escape he just closed his eyes tightly, turned his face on the side and just breathed as if waiting to be punched into oblivion.

Shizuo for a second contemplated whether he should actually hit him or not, even if the other deserved it very much for blaming him and calling him names.

Looking at the pest resigning to his fate once again didn’t sit right with him; it reminded him of that other time, making Shizuo unable to hurt him when he was being so pathetic, no matter how much he wanted -no, needed- to harm him!

He was about to lower his arm and release the breath he hadn’t realized he was holding; there was hardly any force behind his muscles now despite his intention to smush his knuckles on the others jaw so there was no point keeping his hand raised like that.

Just then he felt a smaller and considerably weaker hand on his arm, grabbing him gently as if to stop him but not trying to force him away from the pest or attack him.

That was the first time anyone had dared to interfere since the whole thing started.

He turned annoyed to see who had butted in his business and saw an old guy with a big mustache and big round glasses that made him look like a weirdo that appeared to be kind of fancy in his expensive clothing if you ignored that ugly green tie.

Honestly, he was surprised that of all the passerby that guy had come to flea’s rescue!

This man was over his fifties for sure, maybe even older and most likely he was a head shorter than a properly standing flea, so Shizuo though that the guy either had a very strong sense of justice -if only this little bastard knew what he was getting himself into!- or he was plain stupid!

“Sumimasen~! Is something the wrong here between you and my Izaya-kun, bartender-san?”

This person was flea’s ally?

Moreover “his Izaya-kun” he had said, Shizuo had heard right, hadn’t he?

Was he flea’s father?
Shizuo didn’t know anything about the other’s parents but if this guy was the elder Orihara, Shizuo was going to congratulate him for flea’s upbringing because apparently, he had done a wonderfully shitty job raising such a little bug!

“Who the fuck are you?” Shizuo wasn’t one for formalities and sure as hell he wouldn’t play nice with anyone who was friendly with Izaya of all people!

“Kato-san..” he heard Izaya mutter to the other with the same pathetic tone.

Another look at the flea showed him that Izaya if anything was growing even more agitated by the other’s presence, fidgeting in his seat and trying desperately to make eye contact with the other man, who ignored him and had his full attention on Shizuo.

’Soo, they are not related.’

Made sense. This guy didn’t look like Izaya at all, nor the twins.

Moreover, the man was talking differently in sense of cadence, intonation and wording than what was used in Tokyo- was it a Kansai dialect he was speaking? So, Kyoto or Osaka maybe?

Yes, this man couldn’t be from Tokyo, so obviously he didn’t understand what was going on there and which people exactly he was associating himself with so casually right at that very moment.

“I have to ask you to please excuse my boy if he provoked you in any way. He is not the most sensible but, he means well I assure you!”

“Huh?”

Really what the fuck was going on?

Who was this person and how fucking oblivious he was believing that a shitty person like Izaya could ever mean well and tell that to Shizuo of all people?

The other didn’t seem to notice the vein that was starting to pope on Shizuo’s forehead from irritation and kept going as if nothing happened.

That guy was either too stupid or too smart, Shizuo couldn’t decide which though.

“I am sure it is all a misunderstanding however, please accept my apology on his behalf! As his boss I will take full responsibility for whatever trouble he caused you!”

“Kato-san..don’t“

Ts! Again, Izaya in that pathetic little quivering voice like he had zero pride was trying to make eye contact with the other!

Honestly if the flea started with the waterworks anytime soon Shizuo would applaud him, for the most he was observing him all the more he got persuaded that this was one of the rarest moments in pest’s life that he wasn’t fucking around.

“Hush, boy.”

Man, that was like a fucking dark comedy!

This random dude pops up from god knows where, ignoring Izaya, attempting to clear the “misunderstanding” on his own and even ordering fucking Izaya around telling him to “hush” like he
was a dog and the fleabag shutting his mouth up instantly with no complain and no haughty attitude?

Shizuo was sure this guy would be really screwed over by the flea for underestimating him that much!

Moreover, he started to realize that this person very likely had no idea of Izaya’s true nature since he acted as though Izaya was a harmless man in need protection, that could even be ordered around!

Shizuo would have laughed at the absurdity of the whole thing if it wasn’t this other thing: “Boss” Izaya had said!

If that person was flea’s boss then there was no doubt this old and seemingly harmless dude could be up to some very serious shit!

Appearances could be deceiving, no need to repeat that all the time!

Shizuo would get to the bottom of it right then and there!

“Flea’s boss? The fuck are you two schem-?”

Before he could even finish his sentence, at a lightning bolt speed cold fingers had weakly encircled his wrist and Izaya had yelled out of nowhere at him: “Heiwajima-san!”

The light and very random pressure here and there on his wrist from the flea’s bony fingers almost felt as if the other’s hand was trembling on his own ever the slightest.

He knew that Izaya understood very well what he was about to ask a second ago that’s why he was desperate enough to address him so formally suddenly, since Izaya couldn’t never be decent even if decency slapped him on the face.

Honestly, he would have ignored the little pest and kept going with his interrogation if it wasn’t for the feeling of the other’s trembling touch on his skin.

It disgusted him to his core to feel such close and harmless body contact with Izaya of all people!

He pulled his wrist out of the other’s hand barely two seconds after the other initiated such casual skin ship.

“Do not -fucking- touch me.” he said to the pest in a dangerous whisper.

Izaya ignored him and kept going in this stupid stutter of his.

“W-we will catch up another t-time, ne Heiwajima-san?”

“Huuh?”

Shizuo had started realize what Izaya was trying to do even from the first moment the flea had tried to act nice but the harder he struggled to keep up the appearances the surer Shizuo was that Izaya had a hidden agenda he wanted to cover.

“Oh! You both know each other Izaya-kun?”

“W-we were classmates. In high school. Everything is fine here Kato-san, really.”

Shameless, really!
Highschool classmates his ass! He tried to make it sound like they were school rivals who what? Didn’t get along because they had both wanted to be the class’ student rep or shit?

Whatever, he didn’t give a fuck if the other very obviously exposed himself to that man for the scumbag he was, which Shizuo knew now that Izaya was scared shitless of happening for whatever was at stake for him, to the point that he was willing to take this charade that far!

Shizuo could see it, Izaya was desperately trying to keep a crumbing poker face in place.

“Oh! I am very sorry bartender-san! I didn’t realize you were acquaintances with Izaya-kun! For a-”

“We are not.” Shizuo couldn’t help himself really, that guy saying he was acquainted to Izaya was like being trash talked in his face!

Also, why he should help the other who was obviously again up to no good?

Moreover, how the fuck this guy had fell for such a poor explanation was beyond Shizuo!

And how the fuck Izaya was such a lousy liar right now was also beyond Shizyo too!

Not that Izaya had lied, but still, he just spewed a “we were classmates” and the other was suddenly totally fine with what had just transpired?

“-moment there I feared he got himself into trouble! I guess boys are a bit rough when they express their acquaintanceship nowadays! It’s really interesting actually for a person my age to witness! Anyways, time is money as they say, so if you would excuse us, me and Izaya-kun here have a deadline to catch! Now Izaya-kun we better hurry up! Bartender-san!”

Unless he wasn’t that is.

So, the old butt wasn’t an idiot; he could be very persuasive of the opposite if he wanted, Shizuo had to give him that!

No wonder he was bowing and being all friendly with him and at the first chance he got he had grabbed Izaya and fled the scene going straight to the building he was supposed to wait for Matsuyuta!

‘Fuck! I had forgotten about the other bastard!’

Still, he should do something because that guy came and dragged Izaya away and he really wasn’t done with the pest.

He would make sure Izaya knew that also.

“Izaya -”

“Hai?”

“We will see each other again. Soon.”

“I will be looking forward to it!”

That pest was still struggling to appear unaffected thought he wasn’t convincing anyone really.

At least he showed he still had some backbone intact when he threw him a death glare that together with his annoying voice basically told him to fuck off, right before he disappeared with that guy in
the building.

Shizuo had done that little prick a favor keeping his mouth shut about how they knew each other and why Shizuo hated him, even though he was sure that Izaya had thought that Shizuo was too much of an idiot to realize what was happening when the other guy interrupted them, even though it was taking place right in front of him.

He was pretty sure that Izaya hadn’t realized that Shizuo had quite literally allowed him to escape either; as if it was difficult for someone like Shizuo to stop both men if he really chose to.

It didn’t matter much, he had seen them going to that building and from what he could tell people who didn’t work there wouldn’t be able to enter so casually without being stopped by the people at the lobby to inquire for their whereabouts, so he was sure that both the guy and the flea had some business going on in there.

Yes, let him think that Shizuo was so stupid that couldn’t tell tofu from rice; it was for the best really because if Izaya ever came close to realizing how many times Shizuo had let him run away, he would find a way to use such thing against him!

He knew also that he had looked like a douche in front of that other guy; Izaya was that man’s poster boy in an advertisement about goodness, that much had been quite obvious from the way that dude acted as if he had to protect the flea and spoke fondly of him.

It was the first time since Shizuo had met the flea that anyone had spoken fondly of him, not even Shinra did!

It’s okay, once Izaya fucked the guy over, he would get where Shizuo had been coming from today…

After his adrenaline left him though, all the logical thinking process and calmness he had maintained during the whole fiasco seemed to abandon him once again, his panic returning ten-fold!

He hurried to leave the busy street and enter the first random alley he saw to be out of sight and the moment he got there he practically doubled in half!

His limbs had started growing weak and his legs couldn’t hold his weight anymore.

He just fell on his knees and tried to ground himself, his forehead touching the cold wall of the building in front of him to cool his body down and tried to regulate his breathing.

He was scared, he didn’t know what his body have been going through at that moment; such thing had never happened to him before!

‘Fuck, fuck I can’t breathe, I can’t breathe!’

He felt like chocking!

He didn’t know what else to do; he reached a trembling hand to take off his bow tie and popped the fist two buttons of his shirt open.

He should be able to breathe normally, now right? So why he was still panting and chocking on air what the fuck was happening.

The only thing in his mind was that Izaya was alive!
How he was alive? He couldn’t be! He shouldn’t be! He had killed him, he had been so sure of it!

Izaya had given him no explanations for anything!

And now that he was back, he wouldn’t leave him alone!

No, no, Izaya wasn’t the kind of person to take defeat!

He would find a way to hurt him so bad when Shizuo would least expect it!

He would take revenge for sure even if he was at fault in the first place!

What if he hurt Kasuka? His parents? His friends? Tom-san? Vorona?

Vorona had stabbed him, Izaya would have her pay for that for sure!

So what if she wasn’t in Japan anymore, the pest was an informant he could locate anyone he wanted!

What if – What if he sent Shizuo to prison by pining him another more serious crime, or blamed him for whatever had happened supposedly to him?

Izaya had money and connections to every shaddy corner of Tokyo, all he had to do was make a phone call and everything Shizuo loved and cared about could vanish in front of his eyes!

Even worse, what if the other tried to force his hand again?

He didn’t want to go through the same thing a second time and have to kill the pest because he was pushed to his limits again!

He really didn’t want to have to kill him once more!!

Shizuo was so lightheaded at this point he thought everything was spinning!

Fuck, fuck what should he do?

‘Calm down, calm down!’

He needed to calm down.

Go home and calm the fuck down right this instant so he could think properly.

He took out his phone and with trembling fingers he selected Tom-san’s name from his contact list.

He couldn’t keep the phone on his hand any longer so he let it fall on the dirt and pressed the speaker.

“Morning Shizuo!”

Shizuo couldn’t not reply yet, he was still panting and tried to gather his thoughts.

Fuck, he had rushed to call Tom-san.

“Shizuo? You there?...Hello?”

He took a deep inhale closed his eyes, head still resting on the wall and spoke.
“H-Hello Tom-san..Ah..I’m sorry for bothering you if -if you are busy.”

So far so good! If he could steady his voice a bit would be nice though.

“It’s okay Shizuo. Did you find Matsuyuta?”

“About that..Tom-san, can I go home for today please. Something -sort of came up and -I-I don’t think I can work today. I am sorry.”

A pause.

So, Tom-san had picked something was going on. His sempai always read him like a book whether it he was seeing his face or hearing his voice.

“Shizuo...are you okay?”

It was no surprise that he asked him so cautiously really.

Shizuo had put the man under so much stress these first six months after the fight, there as no wonder that he was very alert whenever it came to Shizuo’s moods since then.

He really didn’t want to bother him and he couldn’t talk about that thing yet!

‘No I am not okay Tom-san. Nothing is okay.’

“Yes. Of course. Just- feeling a bit sick. I am really sorry. I didn’t expect that to happen Tom-san, I’m so sorry!”

“Now, now! It’s okay! Em..Shizuo, are you -really- okay?”

‘Please don’t ask me anymore, I don’t like lying to you.’

“Yes. It’s just, my head hurts. You don’t have to worry Tom-san.”

“Take tomorrow off too. Just in case?”

“I don’t think it is needed.”

“Maybe not. But, we have to take good care of ourselves. Right?”

Shizuo was one hundred per cent sure that Tom-san was also one hundred percent sure that something shitty was going on!

“Of course. Thank you, Tom-san. I’ll talk to you later.”

When he was about to end the call Tom-san rushed to speak again.

“Shizuo!”

“Hm?”

“Can I come over tonight after work? Bring some rice porridge?”

Fuck, Tom-san wanting to check him up in person right after speaking to him meant that he sounded life shit for sure!

“Maybe not tonight Tom-san, sorry. I think I will sleep the headache off today.”
He just couldn’t pretend any longer that he was fine and having to act okay right in front of Tom-san’s face seemed an impossible fit now!

“Tomorrow then! Okay?”

The more his sempai was pressing the more Shizuo knew that Tom-san would be growing increasingly alarmed so he couldn’t keep denying. Saying no again would look weird.

“Oh okay.”

“Oh okay…So see you tomorrow then Shizuo?” It was more of a question to confirm Shizuo’s agreement rather than a phrase to end the call, so the other knew his sempai would once again wait for an answer.

“See you Tom-san. And -I’m sorry for worrying you today” he couldn’t help but add.

“You are my kouhai.”

“Right. Talk to you later then.”

“Get some rest, Shizuo.”

The moment the call ended Shizo willed his legs to move and got up, pocketed his cellphone and headed towards the station in Kojimachi to go back to Ikebukuro.

By the time he entered his apartment half an hour later he had no reconciliation how he got there.

‘Am I - on the -floor?’

Izaya had slowly started blinking to the light of the room, turning his head right and left slowly to adjust his vision but his mind was so tired that he couldn’t help and close them again trying to sleep more.

‘What happened?’

Everything was foggy, how he had ended up on the floor, what the–!

Memories started to flood his brain; that morning getting ready for work, meeting Shizu-chan after so long and almost being beaten up black and blue, Kato-san interrupting them and taking him away, Shizu-chan threatening they would meet again…

“A-ano..I-I think Editor Orihara-san is -is- waking up!”

‘Jo-san?’

He thought that sniffing stuttering voice was his secretary but his brain was still all over the place.

“Izaya-kun? Can you hear me? Try to open your eyes, stay with me boy!”

‘Kato-san? What is going on?’

He could feel light pats on his cheeks as if to rouse him from his sleep.

He blinked a few times more and opened his eyes staring at his boss-san kneeling on the floor next to
his head.

Another look around showed him his pink-loving secretary, her face red and blotchy and her eyes watery was kneeling in front of him and -holding both his legs on her shoulders? -or better yet trying since she was pretty tiny to do that successfully.

He hadn’t realized she was touching his legs, he couldn’t feel it.

He wasn’t sure that he how he felt about such a compromising position but it wasn’t a very nice feeling.

“Jo-san, it’s okay, put his legs down now, the blood has flown back to his brain now that he is awake.”

“H-Hai M-Managing Director Kato-sama!” Jo-san squealed and put his useless legs down as gently as she could, her bony shoulders trembling the moment they were free from his weight.

Izaya would have laughed at the absurdity of the situation if he wasn’t on the floor himself, looking like a dead fish!

Kato-san seriously left tiny Jo-san to hold his legs while he was mostly seated? It was so funny -at poor Jo-san’s expense that is!

“Can you get up boy? Come on, give it a go, okay? Easy, easy, don’t rush!”

Boss-san urged him grabbling him as softly as he could and trying to lift his upper body up, supporting it with his chubby frame.

Izaya was still a bit disorientated and his head spun so he didn’t really register how he found himself sitting with his back on Boss-san’s belly now, rather than lying on the floor.

Kato-san thankfully was still supporting his body because he was pretty sure he wouldn’t have managed himself.

“Secretary Jo!” He suddenly told the girl ready to deliver orders.

“H-hai!” came the squealing answer of his still half crying secretary.

“Calm down child and listen carefully! I want you to go to the bathroom and collect yourself first of all. Orihara-san is awake and very much alive as you can see so there is no need for tears! Then, I want you to go to the cafeteria and buy freshly squashed juice, water, some light snacks and whatever slightly sweet thing you could find that it’s matcha flavored! Matcha, Jo-san okay? Nothing too sweet please and bring them over here, am I clear?”

“H-hai Managing Director Kato-sama!”

“Good. Repeat what did I asked you for just now please and then you can go!”

’Boss-san this is not the army! And speak quietly please~!’

“C-collect myself in the bathroom. Then buy juice -em- fresh juice! Snacks -and a m-matcha flavored sweet…But not too sweet!”

“Brilliant! Also buy whatever you would like for yourself to eat and drink to cheer you up a bit and ask for the bill to be sent in my office, okay?”
“Hai! Ano..A-arigato Managing Director Kato-sama!”

“It’s okay. Now! You have twenty minutes to complete your task. But! I’d like you to be back at fifteen. Am I clear?”

“C-crystal clear!” Jo-san squealed and bolted out of the door running like a mad woman.

Izaya had collected himself enough at that point to at least start laughing the moment Jo-san was out of the door.

“Ne, Kato-san..why are you torturing my secretary? Do you want her to trip on her legs and pass out too?” he chuckled.

“In fact, Izaya-kun I am very pleased with Jo-san’s performance today!”

“This sounds wrong boss-san for more reasons that I care to list now~!” Izaya couldn’t help but tease as if he wasn’t out cold on the floor literally moments ago.

In fact, they were both very much still seated on the floor currently, neither bothering to move.

Izaya could tell that Boss-san seeing him however he saw him moments before, had him quite shaken if the way he was stroking his head absentmindedly like he was a child was any indication.

Boss-san was never one for much physical affection after all.

“What happened Izaya-kun?”

“I should be asking that Kato-san. One moment I’m sitting on my desk chair and the other I am on the floor with you and Jo-san over my head.”

“I don’t know. I was in my office and the next thing I know the phone rings and Jo-san is crying to me to come here saying she thought you were sleeping but when she shook you awake you fell on the floor and were not moving at all and she didn’t know if you need hospital or how to help you..”

“I’m okay now. Don’t be upset anymore Boss-san, ne?”

“Who says I’m upset brat? Unlike Jo-san I had enough common sense to know you weren’t dead.”

Boss-san was saying that now but all the while he hadn’t stopped stroking his hair for a moment since he had lifted his body up to a sitting position.

“Don’t be upset with Jo-san either. She can’t handle pressure well and overreacts; she didn’t mean to scare you.”

“I’m not upset with her. In fact, I appreciate that she thought of calling me the moment she saw that something was wrong with you. I told you I am pleased with her performance today.”

How wouldn’t Jo-san have thought of calling Boss-san? While they tried to keep a professional distance in front of their colleagues it was almost impossible for at least their secretaries not to pick up that they were closer than mere coworkers with how often they saw them interact.

“Hmm..I see. That’s good.”

Izaya couldn’t help but feel touched. He knew his boss cared about him a lot but confirming it especially at this shitty day had felt literally lifesaving to him! He couldn’t help himself but close his eyes and relax more to the other’s care. He really needed something to ground him and Boss-san’s
presence was like a gift now.

Moreover, his mess of secretary also caring for him and even crying with worry for his well-being was equally touching -and weird. Not many people cared enough for him to cry because he was unwell! Only the twins but that was so long ago he didn’t remember how it felt to witness that.

“Were you feeling sick earlier? You didn’t seem well since I saw you this morning.”

“I was just overwhelmed.”

“Did bartender-san overwhelm you?”

“I hadn’t seen my classmate for a long time and it was very unexpected. He lives in Toshima, so I didn’t expect to see him here.”

“He didn’t seem to like you much…”

“I don’t like him much either. We were always at each other’s throats since we met. What happened today was nothing new really, but I understand for you to witness it seemed alarming since you haven’t seen us interact before..”

“I see..”

The last thing he wanted really was to speak for that stupid asshole right now with Boss-san of all people! He had to clap himself in the back for managing to sound so normal while talking about Shizu-chan, because he still hadn’t calmed down.

Izaya knew he would throw a fit as soon as he was left alone again!

Still he couldn’t not mention him, Kato-san had picked up on Izaya’s distress during that meeting. Ignoring it would look all the more suspicious!

Well..better use Boss-san’s pause to change the topic now!

“Then afterwards I just got dizzy you know. I think it’s because I didn’t have time to eat since yesterday evening, but you just took care of that now, ne Boss-san?”

Fuck, how he hated lying to that particular human!

Every time he said a lie to him, he could feel the guilt tickling him!

But what else could he say?

Now that he was back to his senses, he could recall perfectly what happened from the moment he had entered the office!

He greeted his secretary hurriedly and asked not to be bothered unless there was an emergency, and the moment he had entered the office he rushed to take off his coat and throw it god’s knows where, because his body was overheating and then close all the drapes so he could feel free to experience his fucking panic attack in its full glory!

Because how the fuck could he not panic?

Shizu-chan had seen him and he was so angry for what Izaya had done to him the last time, plus all the other times and he was ready to kill him right then and there! He would have done so if Kato-san hadn’t interfered to stop that brute!
But still Izaya was far from safe!

Shizu-chan had seen where he worked, he had seen Kato-san, he had talked to the man!!

Sure, he was a protozoan so Izaya had managed to buy sometime for himself but this whole shitty situation was far from over!

For the first time in his life Izaya had felt completely powerless to do anything!

His worst enemy hold all the cards, whether he decided to kill him or to destroy his current life was entirely up to the other!

Even worst, for everything that happened to Shizu-chan from now on he had Izaya to blame!

If a random gang tried to pick up a fight with him, if something happened to his brother or someone else close to him, if anything happened to Ikebukuro or Tokyo even if it had nothing to do with Shizu-chan at all, he would blame it all on Izaya and he wouldn’t stopped until he torn him to shreds!

99% of whatever was wrong had been Izaya’s fault wasn’t what that stupid beast used to say?

At that point he was hyperventilating so bad he felt like chocking!

He didn’t know how he had managed to wheel towards the window and open it..It wasn’t enough though, he was suffocating! The whole room was so freaking hot!

He struggled to get to the office chair more that any other time and by the moment he had managed his body was under excruciating pain all over!

His arms felt stiff and unable to move like they were broken all over again, but it was the pain on his lower back and his legs that actually had made his eyes tear up!

If he hadn’t grown so disconnected from his feelings for so long, he would have cried from the pain-he was sure he would have!

He just couldn’t. He could not recall how to do so, but from the way his breath had grown shallow and fast and the one or two chocked sobs that escaped his lips that he had to keep biting to shut himself up, he remembered that that was how crying felt!

‘What should I do? What should I do?’

He was squeezing his brain for a solution, both of his trembling hands grasping his hair and pulling hard so the pain would ground him, so he could think!

And came up with nothing!

Apart from one thing that is…

Apologize.

Say you are sorry for whatever you did.

That was the most obvious solution, because really, wasn’t Shizu-chan a goody two shoes that liked to act like he was above his enemies, like he did with that little Rusian bitch who was after his dick and had dared to stabb Izaya, and a bunch of other losers?

Still why the fuck Izaya should apologize to Shizu-chan for all people?
Who the fuck ever heard the one who got crippled to apologize to the one who crippled him?

Besides Izaya wasn’t sorry!

He really believed that he did what was necessary to deal with that beastly human, why would he step on his pride like that?

Okay, Shizu-chan apparently was human despite his disturbing nature, Izaya had admitted as much to himself, would it kill him to admit as much to the bastard if only to protect himself?

Yes, it fucking would!!

He wasn’t going to do that, Shizu-chan could go and fuck off!!

He had crippled him! He had beaten him up and tried to do the same thing that very morning while Izaya was defenseless and at his mercy because he was so unbelievably fucking stupid and aggressive and irrational! He was nothing more than a beastly imbecile, dangerous and abnormal, why Izaya should feel be remotely sorry for trying to isolate such a defected human from the society? He couldn’t fit well among humanity in the first place and it was his own fault for that for never trying to control himself!

Besides despite how stupid Shizu-chan was, he wasn’t that much of an idiot to believe that Izaya would ever be sincere with him!

Apologizing to cover his ass would led to enraged the other even more and then again the result would be Izaya spotting several broken bones for trying to manipulate him!

No, Izaya needed to come up with another solution.

But even if he could come up with something there was no guarantee he would make Shizu-chan comply and agree to leave him alone!

Shizu-chan was unpredictable, no matter what Izaya did Shizu-chan always did what Izaya expected the least and now that the protozoan had seen him wasn’t going to back out easily!

What if he was still outside right now, waiting for him to leave the office?

What if he had managed to get inside somehow?

Who could stop him if he wanted to?

What if he ambushed him again and even found out his house in Edogawa, or even worse his home in Bunkyo?

No, no, no, no…..It was over, Izaya was as good as dead now, he would lose everything like he did every time, he knew it, he knew it would happen eventually, he knew and he wasn’t ready!!

Fuck, why did he open the window? He was cold now, so cold he was trembling all over when a moment ago he felt like burning inside out!

Where the hell had he left his coat just now?

His vision was getting blurry with every second that passed and not because of his unshed tears.

More and more black spots everywhere and his breathing wasn’t returning to normal any time soon from the looks of it nor his heartbeat that could feel right at the sides of his neck pulsing like mad.
He knew he should give up fighting it and accept it - no matter what he tried he would lose conscience soon.

It wasn’t the first time he had stressed himself to the point of everything turning black since that night, though its been a while since he had experienced it, let alone in that magnitude!

He had half the mind to take off his precious red glasses and move them far away from him on the other side of his desk.

He didn’t want to crash them accidentally.

Just moments before he closed his eyes, he remembered he had a deadline and should get his act together.

Too late-

“Did you overwork yourself because of the deadline?”

Boss-san asked him breaking the comfortable silence, breaking Izaya’s train of thought as he had been trying to recall the last thing he remembered.

“No. But we do have to get up soon and work on it.”

“Stop thinking of unnecessary things Izaya-kun.”

“Since when are deadlines unnecessary things?”

He tried to tease his boss a bit just to ease his distress. Honestly Izaya was naturally crap of consoling someone in need so he didn’t know what else to say.

“Since I walked in here to see my child on the floor not responding to me.”

“…”

“You didn’t do anything wrong Izaya-kun. Don’t beat yourself up over feeling unwell.”

“Okay.”

Well, he had done many-many- wrong things and now all those things he did had come to bite him in the ass in the form of a beast and by extent indirectly hurting Boss-san.

They stayed like that a minute or two more before they heard a knock on the door and a panting Jo-san walked towards the office when the two men were currently resting with a plastic bag on one hand and thick paper cup on the other.

Boss-san looked his watch once she arrived.

“18 minutes exactly! Not a quarter but not twenty either! Good job Secretary Jo!”

“A-arigato Managing Director Kato-sama!”

’Was Boss-san seriously keeping time?!’

Izaya was pretty that apparently Jo-san was finally doing better to the man’s standards since he had sort of upgraded her to “Secretary Jo” from “Jo-san” in a span of minutes!
“Ano..Editor Orihara-san? Are you -em - feeling better now? ... S-sorry for being nosy sir!”

“It’s okay Jo-san. I’m like new now see~? Sorry for worrying you earlier!”

“It’s okay Editor Orihara-san! Managing Director Kato-sama helped me!” she kneeled down next to them behind the desk, grabbed the cup with both hands and offered it to him.

Even though Izaya was quite comfortable in his current position on Boss-san’s belly -who had stopped petting his hair now that Jo-san was back- shifted a bit so he could also accept the cup with both hands as it was appropriate.

“Orange juice.” Jo-san said more to Kato-san than Izaya who was sipping slowly from the cup.

“Oh..em..here Ediror Orihara-san!” Jo-san extended again both hands to give an -icepack?

“Ice pack?”

“Good thinking Secretary Jo!”

“Thank you, Managing Director Kato-sama! Ano..W-when I shook you before and you fell to the floor..just in case you got hurt from the fall. I’m so sorry Edittor Orihara-san I didn’t realize I shook you so hard!!”

Jo-san was apologizing as usual hanging her head in shame.

“He took ice pack, again with both hands, and honestly, he didn’t think he needed it because he couldn’t feel pain somewhere specifically, but decided to place it in a random spot or two on his elbow and keep it there for a bit even it was perfectly fine since she had gone to the trouble to find one for him from wherever she got it; going again an extra unnecessary mile to help him.

“Secretary Jo, how about the three off us take an additional fifteen break here so you and Izaya-kun -Orihara-san- can eat a bit and get some color to these pale faces of yours before we get back to work? Of course, this stays strictly between the three of us because what is transpiring right now is highly unprofessional and shouldn’t become a habit! However, the exceptional circumstances of today demand it! Have a seat please!”

“Kato-san, only you can extend a formal invitation to someone to sit on the floor for a pick nick and then scold them for inviting them just for future references, ne~!”

Izaya snickered a bit though a second after it stroke him that maybe he shouldn’t talk so casually to Kato-san in front of Jo-san -resting on his belly was already unprofessional enough as it was!

They should keep the appearances of hierarchy in the working environment at least in front of others, besides Kato-san had addressed him formally just now.

‘Ups!’

Still Boss-san let it slip this time with a “Drink your juice Orihara-san”.

‘He is still stressed from before..’

All the while Jo-san took out of the bag the snacks she had bought and arranged them between the three of them on the floor; her own treats were apparently soy milk and a melon pan.
They ate a bit and chatted about work trying to relax a bit from the stress they experienced that morning and decide how to work on the deadline.

“Orihara-san, do you have a lot of editing to compete to be done? The deadline is at four today.”

“Not really, sir. Three articles for the politics section.”

Izaya went along with him, dropping his voice to its actual octave instead of the higher one he used when teasing or wanting to annoy humans to fall back to the role of a mature professional male.

“Good. Then please forward these articles to me once you are done. I will work on the editing for you just this once since I don’t have much to do and after you eat you should head home for the day.”

“Kato-san it’s not even twelve yet!”

Izaya lifted himself up to be properly seated now so he could turn and look at his boss.

He knew bickering when it was coming!

Moreover: ‘What if- what if Shzu-chan is still outside and jump me if I go out? I’m not safe outside!’

“I am sorry Orihara-san but at this point your health must be prioritized. Secretary Jo, please make sure once you are done to call for a taxi from here to Bunkyo. I’ll write down the exact address and leave it on your office.”

‘Taxi..taxi was good. Shizu-chan couldn’t chase a fucking car, could he?’

That is if he managed to get into the taxi unharmed in the first place!

“H-hai Managing director Kato-sama!”

Wait a minute..Bunkyo?

“Bunkyo? Why not my house?”

“Do you really think you should be left alone after what just happened Iz- Orihara-san?”

“Mayumi-san doesn’t know about that, she might be inconvenienced!”

Shit..It’s not that he didn’t want to go to Bunkyo, in fact he felt much calmer having his two humans around him but what if something else happened while he was at Boss-san’s house? Mayumi-san wasn’t like Kato-san, how would she deal with Izaya’s mood swings?

“Mayumi-chan would be happy to have you like always Orihara-san! I’ll call her and let her know as soon as you are done eating so she won’t be unprepared.”

He didn’t want to worry his boss even more, but if he threw a fit like the ones he did when he panicked in front of Kato-san and Mayumi-san -he honestly didn’t even want to imagine this!

“I am not a baby Kato-san for you to do my job and sent me home~! Besides you don’t know what to edit from the texts!”

“I know you are not a baby Orihara-san. I am doing this for my sake, not yours! Do you think I can get back to work without knowing if you would faint again while being all by yourself? Besides when I was an editor, you were still in diapers, boy!”
“I didn’t faint Boss-san! I just passed out!” Izaya squealed his cheeks flaming a bit at the way Boss-san had phrased his sentence - he would not even acknowledge the comment about the diapers!

“That’s a manly way to say faint Izaya-kun!” The other shot back, both glaring at each other.

“What about my things? It’s not weekend!”

He tried weakly although he knew that Boss-san would easily rebuff this argument.

“You have at least a set of clothes in Bunkyo Izaya-kun! If you are in that dire need of something, I can drop you to your place to collect it after I come home later. Stop being a brat and eat your crackers now, we are at 12 minutes break as we speak!”

“How do you even know that, when did you check your watch~? Ts! Always bossing me around, dictator!”

Izaya was back to whining and pouting but knew that Boss-san’s word was law so he couldn’t do anything about it, especially after he felt guilty for worrying the other so much.

Besides if Shizu-chan found him alone he was dead meat for sure, but he wouldn’t hurt the elderly couple to get him of he found him in Bunkyo, right?

Once they were done yelling at each other both became aware of the little muffled laughs that were very poorly concealed as coughing.

Suddenly both men became aware that they were bickering in front of Jo-san who now choked on her milk when she saw them stopping their “fight” to look at her indignantly for laughing at them.

That was all she needed to keep muttering repeatedly “Gommenasai!” and bowing for the rest three minutes of their break whenever they locked eyes with her.

‘So much for keeping up the appearances and following the protocol!’

From the way Kato-san was rolling his eyes at him he could tell that once again both of them were thinking along the same lines!

The moment that they were done Kato-san helped Izaya back onto his office chair and then rushed to leave his address to Jo-san’s desk and go to his own office to call Mayumi-chan and update her on Izaya.

Jo-san in the meanwhile had gathered the empty packages to place to the bin and repacked the left-over snacks.

When she was about to exit his office Izaya remembered something.

“Jo-san! A minute please?”

“Hai. Anything else you would like Editor Orihara-san?”

“Yes. Actually, what was the emergency?”

“E-Excuse me?”

“I said when I arrived that I shouldn’t be bothered unless there was an emergency.”

“Oh..”
“Since you came to my office, I assumed there was an emergency. What was it?”

The answer he got, he couldn’t say it was completely unexpected but it was amusing.

“A-Antivirus!”

He couldn’t help but laugh out loud for once!

She had also made fun of him and Boss-san before so laughing at her for once surely wasn’t that rude!

Good thing there were so many computer viruses lurking to infect Jo-san’s laptop other wise he would still be out cold on the floor for god knows how long!

“Right. Go bring me your laptop before you call for my ride and let me check what is wrong. If I can’t fix it by the time the taxi is here, don’t touch it again for today and I’ll do it tomorrow okay?”

“H-hai, Ediror Orihara-san! Thank you!” The pink klutz bowed and rushed out of the door.

The moment he entered his apartment Shizuo rushed straight to the bathroom and retched everything he had eaten that morning.

He was left there, on his knees hugging the toilet like his life depended on it and coughing sporadically even when his stomach was now empty and there was nothing to throw up apart from saliva.

His arms shook and his eyes were watering and his throat burned, the muscles on his neck hurting for having stretched suddenly and contrasted repeatedly to help his body get rid of his breakfast.

Once he was done he spat a few times into the toilet to rid as much of the bad taste as possible and pressed the flush to stop seeing the disgusting mess.

He didn’t get up after he was done.

He couldn’t, his body was into overdrive.

No matter how much he wanted to at least reach for the sink to brush his teeth and get rid of the sour and bitter taste of vomit he just couldn’t will himself to move.

He just kept thinking over and over what had happened that morning, what had happened that night, what Izaya had told him barely an hour ago.

“You crippled me.”

That’s what he had said and Shizuo hadn’t believed him then but what if Izaya wasn’t lying?

Izaya didn’t mocked him when he had said that, his voice hadn’t been obnoxious and high pitched like all the times Izaya was fucking with him.

It had been loud and deep and full of anger.

That wasn’t Izaya’s style!
It was very out of character for a pest who was always level headed and his poker face never wavered the slightest!

In fact all of Izaya’s reactions that morning had been out of character!

But then, if his anger directed at Shizuo for his supposedly disability was real then what if everything he had seen and disregarded like Izaya pretending had been also real?

The fear.

The stuttering.

That pathetic submissive behavior he was seemingly struggling to break out of, before falling right back into it and surrendering completely the moment he saw Shizuo raising his hand.

His legs that were angled in such random abnormal way.

His lower body that hadn’t moved an inch during the whole time.

His hand which trembled ever the slightest on Shizuo’s wrist.

The more he thought about it the surer he was becoming that Izaya had spoken the truth for once in his life at least!

And that had been the ugliest truth he could have ever revealed!

Shizuo was the one who crippled him?!

He was responsible for Izaya ending up like that?!?

He hadn’t killed him but still…he had damaged him irreparably!

Izaya who couldn’t spend one day without running around and skipping on the street like the flea he was and parkouring all over the city!

He had forcibly turned him to one of those people he couldn’t face on the street because he thought the sight was disturbing and sad!

He had turned him to one those people that many pretended to not see because they couldn’t deal with the baggage that came with interacting with them!

Shizuo wasn’t a murderer but still he was a monster!

He had hurt someone irreparably and reap them from a good and healthy life with his own two fucking hands!

How he had done it?

How is it possible that he hadn’t realized when he hit Izaya’s legs?

Were they really his legs he had hit?

Maybe his spine?

Or his head?

He had hit his head that moment Izaya had gotten distracted by that white light.
Could it be that he had damaged that part of flea’s brain that makes the body move properly?

But, Shizuo could swear he had punched his jaw!

Could it be that steal beam or was it another hit he hadn’t realized he landed on him or something completely different?

But then how was he still standing back there?

What the fuck Shizuo had done to him?

When?

How?

Ts!

He was such a fucking hypocrite now thinking about how he had crippled that pest, when he had been prepared -and wanted- to squash Izaya under a motherfucking vending machine which weighted a tone back then!

Izaya, who was much smaller and bony and so much weaker compared to Shizuo himself, so much that he had broken his bones the first time he had landed a proper hit on him!

All it would have taken then was one hit with that vending machine and he would crash every single one of Izaya’s bones turning him to a mushy puddle of flesh and bones beneath it!

A bloody stain on the street!

How had he even wanted to do such a disgusting think to a human being?

Izaya was an absolute crazy bastard and yes, he deserved everything bad that came his way because of course karma would have caught up with him eventually after what he had hurt to so many people, but for Shizuo to have thought something as disturbing and cruel at that time as crashing the other alive no matter what had transpired before suddenly seemed terrifying!

Back at the time, he could have come up with a better and quicker solution to put the flea out of his misery without much pain, like snapping his neck like a twig, but instead he wanted to do something so horrific!

He wouldn’t even do that to a bug and he had wanted to do that to a human?!

How sick and twisted he was??

Shizuo suddenly could see it happening in front of him; him crashing Izaya under that thing and squashing him alive while the flea squirmed weakly underneath it!

He turned once again to the toiled he was sitting right next to and in a coughing fit as if his mind was trying to throw up that image through his body, even though once again had only saliva and gastric fluids to puke into the toilet.

Thank god Vorona had showed up at that time stopping Shizuo from doing what would have been the gravest mistake of his life!

But what if Shizuo had hurt someone else of those scumbags he beaten up in a similar way?
What if he had hurt more people like that?

Fuck, fuck, fuck!

If he had crippled more people, he had no fucking way of knowing!

It could be only Izaya, or Izaya and another guy or three other guys or a dozen that he had sent to the hospital and his actions had led to them having to deal with some sort of disability!

How could he condemn anyone living such a half-life?

Maybe it would have been better if he was a murderer, if Izaya had died that night and not just for Shizuo’s sake but for Izaya’s as well!

Because how could someone like Izaya, who was so arrogant and thought himself unbeatable when in reality was spineless and cowardly and always chose the easy way out after he consciously fucked everything up on his own-how could someone like that ever be able to deal with living like this without turning even crazier and malicious, doing more harm than ever before?

Because that’s all Izaya was!

He hated him more than anyone in the world, he hated him with every fiber of his being but at the same time he pitied so -so- very much now that he was coming to the realization that the flea was paralyzed and he felt so unbelievably fucking sorry for taking it so far; hurting him so bad with that monstrous strength of his and at the same time he wanted to beat him to a bloody pulp once again!

These feelings were so fucking contradictory he couldn’t deal with them!

He should have left Izaya set him on fire that night; it would have been better, much better!

At least if he had let Izaya do whatever the fuck he wanted then it would be over now!

No!

‘Don’t think like that! Don’t think like that, you are alive, don’t be an ungrateful bastard! What else could you have done? It was him or you!’

He was trying to take away the self-destructive thoughts.

He had good things -good things- he shouldn’t let Izaya’s return make him forget about the good things!

Besides Izaya was alive, he wasn’t a murderer!!

But the guilt of damaging Izaya irreparably could almost -almost- rival the guilt he felt at the thought of killing the other!

Still though, why the fuck Izaya had to provoke him that night like that!

Didn’t that absolute bastard know that Shizuo wouldn’t hold back forever?

What the fuck Izaya had expected really?

What else could Shizuo have done?

Let the pest achieve whatever the fuck was his plan?
Seriously who would such a thing?

It made no sense!

Besides it was a survival matter! Literally it was either kill or be killed!

Why would he ever choose Izaya over himself??

Who would let their enemy kill them instead of defending themselves and yes, try to kill them back?

Ts! Fucking flea!

Never measuring his own actions and then when things turned south, he would run away or act like the victim while he had been the instigator all along!

Just because Izaya ended up the one to have been injured permanently didn’t automatically made him right!

That is if he really-really wasn’t fucking around because there was only 1% of him being completely honest!

Besides, Izaya being injured permanently equaled to Shizuo feeling permanently guilty too!

Honestly, now that Shizuo had found out that Izaya was alive all along and damaged irreparably, Shizuo felt that it would be impossible for him to move on with his life!

Living with the thought of the flea and learning to ignore it was manageable.

Knowing that the actual flea was out there somewhere and was crippled by Shizuo’s actions was something he would never-ever- be able to ignore and treat as nothing!

But he would force himself to learn how to do so; just as he had learned to ignore the thought, he would learn to ignore the real thing!

He was so tired!

He didn’t want anything more to do with Izaya ever again!

Having his sanity and his whole life going on a limbo once more for that son of the bitch was something he couldn’t deal with anymore! Not after almost three years that he had led a much quieter life! He couldn’t see himself again dealing with Izaya’s schemes or having fights with that pest! Because he was pretty sure Izaya would find a way to fight him even in that state no matter how submissive and scared he had looked, he was too arrogant to stick with the docile act.

IT WASN’T FUCKING FAIR!!

Shizuo had worked so hard to move on from those things, even if his brain and conscience would never fully move on, he would not allow his life to go off track once again for that piece of shit for all people no matter what had happened in the past!

He just needed to find a way to ensure that Izaya wouldn’t mess with him anymore.

A bargaining chip to ensure flea’s cooperation.

First though he needed a cigarette, or ten, to calm his nerves!
He still couldn’t move from his spot between the toilet and the shower so maybe a cigarette would help his mind calm down right?

He took the light blue package and his lighter from his inner vest pocket, took out one cigarette and put it to his mouth, lighting it up and inhaling as deep as he could to let the nicotine enter his system and calm him down.

Fat chance!

His mind was all over the place and his emotions changed so fast he couldn’t keep track on what was going on in his head!

There were four main emotions he was constantly switching back and forth from the moment he had returned to his apartment:

Confusion.

Another cigarette.

He still didn’t understand anything no matter how much he was squeezing his brain to do so! He was starting to give himself a migraine seriously!

Anger.

Another cigarette.

He was so unbelievably fucking angry and really, he thought that he couldn’t hate Izaya any more than he already did after that night, but apparently after Izaya making such a fool of him today he was pretty sure that his hatred had reached new levels now!

Pity.

Another cigarette.

No matter how furious he was, and no matter how much he hated Izaya he couldn’t help but feel so much regret for the state the other had ended up into! He couldn’t help but pity that pest no matter how much he knew the other deserved whatever came to his way. He couldn’t help it even though he was disgusted at himself for feeling like that.

Fuck!

Another cigarette.

Another cigarette.

Another.

Another.

Fucking hell!

Shizuo suddenly blinked his eyes and taking a look on his package to take another cigarette saw that it was empty.

Empty?
Already?

He hardly smoked any more, this package missed probably three cigarettes since the start of the week!

‘How long have I been here?’

He looked down and he could see his clothes and the tiles being dusted with ashes and cigarette buds.

There were too many.

This had him quite alarmed.

‘What time is it?’

He forced his body to move -it felt so stiff still- more ashes and cigarette buds littering the floor with his movement.

A look on the mirror told him what he already knew.

He looked like shit.

Face pale like a sheet, eyes red and swollen, lips dry, skin oily and hair disheveled.

He took out his self-phone to check the time.

14:47

This wasn’t possible.

He had come back barely an hour ago!

He had no recollection of what had happened all that time in the bathroom.

He knew he was smoking and thinking what to do about the pest but them after a certain point he couldn’t remember his thoughts anymore nor his actions.

Or to put it more accurately, it was like his brain had shut off and everything he did was mechanical, because honestly, when had he smoked a whole package or how those hours passed without realizing?

This had him alarmed in an instant!

He needed to protect his mind above everything now that the pest was back but today it was becoming more and more obvious to him that trying to get over whatever sickness was in his head on his own was not something, he could do by bottling everything inside and try to ignore them.

He needed to speak to someone and he needed someone to listen!

He needed someone to lean to at this moment, even though he had denied Tom-san’s offer merely hours ago!

He unlocked his phone again and when to his contact list.

He didn’t have the energy to start typing back and forth, he was too tired, too drained to even move
his fingers; he just pressed call and checked the phone screen.

The moment he saw that the seconds were running indicating the person on the other end of the line had picked up he spoke.

His voice came out rough like he was screaming for hours, even though he hardly had raised his voice that day.

“Hey Celty.. Can you come over today? I need to talk to you about something. But -you can’t tell Shinra yet, okay? Please. Please, I just- I don’t know what to do..”

Seconds of silence passed between them and then he saw two new messages on his phone screen from his headless friend.

[Off course I will! You don’t sound good Shizuo. Do you want to tell me what this is about now?]

[I won’t say anything to Shinra. Promise!]

“Izaya. He is alive..I-I saw him today.”

The moment he said that the line on the other end were dead.

Barely three seconds later another text message came.

[On my way.]

Chapter End Notes

So, one passes out, the other blacks out, both are scared the other will get back at them, neither wants to deal with each other ever again and they very much despise each other! (0_0)

Btw, did anyone picked up that Shizu-chan (above the other things) has some sort of flea-OC? Remember the flowers that he mentions here as tokens? That was the ritual/pattern he uses unconsciously to cope with his obsessive and disturbing thoughts. Although after such a shock therapy I think he won’t be having flea thoughts much now! xD

Also Shizuo is way better at reading Izaya than Izaya gives him credit for-I think even in canon it's a bit like that.

Thought they both are idiots and prejudiced and didn't figure out that they just saw in this chapter and the previous one at least a hint of each other's good points but failed to notice with all that hate and screams in between! :P

Btw, I am thinking of maybe adding Celty's POV too but I'll see about that when I work more on the next chapter.

Anyways, enough with me rumbling!

Hope you enjoyed this chapter and hopefully you felt at least a knot in your stomachs while reading it, because that would mean that I did well in describing what Shizuo and Izaya felt! \(^{v^v}\)?
Hello!)
Here comes a somewhat smaller chapter!
This time surprisingly I managed to address whatever I wanted within 10K words -it's been a while since that- but compared to the previous ones there were less things to analyze,:P
I tried to write from Celty's POV this time, not really sure how it went through, since I have Shizuo and Izaya way more fleshed out in my head than Celty.
Also I'm not sure when will my next update be because I have two seminars to write assignments for -hopefully within a month again though if i manage my time correctly!
Btw the next chapter will be 90% sure the second Shizaya meeting! I have that dialog ready for months and I'm aching to post it already but I miss all the rest of that chapter xD
I hope you will enjoy this chapter and let me know your thoughts on Celty! (^_^) <3

PS: A big Thank You to all of you who commented and left kudos!! I really appreciate it your support!! :)

See the end of the chapter for more notes

When Shizuo's call came, it found Celty cuddling with a fluffy blanket on the couch in her pink pajamas watching one of her many variety shows that hosted the leading actors from a new drama that had aired a few weeks ago and she was already very invested into it.

Besides, watching TV was also a good way to kill some time now that all of the house chores was done and she had no more deliveries to make.

Work had lessened considerably these past years, since her biggest client was -em, had been currently absent!

Sure, she had other clients so she wasn’t out of business -most importantly she still worked of the Awakusu-kai; A job for them earned her thrice the money she’d get for other clients, but overall, she wasn’t earning as much as she used to.

Thankfully, she was still able to buy Shinra little gifts every once in a while, -dotting on him was one of her favorite things to do- and also buy some fancy gourmet ingredients for her culinary experiments.

She hadn’t decided how to cook her newly obtained ingredients but there was still time!

She had bought sea urchins and a large snow crab that day to use as the bases for whatever recipe she would come up to and was planning to surprise Shinra tonight!

Her boyfriend would probably come home really late that day, for some of his yakuza clients had been seriously injured after some conflict among them and a rival underground organization.

Apparently the injured were in no condition to be moved from their current place so Shinra had to go
there himself.

Honestly, Celty didn’t want to know any specifics!

As long as she knew the location Shinra would be and the client’s name she was happy; she could ensure that way that she knew who to look for if anything happened although Shinra had said he was in no danger.

But as for the medical details on what exactly he would be doing -she was fine being left in the dark!

Celty wasn’t one for gory details regarding blood and organs, thank you very much!

The irony wasn’t missed to her, considering she was a Dullahan, therefore in her times she was actively ripping souls, very long ago, she used to carry in her carriage buckets of blood to throw on those who dared looked at the dark fairy and the ones their souls she was about to rip…

That was centuries ago though!

The ways of the humans had rubbed on to her during the years she had lost her memories and if it she technically wasn’t a human herself, she had come to understand and accept their beliefs as her own!

Celty was more into watching TV and gaming than ripping souls these days…Such things felt more wholesome, insignificant or a waste of time as they were considered by many!

Speaking of TV, the moment that the discussion on the show was picking up and interesting details on her drama were starting to be revealed her self-phone rang and took her out of her hype.

That someone was calling her had been a surprise itself; those who had her number knew her very peculiar “predicament” when it came to communication and even those who didn’t -like some random clients- were always strictly instructed to only text her.

She glimpsed her phone-screen and was startled to see Shizuo’s name on the glowing glass.

Immediately it struck her as odd.

Shizuo had never -ever- called her all the years they were friends!

Her friend was extremely laconic with his texts as it was -actual face-to-face, or more accurately face-to-helmet, conversation included, so for him to call Celty figured something was up that apparently couldn’t wait.

She was more than a bit curious too as she pressed the green symbol on the screen and dragged her finger to the right.

Shizuo started speaking barely a second later and from the sound of his voice -raspy and rough- she could tell something was up.

He sounded ill to her.

However, the context of his words had her realize that it wasn’t a simple flu, whatever was troubling him.

For once he asked her outright to meet on the same day.

While not that unusual, Shizuo hardly ever asked to meet with people like that -even his best friend!
Not unless he made absolutely sure he wouldn’t bother or intrude to someone’s other plans.

Furthermore, he had asked her not to tell Shinra.

Now that was a first!

Shizuo despite being her best friend was also a male, and considering his other friend was also Celty’s partner he was usually careful not to give Shinra any weird ideas with his actions, considering how possessive and jealous her lover could get.

So, asking to meet her in secret, while not knowing whether or not Shinra happened to be around during them talking was certainly not typical behavior for her friend.

Was this thing he wanted to talk about related to Shinra’s well-being?

Was Shinra in some sort of danger?

Shizuo’s repeated pleading and admission of not knowing what to do regarding whatever was going on adding to the increasing number of red flags that had started to raise in her mind!

She had half a mind to type him a text assuring him that she would come and trying to coax him to tell him what was going in his mind.

The moment she sent the first text she started typing anew, assuring him of keeping her visit from Shinra a secret as he had asked her to try and ease some of his obvious agitation.

There was a brief pause, telling Celty that he was reading her texts.

And then he spoke again.

“IZAYA. He is alive..I-I saw him today.”

The moment she heard him uttering Izaya’s name along with the admission he had seen him that day her phone almost slipped from her fingers.

From her sudden movement she realized soon enough she had accidentally ended the call.

She had typed instantly “On my way” because really, she had no idea what to say!

The only thing she knew was that Shizuo needed her now! He had sounded extremely shaken!

But Izaya, alive?

This couldn’t be right, could it?

Celty had first hand knowledge on the matter -or so she had thought!

She had seen him that night from above, being dragged away from the pedestrian cross by a bald man and a girl the moment that blinding light erupted in the sky..

When she found them being holed up in that alley trying to decide how to proceed, the man and the girl arguing over a plan while Izaya was somewhat out of it, she had approached the informant to assess the damage Shizuo had cause.

Hell, Celty had talked to Izaya, stayed with him for a while somewhat willingly even!
That’s why she was pretty sure that she had been one of few people to witness Orihara Izaya’s last moments!

How was Shizuo now claiming that he saw him was beyond her!

In the back of Celty’s mind she was always a bit alert regarding her friend’s wellbeing.

She did the mistake back then after that night to focus all of her attention on Shinra, making sure he was happy and distracted, leaving Shizuo behind for half a year to deal with the aftermath of that fight and lick his wounds alone.

She had been a terrible friend to him and at that time, she had realized it later, but it hadn’t even registered to her how selfishly she had acted and how abandoned he must have felt after both her and Shinra left without even telling him.

When she had returned and saw the mental toll that fight had taken on her friend, she had felt immense guilt and the worst part was that she couldn’t turn back the time and be there for him while he was experiencing hardship.

She could do her best from now on to support him though.

Celty was somewhat sure that Shinra had come to a similar conclusion for his own reasons if his sudden clingy behavior towards Shizuo was any indication.

However, what was his reasons she was not sure.

Shinra was actively avoiding talking about anything he was thinking regarding both of his friends, his suddenl and very attentive attitude towards Shizuo and the constant attempts to strengthen their bond, Izaya and everything Izaya-related, his school years, that night... If she thought about it, there was a lot of things Shinra was either bottling up or just brushed off as unimportant those years regarding how he felt about certain things, but it had taken her a while to figure out which of the two was the case.

He had always been better at reading her than the other way around.

The few times in the past she had tried to bring the conversation around his feelings regarding his two friends he had laughed it off and changed the subject!

“I’m not sure what you mean my darling, you know that I don’t care about humans and what they do, whether they are family or friends! Ne, do you think Shizuo-kun would like to go karaoke with me?”

“I really don’t have any thoughts on the matter my dear Celty, the only thing that matters to me is you~!”

“School? Hmm..I can’t think any interesting funny stories right now, my beautiful Celty, gomme~!..Oh! I know! Do you want to hear about the surgery I performed yesterday? It was really interesting!”

Was he in denial, was that just his defense mechanism or did he really not care about neither Shizuo nor Izaya at a deeper extent?

Celty have almost thought for a while with the way Shinra was acting that he truly did not care about anything that had transpired between the two men; in fact, she would have believed him to be
completely detached from humanity and any relationship of significance he held with humans.

That would have been the case if at least if he hadn’t shown her awareness a few years back that his attitude towards Izaya could possibly hurt the other’s feelings at times.

That, and all the sly attempts of his to ensure Shizuo’s wellbeing by pumping him with medication even though he had promised her he wouldn’t.

However, what she knew for a fact was that since they had returned from their 6-month vacation, Shinra’s attention was constantly divided between her and Shizuo -at a lesser extent but still with the same intensity that Shinra expressed himself.

Celty was happy that Shinra was trying with his own manipulative methods to be supportive to Shizuo. She feared back then that what had happened would be the end of their friendship but apparently, they had grown closer than before.

When she saw them being together, Celty used to think that Shinra was completely over Izaya’s death long ago, and maybe Izaya himself too.

The doctor always seemed cheerful, overly excited and generally oblivious to anything unrelated to his love for her and his friendship to Shizuo.

Celty had come to the realization that Shinra’s deeper feelings for others apart from her wasn’t really that deep in the first place.

Maybe Shizuo wasn’t as important to Shinra either, despite what her boyfriend was trying to let on.

Maybe his sudden need for friendship was just a phase.

That was her conclusion a year after that night.

However, around that time, at a random day just after she had ironed some of Shinra’s shirts to kill time productively until her favorite drama at that time started, she had noticed once she opened his wardrobe to arrange the clothes that behind a heavy winter coat that Shinra only wore whenever it snowed, there was a black uniform with golden buttons, clean, ironed and covered by plastic, the pants folded and placed through the hanger picking out of the buttoned topped around it.

Celty was never in the need of a wardrobe -her shadows morphing into different styles- so Shinra’s clothing occupied all the wardrobes in their room, the ones in the other room used as storage spaces- so she hardly ever opened them.

She didn’t even have to take the uniform out of the wardrobe to insect it further to know that it was Shinra’s gakuran from his middle school years.

The missing second button was indication enough.

She had that button; Shinra had given it to her on his graduation day of middle school as an expression of his love because it was the one closest to his heart.

She also had the second button from his high-school uniform too, off course.

Celty was a bit startled to discover the uniform in Shinra’s wardrobe.

How long has this been here, she couldn’t help but ask herself.

The last time she had seen it was days after graduation, being thrown in a box with books and other
things Shinra deemed useless because he would soon become a “mature high school man” according to his words back then, the whole box placed to the back of the storage space and forgotten since.

When he had found it, returned it to a clean and almost-new state and placed it among his everyday clothing was beyond her.

It’s not like he could use it anymore, he had outgrown it ages ago.

Moreover, Shinra stopped talking about his school years for some time based on what she had noticed, so to keep the uniform in his wardrobe didn’t make sense.

Except it did.

That day Celty came to the realization that Izaya’s death had more impact on Shinra than her lover was letting on.

That night when Shinra had returned Celty had pretended she was just about to finish ironing and gave him his shirts to arrange himself.

Needless to say, after that day, every time Celty checked the uniform was still at the back of his wardrobe.

So now, after she had realized that Izaya’s death had impacted both Shizuo and Shinra she was extremely worried by what Shizuo had told her over the phone—and at the same time very confused!

On the one hand, if Izaya was indeed alive it would be very good for Shinra’s sake, who missed the informant and was clinging on him through the gakuran in the wardrobe, much like he was clinging to Shizuo’s whole being!

On the other, it would be better for Shizuo to be mistaken and Izaya to be dead because if the other was alive it meant trouble for basically everyone, but mostly for Shizuo.

Being dead maybe was a form of salvation for Izaya himself too.

Celty had realized that night that Izaya was a troubled creature that had been seeking ways to escape as it was.

If Celty had been completely honest, Izaya returning meant trouble for her personally too and she dreaded to face the consequences of her decisions that night.

As fast as she could, from the moment she had sent Shizuo her last text, Celty dressed her body with her shadows while at the same time shedding her pink pajamas, took her helmet and run straight to Shooter.

During her ride from her home to Shizuo’s place her heart, even if it wasn’t living by human standards, was beating like mad!

The moment she arrived she jumped of Shooter and sprinted to Shizuo’s door.

She had barely knocked the door, but Shizuo opened instantly as if he was behind the door waiting for her.

“You came” her friend exhaled a sight of relief and stepped aside to let her into the house, then heading straight to the couch and sinking heavily into it leaving a second sight.

Celty took in his appearance.
He looked sick in his t-shirt and sweatpants, pale and weak, like he had fought with an army before opening the door, his hair wet and dripping every now and then on his clothes.

[You should dry your hair first Shizuo. You’ll get cold.]

From the looks of it Shizuo wasn’t planning on doing so.

“It’s fine” he said with that same rough voice he spoke on the phone barely 20 minutes before.

[Are you absolutely sure it was him??]

She didn’t want to start addressing head on to the elephant in the room but beating around the bush wouldn’t do much good.

“I am. I talked to him, we fought...”

Few seconds passed in silence again, her friend not appearing willing to elaborate despite his initial urge to talk to her.

She couldn’t blame him, really, he needed to set his thoughts straight first obviously.

But, seeing him completely defeated, worry started to get the better of her.

[What happened?? What did he do?? Are you okay??? You look so pale..]

“I’m sorry..I worried you again..”

[Don’t say unnecessary things, I’m fine! It’s you who is troubled!!]

“Thanks..”

[Talk to me. I’m here.]

She squeezed his arm a bit in what she hoped was a comforting gesture to urge his to start.

“Sorry. It’s just -there are so many things! I don’t really know where to start.”

[Start from the beginning and we’ll move on from there.:) ]

She hoped the smiling emoji at the end could convey at least a bit warmth to him much like an actual smiling face.

She knew it wouldn’t.

“This morning I went to Chiyoda for work. I had to ambush a son of the bitch Tom-san can’t find. I-I was waiting outside his office.....You know, I though I’m going crazy the moment I saw him. I swear I could hear him in my head since then -every day Celty. Every fucking day! But seeing him suddenly in front of me like that..I’m crazy, I finally lost it -that’s what I thought..”

Celty was shocked over hearing Shizuo speak..

Izaya was in his head he was saying!

What’s that supposed to mean? This wasn’t good she was sure of that!

[What do you mean in your head?]
Seriously there wasn’t a way to make such question appear casual if you hadn’t got a head on your shoulders, or under your arm at least- for your face to show innocent curiosity and your voice to sound nonchalant.

“I think about him all the time..There hasn’t been a day I haven’t thought about him. About what I -what I did. I feel like he is always in my head..My head is so heavy all the time, Celty. It’s like he is everywhere I go, sees what I see -I don’t know... I just think about him..But I wasn’t thinking of him as often now.. I thought I would -get over it. He is not real, he is not here -that’s what I thought.”

Celty had never heard Shizuo before talking to that extent about his thoughts and feelings about anything.

Despite his angry demeanor, he was truly aloof and composed -unless there was something to piss him off.

To see him get emotional to such extent was off-putting.

Moreover, she didn’t know what was the right thing to say to all that!

She had never experienced anything similar to what Shizuo was talking about!

She could try to empathize, but as much as she wanted, she could not relate to his feelings at all, so she couldn’t offer any meaningful help apart from her physical presence and what would probably be empty words of comfort.

She could just sit closer next to him and run her fingers between his shoulder blades while he kept silent.

Thankfully, after a couple of second Shizuo went on.

“But suddenly we were both staring each other and he was there and he was real and all this anger I though I could leave behind exploded and I couldn’t hold back!”

That was something Celty found easier to comment on.

[Did you hurt him?]

“No. But I wanted to.. If I knew I could do to him anything I wanted without killing him, I would have broken every single bone of his body though. He is the same you know.. Mocking me, calling me a monster, blaming everything happened on me like he is innocent..Feeling guilty for hurting him makes me so angry Celty! I feel so stupid! I can’t even put it into words..”

[You are NOT a monster Shizuo!!! Also, you are right, he is not innocent at all so you shouldn’t feel guilty! He hurt you too!]

“I can’t Celty..I hurt him so badly..”

[HE hurt YOU too Shizuo! You have nothing to feel sorry for!]

“No -no! You don’t understand Celty! You didn’t see him!”

Seeing Shizuo hiding his face in his palms and acting so guilty while it was hardly his fault was starting to frustrate her!

She pulled at his wrist so his face was visible again and literally shoved her PDA into it.
“He was in a wheelchair Celty! He couldn’t get up! Even when I grabbed him and lifted him, his body wasn’t moving -he was just -wiggling, trying to get away..I crippled him- that’s what he said- I crippled him and I almost killed him he said!”

That left Celty completely flabbergasted!

Izaya was in a wheelchair?

Izaya?

Celty really didn’t know what to say..

Shizuo had indeed almost killed Izaya…

In fact, to this day Celty believed that he actually had, even though she would never-ever- admit it to Shizuo.

But disabled?

That was something she could not know.

When she had seen Izaya he wasn’t standing but he didn’t gave any indication he wasn’t feeling his legs either..

Yet again, Izaya was in a semi-conscious and partly delirious state -even though unsurprisingly he was still acting as a major asshole -at least for most of the part.

Still, what Celty should say to that?

Well, the answer to that was quite obvious!

Shizuo’s best interests were a lot higher in her books than Izaya’s, so off course she would try to protect him, even if that meant concealing part of the truth!

But how should she tell Shizuo she had seen Izaya that night?

At the time she had thought that it was for the best that neither Shizuo nor Shinra knew that, but if Izaya was back then he could say so himself to either of the other men, and probably in a way that would ensure that trouble would be created and Shizuo would get hurt more..

[Shizuo..you know Izaya! He is a liar and a manipulator! How can you take his word for that? He would say anything to hurt you, you know it!]

“I almost killed him Celty! He is not lying about that, I know he isn’t because I know how much I beat him up! He was right -I’m a monster!]

No! Celty knew Shizuo had never been a monster, no matter what he seemed to believe of himself.

But she also knew that he had almost murdered Izaya.

..................................................................................................................................................................................

She had located the informant with the help of her shadows.
The man was seated, leaning against a wall in a dimly light alley, a few trash cans obscuring him from the view.

At the entrance of the alley there were two people, the man and the girl who had dragged Izaya away from Shizuo.

They were arguing in hushed whispers.

When they spotted her on Shooter’s back, clad in her armor, her newly discover head under her arm, they looked ready to run for their lives!

Maybe if she Shooter looked like a bike and she was wearing her cure yellow helmet rather than holding her deceased head it would be a better option when roaming around Ikebukuro, especially at that particular night with so many people on the streets.

“I come in peace. I just want to check up on him.”

The head she raised towards them spoke.

She hoped they would trust her enough not to abandon Izaya and flee because she really didn’t want to be responsible for him of all people.

When her head set its eyes on him, she was startled to see him in such condition.

He was beaten beyond belief!

Both of his arms had turned in unnatural angles and had dropped to his sides, his face was swollen and bleeding from several gushes and cuts and a knife was protruding from his abdomen, a blooded jacket wrapped around it in an attempt to stop the bleeding.

What worried Celty the most though was how unfocused Izaya’s eyes appeared to be. They were opening and closing, looking without blinking whenever they opened, his head limping on one side and blood running out of his lips and down his chin, neck and the hem of his t-shirt.

A Dullahan’s vision was way more advanced than a human’s, so while a mortal wouldn’t realize it due to the black color of his t-shirt, Celty could tell it was soaked in blood that was starting to pull beneath and around him.

She could even see the blood oozing out of his body through the wound!

‘What did Shizuo do?’

Celty would learn later than that night that Shizuo hadn’t been the one responsible for the knife that was plugged in Izaya’s body -to say she would feel immense relief to hear that would be an understatement.

However, in that moment that she didn’t know, a chill had run up her spine; she could never imagine Shizuo could beat anyone to that extent -ever!

But she also knew that for things to get this bad Izaya had pushed him to an extreme!

She had seen the explosion, restrain it with her shadows even, but it was quite obvious to her that Izaya had done much more to Shizuo for her friend to go all out on the informant like that.

“Idiot! Are you happy with what you’ve done?” her head roared!
“Celty...I’ve been -waiting. I -finally- hear your voice. It’s not as I -expected it... then again -your head should be -rotting.”

Too many pauses, Izaya’s chest seemed to be heaving with every word he uttered, struggling to get air in his lungs.

But what he was saying also, and while looking like that annoyed her to her core!

“Aren’t you even remotely sorry? You hurt so many people, you started a gang war, you stole my head!”

“Your face – it’s beautiful. Why Shinra -prefers you without -it? If your head was -attached- on your neck -I’d love you -with the rest..”

“…”

Izaya seemed completely out of it to Celty at that point, like not even registering what she was saying, just going on about whatever was on his mind.

Celty had to stop the bleeding or else there was no chance he would survive.

Talking was wasting time; even if she wanted to scream at him for being a horrible bastard it could wait.

Izaya’s coughing fit that followed, which made his lips even redder with blood, helped her find her resolve.

She placed her head on Shoorter and kneeled down next to him.

“Ne Celty~. Take me to -heaven.”

She had already given up trying to make sense of whatever Izaya was mumbling.

Still she couldn’t help herself telling him exactly what was in her mind.

“I can’t take you to heaven Izaya..Even if I could take you to such place, I wouldn’t. Nothing about you is noble or good.”

The hilt of the knife seemed moderate in width so, she guessed the blade inside Izaya’s body would be similar, possibly a bit thinner.

“You won’t -take me to Valhala? I woke your -head up..”

Izaya kept insisting on her taking him in heaven or Valhala or wherever.

And waking up her head equaled her doing so apparently?

He couldn’t be serious!

He was completely delirious!

“I am a Dullahan Izaya, not an angel nor a Valkyrie. Dullahans only rip the souls- when they pass over, we have no authority regarding where they go. Dullahans are no guides-I’m no more than a ripper.”

She briefly remembered Shinra saying that if you pulled out of a body the offending object the
patient could die within minutes.

But what if there were vital organs pierced?

Maybe she should just stop the bleeding only before taking him to Shinra and leave the heroics aside…

“So I won’t live- forever you say..I see..”

Izaya seemed really fixated on these ideas right now; eternal life, heaven.

Could it be that this wasn’t random rumbling but his grand plan all along?

“That’s why you created such a mess?! You can’t be serious!..Humans are mortal beings, Izaya! Nothing can change that, anything suggesting otherwise is a blasphemy against life!”

Honestly, she thought Izaya was smarter than that and didn’t believe in fairytales!

Then again, she was at fault too, for Izaya’s illogical arguments.

Her whole existence was what Izaya used as justification for the mess he created from what it seemed!

“Mortal beings. Hmm -I’ve been gravely -miscalculating lately -courier-san.. Can you believe -that? I can’t..”

Another cough accompanied his sentence and one more thin line of blood slipped from the corner of his mouth.

Why was he keep throwing up blood?

Was he bleeding internally?

She couldn’t concentrate with Izaya saying all those crazy things and herself panicking!

He probably was doing more harm than good to himself with voicing his thought; exhausting his body more!

Celty had wasted enough time contemplating and second guessing the actions she had to take!

She let her shadows reach Izaya’s body and wrap tightly around his abdomen, making sure to keep the knife in place without accidentally pushing it deeper.

Izaya had let a pained whimper escape his lips and tried to move as if to turn away from her but she put a hand on his shoulder and stilled him against the wall.

Thankfully her vision allowed her to the that no more blood was spilling beneath him.

“I’m taking you to Shinra.” She declared and started morphing her shadows in some sort of stretcher.

“No!”

“You need a doctor Izaya!”

“I said -no! Now hurry and -rip my soul, Dullahan-san. I grant you -permission.”

Obviously, Izaya even in such condition had to be nothing but insufferable!
“I am not going to rip your soul, Izaya! I am no monster! I might not be a normal person but I have the same values and ideals as one! And you need that knife pulled out of your body!”

Denying help, being ungrateful and treating her like a monster!

“Could have -fooled me..What are you - here for -courier-san?”

“I came to help you! But you have to cooperate with me!”

“ I didn’t know -you care that much -for my well-being!”

That was the first time since she arrived that Izaya’s eyes focused on her properly, a nasty look on his pained face.

“I don’t. But I have to take responsibility for the trouble my presence has caused to this city and its inhabitants -you included. And also, Shinra considers you a friend.”

“Is it only -Shinra’s sake and your -sense of righteousness -that force your -noble actions- courier-san?”

“What’s that supposed to mean?”

She knew what he meant but she still had to ask.

Maybe now that the bleeding was under control Izaya was snapping out of his previous daze, not much but enough to be poisonous.

“You’re a good -girlfriend, Celty. An even better- friend .”

That really hit too close to home and angered her -partly because Izaya was calling her out of all people and partly because he was right.

“Be grateful I’m going out of my way for you Izaya. You do not deserve it in the least!”

“Grateful. For helping me for -everyone else’s sake apart -from my own? For helping me- for my enemy’s -benefit? Along with your head -you also found a -sense of humor -courier-san.”

Izaya definitely was the kind of person one would regret helping!

Each word he was speaking made her feel worse and she rose up to his bait every time!

“Yes that’s what I want! I won’t allow you to die by Shizuo’s hand! I will not forgive you if you harm him any further!”

“Such -passion! Careful. Shinra might get -the wrong idea Celty..I know -I would..”

How could a dying man be so aggravating was unbelievable!

“Someone like you could never understand things like friendship!”

“You could almost -pass for a human now -almost! S’funny..”

That was the last thing Izaya had said before he passed out for the first time that night.

Celty would have thought he was dead if it wasn’t for her Dullahan sight, seeing that despite all his injuries his body still refused to give up, even if his soul seemed eager to lever its confinement.
Everything about Izaya was stubborn; She hoped for once that it would stay like that.

However, she had to take him to Shinra!

Izaya needed a doctor, someone had to pull the knife out!

But.. What if Shinra saw Izaya like that by Shizuo’s hand?

And Shizuo would surely drop by their house later; if he found Izaya after everything the informant did.. what if he killed him?

That is if Izaya didn’t succumb to his injuries…

Having Izaya die in hers and Shinra’s home -she wasn’t sure she wanted to experience something like that..

Let alone for Shinra to experience it!

She had told that man and the girl that Izaya needed hospital urgently and yet the man refused to let her take him there!

The girl apparently didn’t even care about Izaya; she was a spectator she had said!

The man justified his refusal by saying that Izaya had requested to be taken out somewhere out of Tokyo.

Celty had argued that there was no time for that but the man was adamant and as an acquaintance of Izaya’s he was going to respect the informant’s wishes even if that meant Izaya’s death.

He just needed to access his car but the girl refused to sustain Izaya for a while for the other to do so because apparently, she considered the informant an enemy.

Celty honestly couldn’t find logic in neither of those individual’s attitude and the fact that there was currently the only sort of allies a dying Izaya had was disturbing!

However, the fact that the man’s hands and shirt had blood stains on it convinced her that even if his care was in an unorthodox way - prioritizing Izaya’s obnoxious wishes rather than his life- he was somewhat more reliable that the girl.

Moreover, the man had mentioned the fact that if Izaya was taken somewhere in Tokyo, his enemies - well, technically he meant Shizuo- could find him easily and finish him off.

That was a good point.

Celty had told him that she would stay with the informant till he brought the car and monitor his condition.

All the while the girl was watching their interaction casually seated on the entrance of the alley and seemingly uninterested.

All in honest, Celty couldn’t do much to help Izaya but apply periodically pressure on the wound.

She trusted her shadows would prevent it from getting infected- -that is if it already wasn’t with Izaya resting in a dirty alley- and tried to count his heart beats per minute to identify whether there was a change.
At the same time, she was browsing through the internet with her phone to get some idea regarding how to provide first aid to a victim of stabbing.

Every site said the same.

Do not remove the object. Do not touch directly on the wound and do not try to clean it. Put some sort of cloth onto it and apply light pressure to the wound periodically. Do not try to move the patient unless absolutely have to. Call for ambulance instantly. Beware of signs the victim goes through shock.

Could Izaya go into shock?

Had he lost enough blood for that to happen?

And if it happened what should she do?

Celty was checking his temperature every few minutes.

He did feel a little warm when she touched his forehead but on the other hand her skin was naturally cooler, so everyone she touched felt at least a bit warm to her; she couldn’t tell if that was fever or not.

Her head had found his coat shed close to the entrance of the alley -Dullahan’s eyes were coming in handy tonight!

It was bloodied and ripped but she had nothing more to keep his body warm like she was supposed to, so since the wound was covered by impenetrable shadows, she draped it over him gently.

She wasn’t sure how long had passed.

Celty was sitting next to Izaya with her back against the wall, her hand gently sitting around the protruding knife, every few seconds pressing lightly down.

At one point, Izaya began to stir next to her, the patter of his calm breathing becoming shallower again as awareness slowly returned to him.

She felt instantly her body tingling with tension from neck to toes.

“Izaya! What’s wrong?”

“Ne, Celty. Do you think -I’ll die -tonight?”

His eyes were closed, his head on the exact same position when she first found him, now resting close to her neck; a few black strands of his hair tickling it.

“I’m not ripping your soul Izaya, I told you.”

She tried her best to sound gentle and reassuring; causing him to act up again would do neither of them good.

“I know. But -do you think I’ll -die?”

Was Izaya …worried?

He seemed like he didn’t care before, so the realization that maybe he wasn’t making the situation as light as he made it seem before weighted down on her.
Moreover, was it possible that he was seeking comfort?

“I don’t think so. You are one of the strongest men in Ikebukuro. You don’t just -die..”

She tried to assure him but, if she was honest, he really seemed to be dying to her.

“Liar..I used to -imagine a glorious death -you know?”

“…”

This was too much!

She couldn’t deal with it, she was losing her nerve the graver Izaya’s words became by the second!

“Celty..You are a -Dullahan. Can’t you tell -somehow?”

Apparently Izaya would keep pressuring till he got the answer he wanted -or expected or whatever!

“I am not roaming around Tokyo ripping souls Izaya..whatever happens I have no knowledge or power over it..”

“..I’m sorry..” She added almost as an afterthought.

And she felt sorry.

How on earth would she ever talk about what happened in that alley to Shinra without making him hate Shizuo?

After he had talked to her about his junior-high years with Izaya …What if Izaya wasn’t as insignificant to him as the doctor made him out to be?

And how would she tell to Shizuo about Izaya’s final moments without scarring him for life?

The Shizuo she knew would beat himself down and act on impulse trying to take responsibility and what he would do she couldn’t know!

“S’okay..”

Came Izaya’s whisper at her neck.

The acceptance in his tone made her feel claustrophobic in that alley.

She disliked Izaya very much but now that her memories had been restored, she had regained the awareness that she was in fact a being that had lived many for centuries.

Even a human much older than Izaya was like a child compared to her.

Izaya, much like Shizuo, while considered grown man by human standards and regardless her relationship with him was like a newborn baby compared to her!

When she had first met him, the informant was almost a child -again by human standards.

Setting her grudges aside, witnessing Izaya’s last moments already felt too -soon!

This whole thing felt suddenly extremely nauseating!

“Izaya, even if there is something like heaven, or Valhala…I don’t think it is as you -humans-
imagine it. You won’t get to be you there.. Souls -they are alive but have neither shape, personality nor consciousness like humans do. You only get to be yourself this once... So, instead of wasting time thinking about a glorious death, can’t you just -live?’”

Celty never received a reply.

She had figured that Izaya had passed out again at some point without her realizing, possibly even before she started talking.

That was the last time she had seen him.

The bold man had arrived sometime after with the car.

She had help him clean Izaya’s bloody face and tend to the cuts there and put then he still passed out informant into the car.

Celty doubted Izaya had heard her then.

She hoped he had told him that before all that happened -let him know he would lose his life for nothing!

Had she known what he was thinking she probably would have.

Maybe then that whole night would have never happened, because Izaya would have realized he was trying to reach an impossible goal from the start.

Or maybe it would -she’d never know.

The sun was beginning to rise by the time she had returned home where she would find a calm Shinra waiting for Izaya -Shizuo had left minutes ago according to the doctor.

While he pointedly ignored her head, he had jumped her and hugged bubbling that he wasn’t letting her go ever again.

Shinra’s hopeful face that morning that Izaya would arrive at any moment, his medical equipment spread around everywhere in his lab and ready and hearing from him of “Shizuo-kun overreacting” to Izaya having not arrived yet was enough to persuade Celty that she was doing the right thing.

She focused that morning on distracting Shinra from Izaya’s absence and herself from the knowledge weighted on her, proposing to Shinra to leave for a while so she could see more of Japan and mend their relationship after what had happened.

At that point Shinra had forgotten all about the medical equipment, happily browsing the internet for destinations and prices, declaring that he would take her to every corner of Japan.

Celty tried to focus on the present.

Shizuo’s intense reaction to his belief he had almost killed Izaya brought back her resolve from that night.

[No you aren’t!! Izaya was hurt yes but, he wasn’t dying Shizuo!! I can guarantee you that!]

She couldn’t, but it hardly mattered.
Shizuo was in such anguish right now, his breathing shallow, his eyes wild and yet his whole posture
tired and beaten, calling himself a monster and saying things like having Izaya in his head, thinking
about that fight every day for so long!

“You weren’t there Celty..”

She had to ease his guilt, to protect him, because she knew that with the way he was right now he
was leaving himself open and vulnerable to Izaya’s maliciousness and schemes!

He needed to snap out of it!

[I was! I saw Izaya that night. I sealed his wound with my shadows.]

Shizuo froze in place the moment his eyes landed on the PDA.

A few seconds passed and he remained petrified -eyes running again and again over the screen.

“You saw him..”

Celty couldn’t measure his reaction but it reminded her the calm before the storm.

She momentarily thought maybe she should have kept silent about it.

However, there was no turning back now.

[Yes.]

“Does Shinra know too?”

[No.]

And then the storm came.

“Why? How could you not tell me Celty? I -I thought he was dead! I was going crazy and you knew
he was alive all along and said nothing? What about Shinra? Izaya’s his friend, Shinra has a right to
know! Why would you do that?”

That was the only time she had seen Shizuo angry and yelling at her all the years she knew him.

She didn’t like it one bit; Seeing her friend being angry at her was probably one of the scariest things
she had experienced since she started living among humans!

The fear of losing your dearest friend was a great as the one of aliens and traffic-police combined!

Shizuo had shot up from the couch, putting distance between them, pacing up and down in the living
room looking even more lost if that was even possible.

His reaction made her panic; she too shot up after him trying to interrupt his pacing gently as if he
was a wounded animal to show him the screen.

Still she could never tell him!!

Celty had to work around it and find some other logic to support her decision back then, but she was
too agitated to come up with something!

[I’m sorry! I was trying to protect you!! I thought I was doing the best for you!]
“How the fuck is that the best for me Celty? Did you think I was happy with killing him? Did you think I would get over murdering that bastard in a couple of months and then I would move on with my life like nothing happened?”

[I feared you would do something irrational if you knew Izaya was alive! I didn’t want you to ruin your life anymore because of Izaya! You have to stop chasing after him!]

That was a half-lie and a half-truth.

But at least it seemed to be the right thing to say because Shizuo’s pacing momentarily paused and he didn’t counter her argument of her fearing he would act irrationally if he had known Izaya had survived their fight.

“I just don’t understand; That’s not like you, Celty! You don’t do shit like that -You don’t keep secrets like that! And for years! I can’t fucking believe it! You knew all along."

[I’m sorry! If I knew how much you were suffering, that you were thinking about it all the time, I swear I would have told you he survived!]

That was a full lie!

Celty wouldn’t have done so.

Because then -to her knowledge at least- she would have told him an even bigger lie.

“You did know Celty, it didn’t matter how much you knew, you still did and hid it from me anyways! Shit! I cannot wrap my mind around it! You let me believe I’m a fucking murderer for so long and acted like you knew nothing, for fuck’s sake!”

She typed frantically and reached for his arm again with one had the moment she was done, the other showing him the PDA.

[I was trying to protect you, I love you, you are my best friend! I am sorry I kept it from you, and I am sorry I hurt you in the end! I thought I was doing the right thing! I don’t want to lose my friend, Shizuo..]

Finally, a heartfelt truth!

That was the first -tiny- smile Shizuo gave her since she entered his apartment and his posture seemed to relax a bit finally.

“I know.. I also love you.. But, I am very pissed at you still, I can’t help it.”

Shizuo sounded so much gentler than before, that if she hadn’t been there minutes ago to know what had transpired, she would have trouble to believe he was angry now.

[I know..I’m sorry!]

“Just- don’t hide something that serious from me again Celty. Please, you have to promise that!”

[I won’t, I swear I won’t!]

Shizuo went back on the couch looking even more exhausted than when the conversation started if possible.

Celty went and sat next to him, leaving some distance between them to give him space.
He wasn’t looking at her now, focusing on the coffee table in front of him.

“What happened? When you saw him I mean..How was he?”

Now that was something she had to thread carefully.

[Battered. The knife was in his body. He was in an alley making light of the situation. Two acquaintances of his were with him.]

“You sealed the wound you said before..Was it- did it look -serious?”

Yes, it looked very serious but that is not your fault! You didn’t stab him, Vorona did! -That’s what Celty wanted to tell him but it would lead to more tension between them.

[I did. It didn’t look good but it didn’t look fatal to me either. Still I didn’t want to take any chances of him dying.]

“Thanks Celty..That’s more like you, now. Always kind to everyone!”

Shizuo looked finally towards her direction, another tiny smile on his lips.

Celty begged to disagree to the compliment.

But at the same time, it made her happy!

She was feeling hopeful that she hadn’t damage their friendship irreparably tonight.

[It’s not that..I didn’t want him to die from your hands..If that happened I wanted you to bear no responsibility.]

“You can’t always protect me from my mistakes Celty.”

[I know but I still want to try. But also, Izaya is Shinra’s friend too as you said..]

“Then why keep it from Shinra he is alive? This doesn’t add up..”

Off course Shizuo would search and find loopholes in her story!

No wander he dreamed to become a detective at one point of his life!

[Shinra could have let it slip to you...You know him..Besides if Izaya wanted he would have contacted Shinra himself..]

That was a lame excuse, but thankfully her peculiar fiancé’s personality was enough to add leverage to her argument!

“Did you know Izaya would leave? Where did he go? Or was he here all this time?”

[I don’t know what happened to him since then. From what you said though apart from his condition nothing changed much about him.]

“That’s true…Well, he also looks like a librarian now if that counts..”

[Librarian??]

“Yes, all pure and innocent!”
“Are librarians pure and innocent?” she joked and that earned her an eye-roll.

“You know what I mean! I guess he was trying to hide in plain sight. For a moment there I feared I would jump a harmless bastard..Ts! Pure and innocent my ass! The clothes don’t make the man.”

[Still though, doesn’t sound like the Izaya I know!]

“It’s not. Until the moment he opens his big stupid mouth..then the illusion breaks, I’m telling you!”

That was better! The tension finally was starting to ease and the atmosphere was becoming a bit lighter now that instead of fighting there were back on their earlier conversation.

She was pretty sure Shizuo was still pissed off at her but she was hopeful that their friendship would prevail!

But, even if they made fun of Izaya now, the other was still dangerous.

[Did he threaten you?]

“No. More like pissed his pants when he saw me..”

[HE DID??]

The shocked reactions of hers earned her a laugh.

“It’s an expression Celty!”

[I know!! Still -I can’t imagine Izaya of all people being scared of you! It’s weird!”

“Neither do I. I still have trouble to believe he wasn’t fucking with me you know? He was stuttering all the time and screaming to let go like a banshee! He didn’t even try to stab me! I almost hit him at one point and he just stood there and waited to take it…”

Could it be true?

What if Izaya was already pulling the strings to manipulate Shizuo?

Such an act would surely guilt trip Shizuo -if it hadn’t already!- and enable Izaya to manipulate him, especially considering how remorseful Shizuo appeared to be!

[Do you think he was honest? You know he can always pretend to make you lower your guard!]

“I think he wasn’t lying. If I really -crippled him -it makes sense he would be uneasy around me, at least a bit. He can’t escape me if he can’t run..”

She wanted to tell him that he didn’t cripple his enemy -even if she couldn’t know, she really wanted to try and persuade him he hadn’t endangered Izaya’s life as much as he seemed to believe -and as Celty knew he had done.

Still she wanted to avoid another fight…

[Just please don’t trust anything Izaya says and does, unless you have proof that his words and actions are sincere!]

“You are right.”
Also..if Izaya is afraid of you, it is a good thing, I think…]

“I know. But I don’t think it’s enough to ensure he won’t try anything. He can always use others to do his dirty work…Honestly, I am scared Celty..I don’t want to hurt him more but if he tries anything -I will have to.”

[You are not alone Shizuo! You have people to support you! You have me!]

“I don’t want you to hurt him for me if he tries something…Even if you said his wound wasn’t serious, I think you did the right thing to help him back then. You are a good person Celty..”

Honestly, Shizuo gave her way too much credit sometimes! Especially after lying in his face today repeatedly she felt the most undeserving of being called a good person!

Moreover, Shizuo was way too soft sometimes!

There wasn’t a chance in the world that Izaya would hurt her best friend and she wouldn’t go after him!

If Izaya had managed to kill Shizuo that night she would have made sure the informant would follow him soon after!

[You are also a good person Shizuo, that’s why you should not become a martyr for Izaya’s bullshit!]

That was the best she could tell him, because there was no chance that she could promise what Shizuo asked from her.

“I won’t. If he does shit, I won’t let him get away with it. It’s just..I would prefer to know that he wouldn’t try anything than having to watch my back all the time!”

[That’s not an option though..You would need something to hold over him to keep him in check.]

“Hold over him? Like -blackmailing him, you mean?”

[I didn’t say that! Maybe a deal of sorts though? Give him something he wants?]

“How the fuck would I know what the flea wants Celty? The only think Izaya wants from what I can tell is destruction, elaborate plots and my head!”

It was a bit of a risky move what she was about to suggest and honestly, she wasn’t even sure if Shizuo would be able to do so, being so temperamental when it came to interacting with Izaya.

Moreover, she wasn’t even sure her assumption could be correct but still listening to how Shizuo portrayed Izaya and his reactions to the blond there was a chance that…

[Izaya can’t fight and was looking like a librarian you said... And he has wronged many people. It’s a wild guess but..maybe you could suggest you would keep quiet about his whereabouts if he plays nice?.If he really is trying to keep a low profile and cannot defend himself then, I don’t think he wants to be found...]

She could practically see the gears in Shizuo’s brain working, contemplating the idea and finding pros and cons to compare.

“Actually, you might have a point. I saw where he headed today and also, I’ve seen an acquaintance of his too. He was the one who saved Izaya’s ass in the morning.”
“Yes. I am not sure what’s Izaya’s agenda with him but he was very weird when that dude showed up. Like the other guy didn’t know who he was. Said to him we were classmates, called me “Heiwajima-san”.

[That’s sound suspicious!]

“Tell me about it! Hell! He even held my hand!”

[EH?? O.O]

“I don’t know! I was about to find out what the fuck was going on and suddenly he grabs my hand and he starts acting even weirder!”

Calling Shizuo “Heiwajima-san” was weird, but for the life of hers Celty couldn’t imagine anything weirder than hand-holding between the two men!

Just how much weird was “weirder” as Shizuo put it?!

It almost was like a sci-fi!

“Actually Celty..do you think that maybe…this could also be…leverage?”

[Hmm.. Possibly. It certainly doesn’t sound like Izaya’s normal behavior so, maybe you are up to something here..However, maybe you should not be that specific in your offer to him in case we are wrong.]

They stayed quiet for a while thinking.

Celty didn’t know what Shizuo was thinking but as for her, she was worried.

Trying to blackmail Izaya into submission was a risky move -maybe she shouldn’t have suggested it.

Mind games like that was for people like Izaya or Shinra, who could remain level headed and keep their cool and poker face intact when pressured.

Shizuo was genuine and explosive; snapped easily when aggravated.

She wasn’t sure if he would succeed or end up fueling Izaya’s hate even more.

Moreover, what if they were reading the situation wrong and Izaya wasn’t trying to hide?

The whole thing was a gamble, really!

[Before you propose a deal with him, try to talk to him, okay?]

“Talk to him? That’s Izaya, Celty! We don’t talk! We fight!”

[I know, but maybe you can find out something useful..]

“I don’t know..I might give it a shot..”

[And try not to let him get under your skin much!]

“Izaya always gets under my skin! He is a parasite!”
Well, Celty couldn’t disagree with that! She just hoped Shizuo wouldn’t lose it and kill him accidentally -or intentionally- this time!

But on the other hand, he had requested her barely minutes ago not to harm Izaya for his sake and he really didn’t seem to want to hurt him again. He had said so himself to.

[Do you know where you will find him?]

“I think so. If I can’t find him there, I know I will find the other guy who knows him.”

[Hmm.. That’s something.]

“I’m thinking I should do the first move. Catch him off guard so he won’t have time so start scheming.”

[I agree! But on the other hand, try not to rush and do something while emotional! You need a clear head when dealing with Izaya.]

“Don’t worry. Even when I was so pissed today, I could think properly. I knew what was going on all the time even if I was about to blow my lid! I was surprised to be honest.”

Well, Celty was surprised to hear that too!

She knew Shizuo had been trying for so long to control his temper -and to a point he was getting better at gradually, but to think he could maintain his sense while around Izaya was a real breakthrough if anyone asked her opinion!

She felt extremely proud for Shizuo!

[You are getting much better with your temper! Even when Izaya is concerned! I’m happy!]

“Thank you Celty!”

From the looks of it Shizuo seemed to be a bit proud of himself too!

“Celty..”

[Hm?]

“You have to talk to Shinra. I know you were looking out for me, but he has to know. I don’t want to take Izaya away from him.”

Oh, Celty knew she had too!

She knew at the time that it was for the best not to bargain neither Shinra nor Shizuo with the knowledge of Izaya’s death, it would be too much for Shizuo to know he killed someone and it would hurt Shinra too to an extent to have lost one of his only two friends -although how much she hadn’t realized then.

Moreover, she feared that what happened could have an impact on Shinra and Shizuo’s friendship too so she had deemed it better for both men to live in uncertainty that share the knowledge she believed she had till that point.

But now the tables have turned.

Izaya was back and Celty knew that Shizuo was right. She shouldn’t keep Izaya away from Shinra
now that he was here!

But how could she say such a thing to Shinra after so long?

She had been terrified seeing how angry and betrayed Shizuo felt!

Just because the tension had left the room now didn’t mean that Shizuo had instantly forgiven her and forgotten she lied to him!

His trust in her had been shaken, even though in his heart he recognized her as a friend who cared.

What if Shinra get angry at her too?

She wanted to tell herself that Shinra was Shinra!

He placed her above anyone else and there was no chance he would be mad at her for anything in the world!

But the gakuran in his wardrobe filled her with dread.

What if Shinra yelled at her too and never trusted her again?

Could her actions hinder her relationship with her fiancé?

[I’m scared. What if he gets really angry with me and we have a fight too?]

“It would be normal. But Shinra would never hold a grudge against you for long. You guys love each other! Besides, your relationship survived even with him hiding your head from you with the flea, I’m sure you’ll be alright in the end. And I won’t be angry at you forever either. I can’t say I’m okay with you hiding things from me for so long but I’ll be alright. I just need to cool off and wrap my mind a bit more around it.”

How the table have turned!

She was supposed to be here to help Shizuo through his crisis and instead she caused him and even bigger one and now him, who needed her support, was consoling her during her own crisis!

She scooted closer to Shizuo and hugged him tightly.

She really didn’t deserve such a good friend, but she promised herself she would do better from now on; be more supportive and honest with him!

They stayed together for a few more hours discussing again and again what had happened that morning and tried to decode every sentence and word from Shizuo’s conversation with Izaya.

Celty had told Shizuo that she would talk to Shinra during that week.

She had been emotionally charged to do it tonight and she was scared she would fight with him too, and really couldn’t handle a second fight with someone dear to her on the same day for Izaya!

The snow crab and the urchins that day stayed in the fridge and no fancy dinner was prepared for her partner that night.

Instead she cuddled around Shinra watching TV while he enjoyed his sushi.

She had dropped by Russian Sushi right after she had left Shizuo’s apartment and had bought all of
Shinra’s favorites.

Among them there was a box of ootoro.

Shinra had started favoring ootoro seemingly out of the blue these last few years, always ordering a serving regardless of his other menu choices every time he had sushi.

Whenever he was with anyone other than Shizuo that was.

Chapter End Notes

So Celty made a bit of a mess in her attempt to help everyone and gotten both an earful from Shizuo and Izaya in the same chapter for her choices even thou she had her reasons! XD
Do you think Shizuo let her off the hook too easily? :P
Also poor Shizuo seems to get manipulated a bit easily at times by those around him, even though everyone is trying to look out for him.:P
Chapter 13

Chapter Notes

Hi everyone!
I’m back with two chapters this time!
The main reason for that is that I had promised you a meeting a couple of months now
that was delayed due to the course of the story so, I didn’t want to update again another
chapter that is not the long awaited second meeting!
Both chapters are from Izaya’s POV this time.
Keep in mind that based on the time frame all the chapters around Izaya and Shizuo
meeting again are set in February! ;P
The next chapter will be coming in around two months because I have zero notes for it
ready and I don’t get much time to write the whole chapters in one go as I like! Writing
tiny part by tiny part going back and forth takes me longer and messed up my thinking
process! 0.o

See the end of the chapter for more notes

He had been living in paranoia these two days, his sanity hanging from a thread.
Izaya had always been high functional even when under extreme pressure or emotional instability - he
was hardly fazed by petty setbacks because he could always find loopholes and manipulate a
situation in ways that would eventually give him the upper hand.

Of course there had been times when his weak body and his even weaker mind gave out, especially
after that night and when he was at its lowest, but usually his drive to succeed was enough
motivation for him to find his resolution and win in the end!

But at least during those horrible moments he didn’t have a beast on his back waiting for the kill, like
he did now!

He knew the other would be waiting; he knew he wouldn’t live him alone - he just did damnit!

Worst of all he knew he couldn’t escape, not without losing the life he had built for himself from
zero; Truly from the scratch - disabled, jobless, alone, humiliated, depressed.

That day after he had regained consciousness and calmed down, Kato-san had taken him at the
entrance of the building once his ride had arrived and made sure he would get to Bunkyo.

When he had arrived, he was met with a distressed Mayumi-san who had dragged him in the house
and after she had stopped fusing over him about how pale and sickly-looking he had appeared to be,
she had pampered him to the best of her abilities.

Apparently, Boss-san had used as an explanation for his poor condition the excuse Izaya had made
about not eating and resting properly these days due to his stress over the deadline.

Izaya had been worried that Boss-san would get an earful for “forcing” him into overworking
himself to the point of exhaustion or something along those lines - which had been true at other times
but never to the point of Izaya feeling like an abused worker or anything of the like.
“It was my fault, really.. I wasn’t feeling very well for days but I ignored it. Kato-san took very good care of me Mayumi-san; bought me food, gave me an hour-long break and sent me home -he’s even doing my work right now!”

Izaya had highlighted again and again to be absolutely sure that the older man wouldn’t get blamed for Izaya’s shitty luck.

After the initial explanations and reassurances were given he had found himself in his room at their home, wearing the pajamas Mayumi-san had gifted him on New Years -he had left them at the couple’s house as a way to assure them that he intended to make proper use of his room- and being popped up on the bed and covered expertly with the fluffy duvet by the woman, looking almost like a maki roll.

A plate filled with a variety of fruits -which in less than two hours would be replaced with udon noodle soup -was resting on his legs, a steamy cup of tea by his bedside and Mayumi-chan seated on top of the duvet opposite of him chatting quietly about this and that.

He didn’t want to be left alone yet; his encounter with Shizu-chan mere hours ago too fresh in his mind.

Having his humans’ familiar presence around him helped him take his mind of things and feel relatively safer.

They stayed in light topics like how him and Boss-san had spent their “Jajjangmeyon Friday” the previous week at their new discovery -a Korean restaurant at Ueno that could finally satisfy Kato-san’s overly demanding pallet, which had been a relief because Izaya was starting to feel like a food critic rather than an editor with how many restaurants they had changed so far in search for “the one”. That comment also had earned him lots of Mayumi-san’s giggles which made him feel a bit smug.

They also exchanged some stories from the happenings at the Times and Mayumi-san’s past career as a teacher, which hadn’t been even nearly as angsty and juicy as Boss-san’s gossip that came fresh straight out of the latest rumor mill and then started making plans to drag Kato-san to the Bunkyo Plum Blossom Festival at the at Yushima Tenjin Shrine that had started a few days ago.

It would last thill early March but they both believed that it would be livelier if they went at the start.

In truth, Izaya wasn’t a fan of shrines; they were pointless!

Humans were worshiping a big fat nothing and didn’t seem to get it!

But Mayumi-san liked them and Izaya could never tell her that he though god doesn’t exist -he had said so to Boss-san but with Boss-san was different!

Besides there would be lots of humans for sure, so it wouldn’t be so bad..

‘Why are you even making plans?! You can’t stay anymore, you’re dead meat here!’

Izaya was trying to suppress such thoughts.

Now it wasn’t the time, he should relax a bit first and then arrange his escape; if making plans to spend time with his humans was relaxing why shouldn’t he?

Going or not going had nothing to do with it, lots of humans made arrangements for things they never planned to go…
The conversation shifted thankfully towards the dinner options a few minutes after the arrangements had been made and Izaya forced his mind to focus on what was actually transpiring rather than his dark feelings; though the uneasy sensation had already grown routes inside him.

For some unknown reason, while the topic of dinner was being discussed Mayumi-san started finding Izaya having “lost too much weight lately” -probably because his initial excuse was still lingering on the back of woman’s brain leading her to faulty observations- and her need to keep feeding him reemerged!

It seemed like some sort of motherly instinct awoke in some women when the child was sick; stuffing it with food to the verge of puking was supposed to equal cure apparently!

Izaya had heard a few humans complaining about it during his school years, but it was something he couldn’t verify as an accurate motherly behavior since his personal experience in domestic environments was limited and he hadn’t encountered something similar in public display either.

It could be true in some cases apparently.

It had been fascinating to experience and overshadowed successfully his previous gloomy thoughts for a while, especially because this behavior didn’t follow a particular logical thinking process from what he could tell; it was an almost animalistic instinct!

However, he didn’t find the action as annoying as he had heard it could be, albeit admittedly he would have preferred a break from food because throwing up didn’t sound too appealing.

He had been feeling as the blood living his brain once again but this time to head to his stomach which was full at that point.

It made him sleepy.

When Mayumi-san got up to brew a new batch of tea for them Izaya decided to rest his eyes for a moment while waiting for her return.

~~~~~

Apparently, he had fallen asleep without realizing.

It was already dark outside.

Was Boss-san home?

He checked with his phone on the bed side table.


So Boss-san must have returned by now.

He was surprised he had slept like a log in a dreamless sleep after what happened that day.

‘Must be all the food.’

Before he got up to go meet the couple, he stayed a few moments on the bed and contemplated how he should plan for his escape.

Ask for leave the next two days due to health reasons and at the same time prepare his resignation letter to send to Times the next day. Buy a ticket to somewhere really far away and random and hire
someone to pack and transport his belongings to wherever he would go. He wouldn’t need more
time; if he planned efficiently two days would be enough for him to disappear again.

Disappear.

Would this really be the only way?

Going away forever like that without a word to his humans?

They would be upset.

Izaya knew that the most important person in their books would always be Hideki-kun -which was
expected for obvious reasons - but he was sure by now that he was important enough for his actions
to have a big enough of an impact on them.

But he couldn’t explain the situation and even if he could he doubted they would understand.

If he left like a coward all of a sudden in secrecy and no explanation Boss-san would be so
disappointed in him -he knew he’d never forgive him.

On the bright side Mayumi-san would be probably only sad but wouldn’t hate him -she didn’t have
expectations of him the way Boss-san did to be let down; Her only expectation was that he is a good
man probably. Which of course they’d both learn in the end that wasn’t true, if Boss-san took it up to
himself to search for him and did his research.

Jo-san would be fired probably too.

No one would have such a lousy human working for them before they lost their patience. She wasn’t
like Namie-san -intelligent, competent, professional- and in business humans appreciate such skills
way more than good intentions and kindness.

Sure, she wasn’t that much of an important human to him because he didn’t know her well enough to
be sure she was worth investing into, but she seemed to honestly appreciate and worry for him and
also, she was his project– a human he could push towards the right direction with honest means and
support. He never attempted a project like that before!

Izaya wasn’t sure if leaving was truly his most sustainable option…

He would weight his options later again, because if he indeed run away he was wasting precious
time with staying in the room by himself.

He brought his chair closer and maneuvered himself enough to sit on it, the wheeled towards the
living room.

“Izaya-kun! Rise and shine!”

“Okaeri, Kato-san!”

“Tadaima. Are you feeling better? You still look a bit pale..”

“Ehh? I’m fine, I’m fine~. Mayumi-san gave me lots of food and I also had a nap!..Mmm..Where is
Mayumi-san?”

“Kitchen!” came a voice from the other side of the house.

Seconds later she appeared looking at him with big watery eyes.
Izaya would have been worried if it wasn’t for her apron stained with food, a massive half of an onion on one hand and a big knife to the other.

“Did you rest well Izaya-kun?” she sniffed a bit and blinked repeatedly as she talked, the hand with the onion stretching a bit away from her body.

“Hai! Sorry for sleeping like that..I didn’t realize.” He admitted sheepishly.

“It’s okay, you needed it!” she smiled down at him and send a disapproving look towards her husband who started to fidget the moment he was met with it.

“I didn’t do anything!"

“Just in case!..Izaya-kun I’m making beef curry! Do you need anything until it’s ready?”

“Coffee, please?”

“Isn’t it too late for coffee? You won’t be sleeping all night if you have coffee now!”

‘That’s the goal Boss-san!’

“I think it will help me wake up a bit!”

“Kioshi! Don’t pester him first thing after he just woke up!”

“I didn’t!”/ “He doesn’t Mayumi-san!” both men said at the same time and as usual they grinned at each other a moment later acknowledging their synchronization.

“Hmm. If you say so Izaya-kun.” Mayumi-san said a bit skeptical.

“You boys hang out till the dinner is ready and I’m going to bring you your coffee in a bit.”

“Hai Mayumi-chan!”/ “Arigato Mayumi-san!” they were still in sync!

“Ne Boss-san, Mayumi-san seems extra scary with you today!” Izaya couldn’t help to tease him when they were alone and the woman had finally closed the door to the kitchen so the smell of the curry wouldn’t overflow the living room.

“You don’t have to seem so happy about it!” the man pouted.

“Gomme~ It is funny, I can’t help it!..But I told her it wasn’t your fault -which really isn’t!”

“Thanks, Izaya-kun! I think that’s why I’m not sleeping on the couch tonight!” Boss-san laughed.

“Mayumi-chan is not upset with me -I guess I have you to thank for that!? She is just, for the lack of a better word…cooking-stressed, I guess you would call it!”

“Since when does Mayumi-san gets cooking-stress over beef curry?”

“It’s not about the curry boy!...Valentine’s treat!”

Oh! Right there were at mid-February now.

Izaya had noticed the previous days how everything was starting to turn nauseatingly sweet and cutesy all over Tokyo!

Humans were bound to go crazy if they hadn’t already! The females in search for the cringiest
purchase to express their superficial feelings and the males fidgeting in anticipation of whether or not they would receive anything and how their little love lives would be shaped the day after, while in reality the only thing that was going on was a big waste money!

It made him shiver internally imagining the crazy mode everyone at the office would enter!

Poor Mayumi-san was also a victim of marketing apparently.

“I wasn’t supposed to know but I barged into the kitchen before and kind of spoiled her surprise, so Mayumi-chan has it out for me now..” Boss-san laughed sheepishly but then his face drawn into a realization “Actually, I’m still ruining it I guess, so when she gives you yours act surprised, okay?” he whispered to him conspiratory.

“Okay! Don’t worry Kato-san, you can count on me! You’re definitely avoiding the couch!”

“Now I am really starting to worry! I should bring my pillow here already…”

It wasn’t surprising really; Izaya was always included in every event that related to human dynamics by the couple so it made sense to receive Valentines treats too from the Mayumi-san.

Receiving sweets on Valentine’s Day wasn’t a new experience for him.

In fact, he had received more than enough sugary shit during his school years.

He always had fangirls -and fanboys- who were following him around during that time whether is was his looks they were attracted to or his smarts.

Half of the humans who bombard him with sweets on that particular day were girls who he had never exchanged a single word with and yet they claimed they liked him when they didn’t even know him! It was so superficial that it was frustrating!

Valentine’s Day had been associated with another problem back then.

Usually the unwanted sweets came hand in hand with even more unwanted love confessions!

Humans claimed to love so easily; it was ridiculous! Then when they received the rejection, they acted all heartbroken and a week later they’d found someone else to “love”!

All humans were like that -males and females alike! Couldn’t they see back then how much they irritated him for the sake of creating some sort of drama where they could be the main leads themselves?

There was only one confession that had been genuine enough and at least made some sense, but that wasn’t cliché enough to happen on a Valentine’s day. It was also the only one he had ever reluctantly accepted for these exact reasons -Mikage-chan’s.

The whys and hows were something that he didn’t care to start reminiscing right at that moment in front of his Boss-san. Moreover, he had already too many things to deal with to add that to the things he was currently reflecting on at that moment! Besides the end result had been disastrous anyways - which was to be expected really with how dysfunctional Izaya was.

Anyways, the sweets he was given in the past he always he gave to the twins when he returned home after another draining Valentine’s; if they didn’t like something, they could throw it for all he cared. All the additional love letters and little gifts that came with them he just checked out of curiosity and then they ended up in the trashcan.
He had received obligatory chocolates from the twins off course when they were still living together, since he was their family. There were the only ones he forced himself to eat.

Mayumi-san’s Valentines treat he would be similar to the ones Mairu and Kururi used to give him.

They had known and liked each other as humans and he knew that the sentiment behind it would be honest. Most importantly Mayumi-san’s gesture wouldn’t be a love confession but rather an expression of acquaintance so it wouldn’t uncomfortable. Knowing he was regarded as one of the important males in her life through that gesture was nice and he would accept whatever he was given gratefully.

“Isn’t it a bit early to make sweets though? We still have a full day before!”

“It’s because tomorrow you’ll be going to your place and she won’t see you till Friday, so she wants to give them to you in person. With how things turned out today, you met anyways. I’m receiving mine on Valentines though!” Kato-san’s cheeks were turning a bit rosy at the admission.

Could Mayumi-san have unconsciously sensed that they wouldn’t be meeting on Friday and probably forever after tonight so that’s why she had started working on his gift from today?

“Ne, Boss-san.”

“Hmm?”

“Gomme.”

“What’s with this all of a sudden?”

“Because I inconvenienced you a lot today.”

‘And probably I will inconvenience you some more when Shizu-chan breaks the office down to get me and you would have to deal with him by yourself.’

“Again, with that? Seriously Izaya-kun snap out of it already, hearing you apologizing so much today gives me the creeps!”

“Ne ne! I know it’s a working day, but promise you’ll take Mayumi-san out on Thursday, okay? I can’t take your wife out on a date to thank her, so you’ll have to do it yourself for both of us, Kato-san~!”

“Hmm..It’s not a bad idea actually! We haven’t been on a date for years! But let’s not call it date. These things are for youngsters...” Boss-san’s blush increased more.

“By the way Izaya-kun, I appreciate you not wanting to date my wife! I can feel finally at ease now!”

Izaya couldn’t help but laugh along with the other man at their weird insinuations.

“Seriously, don’t overthink so much, just get her some chocolates on the White Day; it’s not like you have to do a grand gesture. I’m sure you know how this works, you’re a good-looking boy!” Kato-san winked at him the implications unsaid.

It was his turn to squirm in his chair now.

“What does it have to do with anything??! Besides, White Day is a month away!”… ‘and I don’t think I'll be here in a month’s time..’
"Don’t worry, if you forget -which I’m sure you won’t, I will remind you."

“Okay…..Ne, Kato-san? I think I should stay at home tomorrow…Would it be okay with you to call sick in the morning?”

Boss-san gave him a look at that.

Not a glare or an outright decline. Just a look.

It was like the other was trying to read his mind that moment.

Izaya was slightly uneasy to be under such a scanning gaze for fear his calm and lighthearted façade would crack and the other would see that the mornings panic was still lingering under his skin.

“I thought you were feeling better already. Is something wrong?”

“Now you are the one who’s overthinking Boss-san. I’m fine, I was just thinking I should stay at home just in case, that’s all.”

“One day. I will be expecting you on Thursday at the office Izaya-kun.”

“Hai.”

Izaya agreed but he knew it wasn’t possible.

“Besides you have to give me the last-minute tips and encouragement!” Kato-san told him crossing his hand in front of his chest in a show.

“Eh? You want my advice on how to date your own wife Boss-san? Seriously? Hm..Maybe I should indeed be the one to date Mayumi-san!” the idea was so farfetched that Izaya was sent in a little fit of giggles.

“Stop laughing at me you brat! And find your own wife! You are very annoying Izaya-kun, do you know that?”

“Oh! You are such a tsundere Kato-san, acting like you don’t like me now! Kawai~! ”

“Whatever that means anyway... Besides Izaya-kun, it was your idea! You don’t just say something like that and then stop; you have to elaborate!”

“Hmm..I’ll think about it.. But, you’re the married one here Boss-san~! What would I know~?” he raised his shoulders trying to feign mock innocence but he his laugh refused to die down.

They kept at it for a while but eventually Izaya decided to spare the man who was apparently oblivious - seriously how someone like Kato-san wooed Mayumi-san beyond Izaya at times!

Not that Izaya himself was any better but he had observed a lot of humans during this particular celebration because it felt really wholesome to make fun of them, so he knew that he could at least grant him some information on how the trends had been shaped.

Eventually, Mayumi-san came to set the table, hair all over the place from the steam in the kitchen and the three of them sat around the table to start with their dinner.

The atmosphere had been light hearted and pleasant -Mayumi-san had apparently decided to forgive his boss for ruining whatever surprise she was preparing- the curry had turned out really good and chatting quietly over the television after wards felt relaxing, but Izaya’s appetite had shrunk and his
mood was declining rapidly.

That day had started terribly -and that was putting it light- but turn out warm and soothing and when it would end it would take with it everything -good and bad.

When everyone was about to retreat to their rooms for the night Izaya couldn’t help but feel like suffocating a bit.

He would see his humans one last time in the next morning before he left so, he shouldn’t act all weird now but he just couldn’t disappear so casually without saying some sort of goodbye. The shallow feeling, he got to his stomach since the moment they sat for dinner wouldn’t just leave him do so!

“Kato-san, Mayumi-san.” He called them when they were about to retire to their room.

“For everything you’ve done, I am very grateful! Being around humans like you, makes me feel happy!”

It was the first time ever he had dare to admit both to them and to himself that the warm fuzzy feeling he got more and more often these years was indeed happiness.

He had been reluctant to put a name on it before for fear that if he addressed the feeling for what it was he would lose it, but he had been stupid. He was meant to lose it anyway -calling it by its name wouldn’t change a thing.

He really hoped they would remember his admission and recognized it as truth afterwards.

“Hearing you are happy Izaya-kun makes me happy too! You are such a kind boy! Get some good rest and not push yourself too much from now on, okay? Goodnight.”

Mayumi-san told him softly, squeezing his arm with gentle force before she slipped to her room quietly.

“Goodnight.”

“Izaya-kun. I know it was a difficult day for you. But you are a strong man. So, don’t let today get to you that much, I am sure you had worse before. Get some time off and come to work on Thursday… I’ll really need your last-minute encouragement I already told you!” Boss-san gave him a toothy grin at the end.

“Thank you, Kato-san. I’m lucky you’re my boss!” Izaya smiled back but he doubted it reached his eyes.

“And I’m lucky you’re the one I boss around -unbearable as you are! Goodnight Izaya-kun.”

“Goodnight.”

He had a fitful sleep that night.

His brain was overloaded with so many different thoughts and so many negative emotions he couldn’t know from where to begin to decipher them all. His body craved sleep but his mind was overworking too much to allow him any. And whenever he was close to shutting down completely, he would jolt and wake up again waiting for the beast to jump him in his room.

By the time ha had managed to get some proper sleep the alarm on his phone had started ringing.
The next morning when he got up he called at Times to request the day off for health reasons and after he got dressed and finished his morning routine he realized that Boss-san had already left before Izaya even got to see him one last time!

After he finished his coffee with Mayumi-san he knew it was time for him to head to Edogawa and work on his escape plan.

“Mayumi-san thank you for the coffee~! I think I should be heading to my house now, I might as well do my chores since I don’t work today!” Izaya wheeled towards the door.

“Okay Izaya-kun. Just wait for a moment here first!” the woman said and rushed to the kitchen.

‘Ah! The Valentines treats!’

“Hai!”

When she returned, she was holding a poohch with red and pink ribbons, that Izaya knew contained the chocolates she prepared the afternoon before.

“Happy early Valentine’s Day Izaya-kun!”

“Oh! An early Valentines treat?” Izaya faked to be slightly surprised but not too much to be convincing. “Thank you very much Mayumi-san! You really didn’t have to!”

“You’re welcome Izaya-kun! Please enjoy them!”

“I will! Thank you again for your gift!” He bowed lightly and headed for the door which the woman held open for him to assist him.

“See you for the Plum Festival?” she waved at him.

“Yeah..I’ll see you there Mayumi-san..”

If anything, the moment he had arrived at his own house his mood deteriorated even more severely.

He was holding back successfully all the previous day but the second the door behind him closed and knew that he was in absolute privacy misery and panic started hitting full force.

He wheeled to his bed and fell on it like a corpse and spend hours trying to calm his nerves and rethink his decision. He knew he should start packing from the moment he had arrived and booking his tickets to wherever but he didn’t seem to be able to get himself to start.

He didn’t know what to do anymore, he didn’t want to leave, he liked his life!

Why did he have to run on Shizu-chan from all people, why was he so unlucky all the time?

Izaya had struggled so bad and for what felt like forever just to pull through; Yet, for some reason - even with his useless legs- he had made it and had been rewarded for his effort for once!

Because when else had he ever felt truly content with his life before? When had he ever taken pleasure from actively engaging in life, rather that observing it from the safety of the sidelines?
He supposed there must have been a time like that somewhere in his past, but if it actually existed, he really couldn’t remember it!

But, the problem with being an active player rather than a mere spectator was that one had to give up that detached safety the sidelines generously offered them.

And when everything when to hell, the option to run away was just not there anymore because the price the player had to pay was much larger than the one for the spectator!

Not that it wasn’t fair; the benefits the player got to reap exceeded the spectator’s by much.

Which led to the obvious conclusion, that running away when you had nothing to lose was simply not the same with knowing that to escape you would have to sacrifice something you wanted and had within your grasp.

Izaya had also came to the realization that apparently bonds came with even more of a bargain than he initially had expected!

Severing a tainted bong out of betrayal, anger, pain, hate or death would be extremely painful; But severing a perfectly healthy and ever-growing bond because of something that had nothing to do with it was enough to make him feel like his insides had been torn apart with a knife all over again!

It wasn’t fair, he didn’t want to do it again!

He had already given up Shinra years ago, should he have to give up his new humans too now?

Moreover, it felt like this time it was all or nothing for him!

Because, miraculously this time around things had worked for him for the better -even for a while! If he stopped now, he would go back to square one and if that happened, he wouldn’t be strong enough to create a life for himself all over again for a third time -his determination and capacity might have been extremely resilient when it came to shitty situations but they were not endless!

Moreover – he wasn’t normal. He might be not have been crazy, but his personality had proven to be defective in certain contexts time and time again!

In the past, Izaya had been satisfied with the knowledge that he had created it himself, based on his own standards and views -rather that it being created by some uncontrollable factor, but now that those standards had changed and despite some of his views had been based on miscalculations, he was stuck with it!

Even if he had learned to tone down some of its aspects that had been confirmed as problematic, he couldn’t just erase or reset it as a whole and create a new one!

He had lived with that personality all his life and despite its downsides he still liked how he was!

However, now that personality was at times contradictory to his new priorities and views, which made things difficult and frustrating for him more times that he cared to admit!

He always had trouble to get across his honest feelings to others -care, sincerity, sadness, happiness; such basic feelings and he couldn’t express them correctly! He couldn’t voice his thoughts without not appearing disturbing or eccentric but that was how his brain worked! Bonding -the very essence of humanity, the pillar on which society had been created, it was a puzzle that took him almost three decades just to understand where he should start from to put it together!
That was why there were times in the past that anxiety had plugged him that something must have been wrong with him - with his brain, his family’s medical history - something.

But in the end, after so long he managed to gain at least some basic understanding on how to solve that puzzle of bonding with humans without having to change or conceal his core to do so.

He had a long way to go but at least didn’t feel like a lost case anymore, as he once had believed.

Furthermore, now he could even express his feelings a bit clearer and with more confidence and from what it seemed there were a few humans out there that understood them without him having to second-guess himself at every second!

So, if he gave up now, with how peculiar he was and how long it took him to figure things out that for others seemed obvious, he would end up dying alone for sure!

Izaya always had a very limited number of humans he could consider himself close with.

For the longest time he had basically only Shinra and no one else! But, even then he knew he wasn’t very important to the doctor because he didn’t care about humans. But still Shinra had been the only one to ignore his deficiencies for the most part and stick with him then.

Even if they were other humans like Shinra, or his Boss-san, who was caring and kind to him like no other human had ever been, Izaya would not know where to find them and even if he did out of sheer luck, he couldn’t be sure that they would want him or would be trustworthy… or that he would want them!

In the past he had never cared whether or not he would become a villainous hermit - in fact he had made his peace with the idea and was already entering that stage at the time.

But now, he couldn’t go back to thinking he could be alone; not when he experienced how it is to be a proper part of a healthy dynamic!

The solution might have seemed obvious – escape somewhere far away from Tokyo and start compromising for the sake of safety. Find a new job, find some tolerable humans to build superficial bonds with and when he’d got older, find a bearable career-orientated woman who wouldn’t care about kids and be with her so he wouldn’t die alone and forgotten; Because who knows for how long he could bear loneliness after having experienced proper companionship - one decade, two, three? He would break eventually.

Even if he wouldn’t care much about those new humans he’d find, and even if they wouldn’t care much about him either, even if they would substitute his important humans poorly, it would still be better than nothing.

Pathetic much?

Well, he was a pathetic coward when it came to being a human – he always had known that.

But, even if that solution was obvious, it was not easy to follow through with.

After how well he had used his second chance, he knew deep down this solution was bound to never take shape, because Izaya didn’t think he could just have humans around him for the sake of simply having humans; He wanted to be with humans who were loyal to him, and despite his eccentric and asshole self still wanted him! He wanted his humans, he didn’t want new ones!

He didn’t want to run away and leave them to save his skin either! If that was the case he would
have chosen to stay in Osaka from the start and never taken the risk to return to Tokyo!

And honestly, Izaya felt such miserable solutions weren’t worthy of him!

He had worked his ass off every day and managed to acquire a couple of good things all with legal means, no deceit or manipulation and with no intention to harm or exploit others for the sake of personal gain, not even for relatively harmless amusement!

He sure must have deserved better!

It wasn’t only his emotions that disagreed with running away from this old-yet-new problem with the name Heiwajima Shizuo, when his brain was still divided.

It was his instinct too that told him that rather than run away from Shizu-chan’s murderous presence as usual he should stay rooted and wait to face him again.

Yes, he had run away from the other man multiple times but at least he always gave a fight before he retreated eventually -now he hadn’t even tried to stand his ground yet. Moreover, Shizu-chan almost robbed him from everything he had in the end but Izaya at least had never considered letting him have it without fighting him first for it!

Of course he was scared to death that the monster would try to pummel him again but the knowledge that he had screamed and pleaded and ridiculed himself so terribly in the face of that protozoan made him want to yell out of frustration and anger and break something!

He wouldn’t of course; Izaya wasn’t a mindless beast so he refused to act like one.

But that didn’t mean that the feeling wasn’t still there to mess with his self-preservation instincts!

Shizu-chan had looked down on him yet again and Izaya had proven him right! He hadn’t acted like the debt collectors equal yesterday morning; he had acted like -like an insect, tiny and pathetic and ready to be crushed! Just like what the other always called him!

He didn’t know when Shizu-chan would choose to strike, but Izaya would wait for him and would be ready to show him that this first meeting didn’t prove the beast right in any way!

Izaya would show him that he wasn’t scared, pitiful nor pathetic; that he hadn’t been crashed that time and that he was still his equal and that he wouldn’t lose anything else to that animal!

But, most importantly Izaya wanted to make clear to the other that he believed it was time to sever this toxic relationship.

He had come to that decision from the moment he had fled Tokyo years ago but, now it as time to let Shizu-chan know it too.

Till that particular night he had never cared before whether or not this endless circle of hate and violence kept repeating itself, but he never deemed it necessary before to break the circle, because there was no need for that. Besides, until that night his relationship with Shizu-chan had been almost his exclusive source of amusement!

Izaya provokes Shizu-chan one way or another – Shizu-chan takes the bait – Izaya runs – Shizu-chan chases – Izaya hurts Shizu-chan – Shizu-chan hurts Izaya – Izaya provokes Shizu-chan…

On and on and on the same thing day after day after day with no end.
But now terminating this connection was essential for Izaya to keep moving on and to ensure that the little soap bubble that was his life wouldn’t blow up in his face!

To break this circle all it would take was add a new point on its perimeter and see what it would happen—at least he hoped his assumption had been correct.

There was no point in dragging it further. That night was supposed to be their last battle and he had lost because he had miscalculated so many different parameters.

Being stuck in this chair was the result of his miscalculation, he had long accepted that too.

Not that he hated Shizu-chan any less for breaking him beyond repair but Izaya wasn’t deluding himself to the point of believing he was innocent.

He had driven the other in a corner that night and how much he had enjoyed it! He felt like he was hunting a wild animal in humanity’s jungle and the trill he got out of in his anger and hate, had been exquisite!

Moreover, Izaya wouldn’t bat an eye if Shizu-chan bit the dust that night so he really didn’t have the right to victimize himself!

Sure, he wouldn’t go around admitting he was in the wrong more times than he cared to count but at least he could be honest with himself—he was despicable and he had always been aware of that.

Besides he wasn’t a victim!

That word made him sound weak and disgraceful!

Izaya was a survivor!

He had lived despite all odds being against him!

Some days when he felt his self-esteem being high enough—which was a fluctuating feeling actually—he wished that assassin had shot him in the head, just so he would beat even more odds and rub it in hers and Shizu-chan’s faces that no one could take down Orihara Izaya—wheelchair or not!

He could survive another encounter with Shizu-chan and this one he would win!

No, he wouldn’t seek revenge. In this round he would seek to achieve making the protozoan agree to end their sick relationship.

That was the main objective he had decided finally, but the means to achieve that—well, he—almost—didn’t care about them.

Beggars can’t be choosers they said and they had a point.

He just needed to know Shizu-chan would let him be and Izaya would bargain almost everything to make the other agree!

He had thought to request it from the ex-bartender but this wouldn’t be enough.

What could Izaya do to him anymore anyway to use as a bargaining chip?

No matter what happened to the other from that point he would have him and of course his Dullahan friend on his back, probably word would get out too and he would have to deal suddenly with half Ikebukuro, if even the tiniest thing happened to Ikebukuro’s favorite beast.
In fact, Izaya hoped that really nothing bad would befall Shizu-chan, if only out of self-preservation!

He also desperately hoped that the blond amoeba hadn’t opened his mouth as of yet about his whereabouts but knowing the beast never did what Izaya wanted from him he was sure Shizu-chan had spoked already with a few humans.

‘Just give him whatever he wants! Ask him what he demands and do as he says! The sooner you get it done the better!’

That’s what his brain screamed.

He hated not having a choice -being at anyone’s mercy- stomping on his pride!

Give in to like that to Shizu-chan willingly, allowing the power balance shift completely in his enemy’s favor, reducing himself to a loser, knowing that he would eventually cease to any insane demand Shizu-chan might have regardless whether or not he’d try to show the other that he was still in control of the situation -he absolutely loathed it all!

But what else would he do??

At least, if it would be something like money it would be okay.

But Shizu-chan even if he was piss poor but he was stupidly proud.

His style was more brutish and less exploitative; that’s what scared Izaya the most.

The other was so violent and irrational that Izaya could easily see him demanding to beat the shit out of him on a monthly -or weekly- basis as a form of repentance on Izaya’s part, because Shizu-chan wanted to hurt him or simply because he needed an convenient outlet for his anger that would not resist or report him and he didn’t care about inflicting pain upon it!

Izaya knew he fit perfectly in that description!

There was the tiniest voice inside Izaya that tried to argue that Izaya’s judgment wasn’t 100% objective because the result of the last fight was making him paranoid and overly dramatic.

Even if Shizu-chan lost his temper and beat up humans -him included, when he was in his normal brutish and aggressive state, he had never been “abusive” with the traditional sense of the world, because he had some sort of moral code he went by.

And also - Shizu-chan had jumped him on the street and tried to beat him up before Kato-san interfered but after that, he hadn’t tried to hit him again even though he definitely could.

But Izaya wasn’t sure he could trust that memory -he wasn’t in the right state of mind to observe him and even if he was correct, how the hell could he trust Shizu-chan of all humans? Certainly not after he had ended up disabled and with half his bones obliterated!

No, Izaya would still keep this potential demand within the realm of possibility; better already expecting the worst so to be prepared.

Still Izaya would probably accept even a demand as absurd as that, considering the severity of the situation, because his life worth the sacrifice of reducing himself to Shizu-chans ever-there punching bag no matter how

terrifying or painful that prospect could be!
The only thing that Izaya was stubbornly unwilling to offer the beast was an apology - even if it cost him his life Izaya would never do it. That was the only line he continued to refuse to cross.

All in honest, he had still been unsure regarding whether or not he had indeed chosen the most sustainable option.

Anything Shizu-chan-related demanded careful handling but at the same time he had no idea what the blond brute was thinking.

The sun had began to set and Izaya was still in the bed having done nothing but thinking for the whole day.

He was still really unsure about mostly everything, apart from one thing.

'I just want to keep working with Boss-san and going to Bunkyo.'

When he had grown so attached and depended on humans he hadn’t even realized, but it didn’t change the fact that he was and wasn’t bothered by it as much as he had believed in the past - at least not in cases of dependable humans.

However, he was coming to slow realization that attachments and bond could also be sources of courage if his increasingly strong resolution to face what was coming in order to protect his life was any indication.

It was like he had a reason to be a bit brave now that could counterweight even the need for self-preservation!

Boss-san had called him yesterday a “man”! Not a “boy” - a “man”!

He had never addressed him as an independent adult that could that could deal with shitty things before!

Obviously Izaya was a man and not a boy, but to hear someone calling him a “strong man” when he had felt like a helpless bug about to be squashed at any moment during the whole previous day, had felt really significant to Izaya!

He liked how Kato-san had said “strong” and not “stronger” or “strongest”. There was no one to compare Izaya with the way that sentence had been phrased. Just “strong” on his own.

That was true. Sure, he wasn’t strong by the beast’s standards but who wasn’t?

That didn’t mean that he was a weakling!

He’d better remember that too, next time he lost his shit and was being disgraceful!

Izaya finally found the determination to get up from the bed.

He would force himself to eat and shower and then check his emails from work and edit some texts for a couple of hours so he wouldn’t be far behind after skipping today. He might as well make some coffee so he could try Mayumi-san’s gift too while he was working.

The third day he woke up feeling once again fidgeting and uneasy, but the tiny level of determination he had gained last night was still there, a small fire making him ready for a - hopefully metaphorical only - fight!
Still all the fidgeting made him take longer to get ready and leaving home, resulting on missing his train.

He felt dreadful anticipation during the whole distance from the station to the Times, his heart beat increasing and his throat drying.

Once he arrived, he gave himself a few minutes before entering the building and scanned the perimeter around him with his eyes.

He could have sworn he caught a glimpse of blond with the corner of his left eye but when he turned his head towards the general direction of the said glimpse the beast wasn’t there. Despite that, he started growing alert, palms sweating around the wheels of his chair.

Should he go and check? He was already 3 minutes late though, he had to set an example to his assistants; being absent one day and tardy the other wouldn’t do.

“Good morning Orihara-san!” a bunch of voices said together.

Shit, when he heard humans addressing him, he almost jumped from his chair.

He turned towards the voices and saw three of his male juniors, two from his own department and one from the Society -or was Entertainment- section, bowing slightly to him.

‘Some example I wanted to set!’ he couldn’t help but sweat drop internally.

They looked slightly off too him today -too well-dressed, too much cologne and too much agitation for a weekday that is not Friday.

‘But off course! Humans!’ he internally eye-rolled.

“Good morning mina-san!” he nodded back at them.

“I hope you all get chocolates today gentlemen, but let’s try to keep the excitement to moderate, ne? Information is never stalling and it’s our job to caught up with it!”

Waah! He was turning into Boss-san! The tone was a lot lighter but the wording was way too similar! Scary ~!

The answers he got varied. One was a loud “Off course, sir!” that was probably trying to persuade him as much as that human himself, the other was an embarrassed “Hai” and the final was a nod that kept going on and on!

“Good! Now let’s head inside and work a lot today too~!”

Before he entered the building with his subordinates, Izaya took one last glance around him but he didn’t see anything dangerous lurking.

Barely two minutes after he arrived Jo-san came to his office with his coffee -the second cup of the day and his daily schedule that was a mess of colors by several different highlighters as usual.

“Ano..Editor Orihara-san?..Are you -em- feeling better now?”

“Arigato Jo-san! I’m all good now, don’t worry! And how is your laptop holding on since Tuesday?”

Izaya raised his head momentarily to look at her out of politeness but was already getting immersed
to his computer. It had only been a day but he had missed his role! Thinking that he wouldn’t see the office he had earned with his hard work was simply not an option anymore.

“It’s like new Editor Orihara-san! I was very careful with it!”

“Good. Take care of it so I won’t have to fix it again before Monday, ne?”

“Hai!..Ano..Editor Orihara-san? Here!” She reached out to him with both hands as always to give him something but at the same time she was walking backwards so for the sake of him he couldn’t even reach it!

“Ne Jo-san, you need to bring it closer. I can’t get up don’t forget~!

“I’m sorry! Eto...P-please accept this!” she said bring him closer again the box being tomato red from head to toe.

Oh! Once he reached for whatever she had and saw how much she was blushing it hit him!

He initially though she had something else work related to give him. It seemed the little box had been obscured by the printed schedule and he hadn’t even seen it.

‘Please let this not be a confession!’

Jo-san was his secretary and a potential trustworthy kind of friend and his project and she wasn’t really his type – assuming he had a type; he couldn’t date her even if she was a nice human that seemed to honestly worry about him.

Still because of the last two characteristics he would accept her gift and then give her the nicest rejection he had ever given to a human before -and even make sure not to become awkward afterwards!

He had already realized that he was a sucker for humans who showed him genuine care. He could count them on the fingers of his one hand…Three!

As for the ones he cared about…Four.

“Giri choco! Ano..Happy Valentine’s Day Editor Orihara-san!”

‘Giri? Say that from the start Jo-san~!!’

More and more obligation chocolates seemed to be coming to his way!

He wouldn’t complain. He preferred “giri choco” a billion times over the “honmei choco” that was reserved for love interests. He really disliked those!

He almost exhaled in relief out loud!

“Thank you very much Jo-san! I will eat them all!” he told her and he really meant it. Jo-san’s gift was almost as important as Mayumi-sans -and it wasn’t frustrating at all now that she clarified that she didn’t consider him in any way as a love interest!

“Hai! Ano..please keep taking good care of me, Editor Orihara-san!” tiny Jo-san bowed to him.

“Of course, Jo-san! Keep taking care of me too please!”

“Hai!” his secretary squealed happily looking determined!
Boss-san barged in his office at that moment like he owned the place as usual- Jo-san bowing to him to the moment he walked in.

“Izaya- Orihara-san were you scolding the assistants this morning?”

“I didn’t scold anyone! I just advised to remain professional. How do you know anyway?”

“Overheard one in the kitchen saying to some others you requested the excitement to be moderate in the Paper!”

“Ah! That I did~!

“You should have said minimum, not moderate. Other than that, I applaud you for your initiation!”

Only Kato-san would applaud him for “scolding” others and at the same time criticize him for being too lenient!

It had been a day only and he had missed being yelled at! He had started developing masochistic tendencies thanks to Boss-san, Izaya was sure about it!

“Kato-san, you are messing with my head really badly I swear!”

“Ah…Secretary Jo. Thank you very much again for the chocolates my dear girl!” Boss-san suddenly lost his bravado and he started acting like a middle schooler.

Oh? Jo-san had also given giri choco to Boss-san?

Looking the old man being oozing enthusiasm about it made Izaya appreciate Jo-san a bit more. He was so demanding at work that Izaya doubted anyone else had ever given him Valentines candy from his working environment.

“No..I am glad you like them Managing Director Kato-sama! Em..Editor Orihara-san, I will be outside if you need me! Eto..Please both of you enjoy the chocolate!”

Oh? Jo-san felt a little braver too today -much like Izaya himself; she stuttered way less than usual when she talked to either of them now, however the bows and “ano” and “eto” were still needed apparently.

Izaya observed finally the package she had given him.

It was very obviously pink and overly cutesy as everything related to Jo-san. He saw a heart shaped - and pink, no surprise there- post-it note stuck on top.

He took it off and stuck it on the desk while he started peeling carefully the paper -he liked the anticipation that wouldn’t built up by tearing the packaging like a brute.

Inside, he was met with a rather modest box that according to the packaging it contained tea flavored chocolates with an increasing percentage of matcha into them. Actually, they looked like something he would most likely enjoy. He had expected heart shaped milk chocolates with strawberry feeling or something along those lines.

He would still eat them even if they were like what he had originally expected, because it was a thoughtful gift of acquaintanceship -he had also eaten some from Mayumi-san’s already even if the fruit in them added to the sweetness a bit more than he’d like but was still planning to finish them all.

“Jo-san is a really nice girl Izaya-kun! You have an eye for people!”
“Oh? And you were whining when I hired her because you said she was incompetent~.”

“Me? When did I whine?”

“You know you did~.” He said in a sing-song voice.

“Maybe a little..But I was only talking about the qualifications..”

“Well good thing that Jo-san is here despite her lack of qualifications because Hora-san is so cold the only thing she’ll ever give you is your daily schedule!”

“Hey! She brings my coffee too…” his boss pouted.

“Ne, Kato-san...I will never miss another day at work, I promise.”

“One day every now and again is okay Izaya-kun, we don’t want you to die here! However, it’s good to have you around so I hope you won’t need to again for long.”

“Nothing will kill me Boss-san. I promise that too!” Izaya grinned at him.

No, he wouldn’t let Shizu-chan kill him. He would deal with that issue soon!

“Good to know! I take it you have recovered fully then? Your spirits seemed higher today!”

“Hai! Don’t worry about me! I will be alright! Also..Should I start acting like your wingman already? It’s your big day today~!

“You can start at the lunch break, we haven’t even started working yet!” Kato-san laughed. “I just wanted to see if you felt better since we didn’t spoke yesterday. But -since you are all obnoxious as usual, I presume everything is fine now and I can go to my office!”

“Yes, you can go back to your cold secretary, Boss-san! I’ll see you later and offer you generously my expert advice -for free!”

“You are impossible Izaya-kun!” Kato-san was scolding while heading to the door.

“I know!”

Once Izaya was alone he unstuck the heart shaped post-it not and read it.

[Happy Valentine’s Day Editor Orihara-san! Thank you for hiring me! Please stay in good health. Let’s continue working well together!:)]

He stuck the little paper on the inner side of the front page of his planner and then added as a reminder:

[Buy sweets for Jo-san on White Day too.]

~~~~~~

The rest of the day at the office passed at a similar fashion.

Work, then lunch break where Izaya and Kato-san talked about the up-coming date of Boss-san and Mayumi-san that evening and then more work. It didn’t sound like much but it was comfortable and productive and that was all that was important.
When eventually the clock showed 18:00 it was time to head home.

Kato-san and Izaya stopped at the exit of the building to were Izaya was teasing the other once again, relatively subtly when people were coming and going. Almost every one from the paper was living at the same time so they had to stop their conversation to wish goodbyes to many humans they were acquainted with whether they knew them well enough or not.

“You are making a big deal out of it Boss-san! You are already married and used to do such things anyways!”

“Still it’s been a while! Can’t a man feel nervous?”

“Worst thing that can happen is Mayumi-san filing for a divorce! No big deal really!”

“Some wingman you are Izaya-kun!”

“Always at your disposal Boss-san! Now you should get going! You don’t want to keep Mayumi-chan waiting!”

“Okay. Are you sure you don’t want me to drive you to the station?”

“It’s barely ten minutes Boss-san it’s not worth it really! Now go!”

“Editor Orihara-san, Managing Director Kato-sama!”

“You haven’t left already Secretary Jo?”

“I was finishing taking notes on Editor Orihara-san’s schedule for tomorrow! Oh! Goodnight Horasan!”

Tiny Jo-san waved to Boss-san’s secretary who was also coming out of the door. The strict woman bowed and said her goodbyes without an inch of a smile.

“Robot!” Izaya mouthed at Kato-san so Jo-san wouldn’t hear when the other woman turned her back and headed away.

“Okay, I’m leaving too, I’m 7 minutes behind schedule! Goodnight Orihara-san, Secretary Jo!”

“Have fun Kato-san!”

“Goodnight Managing Director Kato-sama.”

“Ne, Jo-san I think we should also head towards the station.”

Jo-san was coming from the same direction as him, her living in Chuo so a few times they left at the same time-meaning Izaya not working overtime- they had headed to the train station together since the sun in February set almost an hour before their day at the office ended so it was be better not to let such a clumsy tiny mess navigate all alone.

“Hai! It’s getting cold!”

And then he saw it.

The reddish color of a light up cigarette in a badly illuminated part on the opposite side of the road. The monster was waiting in the shadows to get him.
'Keep your cool. Stay calm. Do not let him get to you; don’t let him see you’re scared.'

So, he hadn’t been delusional this morning; the other was here all along.

‘Stay calm. Don’t you dare show him fear!’

He couldn’t help but stiffen involuntarily now that he knew that Heiwajima Shizuo was on the other side of this road and at the same time feel relief because he could get it over and done with, without keep prolonging the inevitable.

‘It’s just Shizu-chan. Just Shizu-chan…’

His eyes didn’t bulge an inch from the spot he could see the burning tip.

‘Tokyo was your playground; You were one of the strongest. You still are! Nothing has changed!’

But everything had changed!

Once his eyes adjusted to that particular spot, he could see the outline of the huge beast coming slowly in sight.

‘You are Orihara Izaya, you are afraid of no one.’

“Editor Orihara-san? Are we going?” Jo-san asked him and a moment later she turned her head and looked behind her quickly on the other side of the road where Izaya’s eyes were glued. However, she turned back fast enough without looking curious or alarmed which led him to the conclusion she hadn’t noticed the other man in the shadows -that was exactly the reason such an oblivious person shouldn’t be left to walk alone at night in a city that was full of alleys and color gangs.

“Gomme Jo-san! I just realized I have an errand to run that it really can’t wait but first I have to make a call to make sure! Can you walk to the station first?”

“It’s okay Editor Orihara-san! I’ll be going then! Take care!”

“Thank you for being understanding! Stay on the illuminated parts of the street so you won’t trip anywhere, these streets are bumpy. Bye-bye Jo-san!”

Once Jo-san started heading away Izaya’s bright dispassion turned pitch black.

He made a point, staying rooted on his spot, glaring where he knew Shizu-chan was standing to show the other he already knew he was there.

He couldn’t help but cross his arms in front of his chest in a pretense of defiance that was more of a defensive stance than anything else.

The irony of the day wasn’t missed to Izaya.

Seeing your most hated human on Valentine’s Day of all days? Seriously??

Of course, the protozoan would create such a stupid satire with his actions!

The other apparently had caught up with the fact that Izaya knew he was there and moved away from the shadows, walking casually towards his direction.

Izaya really hoped his nerves wouldn’t get the better of him this time that he was more or less expecting this to happen but he couldn’t help but think how much bigger and physically stronger the
other was compared to him now that he could see him approach him.

But he wouldn’t back out. He would make his point this time and he would get the protozoan to agree to leave him alone, he wouldn’t accept defeat -not when his happiness was at stake!

“Izaya.”

Was the only thing the other said in a mock greeting once he finally stood tall and intimidating in front of him. He looked a lot calmer than the pervious time -a bit determined himself too.

He replied raising his head so he would make eye contact and held the others gaze.

“Hmm..You don’t waste time, I see~” he said in a sing-song voice, purposely changing his voice in a slight higher octave to make sure he sounded obnoxious.

He had to acknowledge the other somehow and still remain in character without saying something to wake the beast inside the blond but he also needed to remain in character to show the other he wasn’t intimidated.

Most importantly this time he needed to keep his façade firmly in place.

He was tempted to say something like: “Happy Valentine’s Day Shizu-chan! Here, have some chocolates!” or “Don’t you have anything better to do today, other than tailing after me, protozoan?”

But, he didn’t want things to escalate quickly or to provoke the other into a fight -yet. He needed him to agree to leave Izaya alone and ticking him off by using nicknames or saying something spiteful and unnecessary wasn’t the way to achieve that!

Shizu-chan’s brows came together from how hard he started frowning the moment Izaya opened his mouth however he took his sweet time to reply back.

Two exhales later, Shizu-chan spoke again, the frown on his forehead vanishing.

“I’m not here to play games. We need to talk.”

Chapter End Notes

So Izaya is showing some spine now that he set his mind straight and gets his chocolates too!
Btw, having their second meeting on Valentine’s also seemed way too funny and ironic so I couldn’t resist!xD
Chapter 14

Chapter Notes

So…the second meeting is finally here!!!
I seriously tried to do my best for this chapter to live up to the expectations.
I hope I succeeded but I can't be objective since I'm the writer, so you tell me! :P
Of course we’ll see Shizuo’s POV too, though I haven’t decided if it should be as descriptive as Izaya’s.
Well here goes nothing! Enjoyyy!! /(^v^)/

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“Indeed, we do.”

Yes, they did need to talk, that much was true.

What Shizu-chan felt it has to be discussed between them was a mystery though; In reality they didn’t have anything to talk about.

The only thing they had to talk about was Shizu-chan leaving him the fuck alone but other than that there wasn’t much to be said.

It’s not like Izaya cared to explain himself and Shizu-chan had nothing to explain either because he did not think about things, he just acted -like an animal.

Shizu-chan had requested them having a little chat before start pounding at him right then and there so that was a hopeful beginning that Izaya could start negotiating soon with the beast about the price the other would demand in order to stay away.

Maybe following his instinct and try to change the spots on the metaphorical circle they always seem to fall could work in his favor -just maybe?

Honestly, when Izaya first saw the beast on the other side of the road hid in the darkness, he was bracing his self for a reaction from the other man much similar to the one barely three days ago - which was a normal reaction for the protozoan- that could potentially trigger Izaya reacting in a way similar to the one he had three days ago. Another circle would start taking shape then, if Izaya didn’t control himself tonight.

Bloodthirsty Shizu-chan and devious Izaya had been a good circle that had lasted them for a decade and worked well in Izaya’s opinion -until that night, that Izaya broke it.

Bloodthirsty Shizu-chan and pathetic Izaya was an absolutely disgusting alternative and Izaya would never allow it to become a “habitual behavior” for either of them.

He should have learned by now not to try to predict anything Shizu-chan related, but this mattered little.

What was the important thing, would be Izaya’s responses to Shizu-chan’s unpredictability.

So far, this unpredictability had seemed to be working in his favor but they had barely exchanged
two words.

That hardly meant that Shizu-chan couldn’t go ballistic at any time, just that he could spare a few minutes before rip him in half!

‘Do not think unnecessary things. Don’t act pathetic!’

But, now that the hustle and bustle in the streets was slowly dying down a bit, it would be the perfect opportunity for the other man to beat the shit out of him; there wouldn’t be many witnesses around - Izaya had to keep that in mind.

He didn’t have high expectations regarding whether or not they would be able to keep it civil with each other -after everything that had happened the mere idea was laughable.

But as long as it served his purposes, Izaya was willing to make at least some effort to keep his tongue in check.

That would be only if Shizu-chan also tried on his part not to act like a brute off course.

“We should take this somewhere else.” Izaya said evenly still not daring to break eye contact with the other’s hard gaze.

He couldn’t risk dealing with Shizu-chan right in front of the Time’s building for fear he could run into colleagues who could be still at the office.

In fact, this whole street was a red zone for any interactions with Shizu-chan to take place.

While no one recognized -or knew- Izaya as an informant in this part of Tokyo -or at least it seemed to be that way- Izaya was a still notable persona in this street since he was coming and going every day, mostly because of the fact that the freaking wheelchair was impossible to go unnoticed!

Even if there were other disabled humans working in that exact road, something that was highly unlikely, it just meant that the sample pool of disabled males with suspicious dealings would just slightly increase, not that Izaya would be cleared of any suspicion.

“Whatever flea. Come” said the protozoan and started walking to a seemingly random direction.

Flea.

Of course Shizu-chan would address him like the bug he viewed him as.

But, he wasn’t a flea anymore. He had lost the abilities that according to the blond made him a flea.

No, this wasn’t correct. He hadn’t lost them. He was robbed off them!

He had made peace with his disability for the most part of it, but that didn’t mean he didn’t miss the freedom a pair of healthy strong legs could offer -especially at times that all he wished to do was to escape; like right at that moment.

Now the only thing that he could do was crawl probably.

Did that mean that the other would start seeing him a worm now, instead of a flea?

Unnecessary thoughts again.

There were more important things to concern his brain with, like where exactly they would be
“Where are we going?” he asked cautiously, not spinning the wheels of his chair yet.

“Shimizudani Park” Shizu-chan replied and started walking as if Izaya was supposed to follow his lead.

Izaya knew where Shimizudani Park was.

How could he not? It was barely a 5-minute distance walk from Japan’s Times!

The fact that the beast seemed to know the area around Izaya’s work well enough to also know it agitated him.

Moreover, was that protozoan stupid?

Did he seriously suggest that Izaya should follow him of all people to a park that was famous for being Toshimichi Okubo’s freaking assassination spot?

Sure, the murder of Japan’s Home Minister that had occurred back in 1878 but still…the idea left a lot of room for implications.

Going with your almost murderer to a place where murder had occurred; the suggestion hadn’t put him on edge!

‘Is the beast mocking me?’

Moreover, there was another more important thing to address.

“Do you really believe that I would follow you in a secluded park, at the night?”

Being alone with the beast, in a park that is mostly obscured with thick flora and a lake so the beast could conveniently drown him into, after the sunset which decreased the chances of any passerby running into them…Did Shizu-chan thought that along with his mobility Izaya had lost his sanity too?

Izaya didn’t know how much the area had changed since back then but it still seemed like a very convenient spot for Shizu-chan to end him with no witnesses, if someone asked for his opinion.

“Suit yourself. I figured you wouldn’t want an audience but if you don’t care we can start already” the beast replied shrugging his massive shoulders in a nonchalant way.

Izaya had become extremely aware of how much bigger the debt-collector had always been compared to him, something that never fazed him before. But now the Knowledge of how much power hid beneath the blond’s lean frame and how easily the other had broken him was impossible to ignore.

Furthermore, from the way he phrased his sentence, Shizu-chan seemed to have figured out that Izaya didn’t want to draw any attention to their interactions -which wasn’t good. He had picked up a weakness of his and he was already making use of it!

“Whatever. Let’s just go there..” Izaya passed in front of the other and headed the direction of the park. He didn’t like that he already started compromising and going along with whatever Shizu-chan wanted.

But really their options were kind of limited! It’s not like they could go to a restaurant or a bar or
something. It was too public! And Shizu-chan didn’t care about being witnessed to beat the shit out of him! He had done so that night in front of half Ikebukuro. He almost did it again a few days ago in broad daylight in the middle of the street! If he wanted to kill him he could -witnesses or no witnesses.

The walked -and wheeled- on the street in deadly silence, Shizu-chan always a step or two behind him -a considerable space between them; the beast walking almost at the edge of the pavement from the side of the road and Izaya on the other end, practically glued on the walls of the buildings. He didn’t like having his back turned to an unpredictable beast but walking “together” would be uncomfortable; They weren’t acquaintances so they had no reason to be walking side by side.

With every second that passed in dead silence and the closer they got to the park, the tenser the atmosphere between them got; Izaya could almost feel the tension like a third body, materialized and walking in between them.

He didn’t know what the other was thinking about but it was but the atmosphere was indication enough that the beast’s mood was deteriorating, if the way he was exhaling hard every time he let the cigarette smoke slip out of his lips wasn’t hinting enough at it. Izaya guessed that the other wallowed in his own negative emotions and memories of the ex-informant, much like he himself was doing about him.

In fact, Izaya felt like he would combust at any moment! Adding the fear he had experienced for the past two days on top of feeling lost, pathetic, shameful, weak and small at every waking moment he was left alone and his mind travelled to unwanted places, combined with the anguish of thinking that he would be forced to leave behind him his life, as well as the hate and envy he had been feeling for the other man all the previous years was a suffocating poisonous cocktail that charged him with the need to let it all out, his self-preservation be damned!

Suppressing so many emotions even for this 5-minute walk could potentially mess with his carefully crafted façade; the persona of the calculating and collected mastermind.

It was risky leaving his mind wonder to such paths when he had an agenda to serve but…he just felt too much! Whether it was too much anger or jealously he felt -and more recently too much contentment or gratitude- his emotions always got the better of him and his words, expressions and actions reflected that accursed emotional high.

Shizu-chan had always been one of the very few humans Izaya felt too much for. He thought with the years and the distance between them that his feelings would have grown numb towards him but apparently this wasn’t the case.

Izaya wanted to believe that whatever happened tonight would be Shizu-chan’s fault, that everything would go to hell because it was the protozoan who would not control his stupid self, but he could not guarantee that he would take no credits for the blame himself.

If Shizu-chan’s emotions mirrored his own even by a small fraction, there was no chance that this night would end with both of them -Izaya- in one piece!

When they reached the entrance of the park, after what felt like an uncomfortable eternity, Izaya stopped and pretended to wait for the other to catch up.

In reality, he had stiffened involuntarily in the idea of going there alone with him. It was in fact dark; he could detect no human presence there as of yet.

When the other stopped next to him after two steps Izaya’s self-preservation got the better of him
once more.

“How do I know you want jump me again there?”

He regretted it the moment he asked. It showed weakness, no matter how nonchalant and challenging he tried to pass his question as.

Both men held each other’s gaze again for a moment- almost like each was trying to see how far he could push the other.

“You don’t.”

Shizu-chan finally challenged him right back with hard look and a deadpan tone that left no room for argument, before throwing down the half-burned cigarette and passed through the entrance of the park.

Izaya braised himself and followed him inside; the blond fueling him even more with the way he was behaving. If Izaya hated being one thing that was feeling hopeless and Shizu-chan’s was doing everything in his power to remind him that the power balance between them had shifted entirely in his favor. Like he knew he had the upper hand and was testing how far he could push him and when Izaya would succumb to him fully.

They reached the center of the park seconds after.

Shizu-chan sat heavily on the corner of a bench in front of the lake, his right elbow supported by a small wooden picknick table in front of him. He snooped with his hand in his inner vest pocket for a moment and pulled out his cigarette package, opened it with his thumb and grabbed a cancer stick with his lips before lighting it up.

Meanwhile, Izaya stopped with his chair in front of him. He stayed close enough to be able to talk face to face to beast like equals, but still left a half a meter distance between them just in case. While the other was busy fishing for his cigarette Izaya busied himself taking his red glasses of and reaching for his briefcase, which was placed next to his side on the chair to take out their case and tack them inside safely and back into the briefcase.

He wouldn’t risk the other acting on impulse and break them by punching him or roughing him up. The first time they met a few days ago he was wearing them too. He really had to be more careful with such a precious object!

While he placed the briefcase next to him his eyes landed momentarily in the back pocket of his black case which didn’t have zipper to be easily accessible.

He had sneaked inside the metallic letter opener from his desk in a moment of clarity. It wouldn’t work as well against Shizu-chan as his beloved switchblade which he had long ago lost, but he had faith in himself that he could at least draw blood from the other if things went south. He knew he would definitely be the one to lose but the knowledge that he wasn’t completely defenseless against that amoeba was the tiniest bit reassuring that he would see his Boss-san the next day.

“So…”

Finally, the protozoan seemed to be ready to start this accursed conversation after smoking half of cigarette, looking everywhere but at Izaya.

“So..?”
Izaya half stated half questioned.

Shizu-chan however didn’t seemed too keen to start speaking, despite him being the one to harass Izaya in his working place for a second time and a few more seconds passed in silence between them.

“You were the one who wanted to talk” Izaya pointed out.

The other turned his head again towards Izaya and stopped pretending the ex-informant was invisible.

Their eyes locked again; two hard gazes meeting each other, quiet seconds running in between them again.

Izaya couldn’t help but think that if they kept that pace up the sun would rise and they'd still be in that park.

“I thought you dead.”

Finally, the other graced him with an answer.

Dead?

Shizu-chan was so stupid thinking him dead without even having seen a body, even when he knew Izaya had the tendency to disappear for months in the past.

He was sure he picked up one thing from the way the protozoan was staring him in something akin to desperation and couldn’t help but pointing it out.

“Sorry to disappoint you then.”

Shizu-chan didn’t say anything.

He didn’t deny he had been disappointed he was alive.

Izaya didn’t expect him to feel any different either, so the bitterness he felt at the other man’s silent admission was unreasonable.

“How did you know I was in Tokyo?”

He had been really curious about that.

Had he “sensed” him?

“How did that animal sniff him out in freaking Chiyoda from Toshima?”

Since Shizu-chan was still quiet someone had to break the silence that had once again fallen.

“I didn’t. I was searching for some Matsuyuta who owns us money. He works in that building.”

Matsuyuta?

Matuyuta Gin?

His predecessor in Japan Times?
That man was the reason for all the shit Izaya went through these past days? Was going through right at that moment?

He had sensed something about that guy was fishy, but for Shizu-chan to have been assigned to deal with him?!

‘Good to know who is to blame~!’

“You won’t find him there anymore.”

It was better to share this piece of information with Shizu-chan in hopes to keep him away from searching for that human at the Times.

“How do you know?”

The blond grew suspicious of him in an instant.

Same old, same old, really.

“I do. He quitted his job. No one has seen him for months.”

Of course, Izaya wouldn’t disclose that he was the one who was filling Matsuyuta’s role. That would be unnecessary.

“Ts! Fucking perfect!”

“Who else you told I’m here?”

Izaya couldn’t help but question again.

That was what he cared to learn the most!

Now that he had offered information to the other, he might as well ask again.

It was fair, right? Once piece of information for another.

“Celty.”

‘Yes, fucking perfect indeed!’

That answer wasn’t unexpected but it made Izaya’s blood start boiling all over again.

Celty was one noisy self-righteous Dullahan! She also had more humans to interact than Shizu-chan and never shut up; even if the amoeba kept his mouth shut, she would start talking for sure!

“Then Shinra knows too?”

Izaya didn’t even bother to mask his displeasure at the prospect.

It’s not that he didn’t want to see Shinra.

The doctor would always be his first friend and Izaya cared about him a great deal -even if Shinra had never been much invested in their friendship.

But compared to Shinra, Izaya couldn’t help but feel self-conscious, especially now!

What if he saw Izaya and though he was pathetic? Even worse, what if Shinra hated him after what
happened with Celty’s head and wanted nothing to do with him?

Izaya wasn’t ready to deal with his past yet, not even Shinra who was one of the few mostly-good parts of it. And yet here he was dealing with Heiwajima Shizuo!

“He doesn’t. She told me she had sealed your wound days ago. I didn’t know you two had met after-. Shinra doesn’t know either. He thinks you’re dead. But Celty will talk to him too.”

Unbelievable! Shizu-chan and Celty with their behavior and decisions kept forcing him into unwanted situations; pushing him to take steps he didn’t feel he was capable of taking!

Why the hell they felt entitled to mess his life, even when he had left them alone like they wanted? Forcing him to live; forcing him to run away; forcing him to hide; forcing him to stop hiding!

Could they not see he was trying to move forward? Why they kept dragging him back?

“Well, your bestie sure loves you a lot! Saving me so you wouldn’t become a murderer! Touching~!”

That had been the wrong thing to say in the wrong tone of voice while making the wrong facial expression.

Shizu-chan who had surprisingly maintained his composure till that moment snapped instantly right back at him.

“Shut the fuck up! You should be fucking grateful she saved your sorry ass!”

Grateful! Ha! Shizu-chan defending Celty as if he didn’t know!

“Why should I? She only did it for you and we both know it! Said so in my face too.”

“You stole her head Izaya! You said nothing when you knew how much she wanted to get her memories back!”

Yes, Shizu-chan knew it too. If he didn’t, he would have denied Izaya’s accusation, arguing for that living corpse’s greatness rather than bringing up the head.

“Shinra is as much to blame as me for that! Though I am always the one getting the short end of the stick, while everyone else is let of the hook with a pat on the hand, ne?”

It’s not like Izaya wanted that creature to break up with Shinra for the whole “stealing her head” thing, nor that he didn’t recognize his own actions were despicable, but to regard him and Shinra differently while they had committed the same wrongdoing was duplicitous!

Regardless of that, him and Shizu-chan just needed an excuse to start arguing and Izaya had just given them one. This wouldn’t serve his purposes of that meeting!

Before the other man got to answer, Izaya masked his annoyance and regained his composure quickly.

“Anyways, we have our own problems here, Celty can choose her own battles.”

That much was true. Adding Celty to the mix would only make things more troublesome.

“Whatever flea..”
The protozoan took another cigarette out and light it up.

Izaya changed the subject to no-sensitive topics and tried to waste some time until the beast calmed down enough for him to make his proposal.

“Since when do you work outside of Ikebukuro?”

“Recently. I’ll be working in Chiyoda too now. Chuo and Minato as well.”

So, these dealings could turn into a regular thing?

Then this deal was even more crucial to be made tonight!

“I see.” He said evenly.

“Where have you been all this time?”

The disappointment was back to Shizu-chan’s voice, that had quieted down from before.

It momentarily registered with Izaya that Shizu-chan had calmed pretty fast, but he couldn’t spend too long to try and decode the man’s behavior.

He could only collect data through brief observation and go back to analyze them in depth later.

“Osaka. I’ve been there since that night.”

He didn’t understand the look of annoyance that crossed protozoan’s face but he didn’t have time to do so before the other started interrogating him!

“Were you scheming and making a mess there too?”

“No. In fact, both there and here I was enjoying my quiet life -until recently” he added pointedly.

“Right..And You expect me to believe that?”

That protozoan was so aggravating! Making accusations with no basis; acting like a prosecutor!

“You won’t. You always assume the worst anyways.”

‘Bipolar beast...’

“Am I wrong to do so? Some things don’t change flea. You don’t change!”

That comment about him being unable to change had really rubbed Izaya off the wrong way.

That was all he was trying to do for quite some time now and to hear the conviction in the other’s voice that he was unable to do was picking at his insecurities, making him defensive.

Still, he refused to raise his voice but poison started creeping in his tone and his will to control it… well, let’s just say it was growing weaker the more time passed.

“I don’t care what you think. You are not particularly important to me, in case that slipped your mind~.”

“Oh of course, you don’t! You only care about yourself!”

Moreover, each time the blond opened his mouth too his tone was becoming more and more
aggressive.

“Hmm.. Can’t really argue with that~!”

Yes, he could.

The whole reason he was in that particular predicament in that moment was because he had humans that he had unintentionally grown to care about enough to risk his own wellbeing.

He wouldn’t disclose his greater weakness to his enemy of all people though!

“Why come back now?” Shizu-chan demanded in the same harsh tone, Izaya’s voice rising dangerously in response.

“Why do you just have to butt your nose in my business constantly?”

“Enough with the attitude Izaya! What business you have in Tokyo?”

“My job is here! Are you afraid to use your one single brain neuron to figure out the obvious, huh protozoan?”

“I’ve already done so fleabag! I’m not stupid on contrast to what you seem to believe!”

“Then since you’re not stupid as you claim, which I have trouble to believe, you should know to stay the fuck away from my job from now on!”

Fuck! He shouldn’t have said it like that!

Why the fuck couldn’t he control himself, how the hell the other would agree if Izaya gave him more reason to aggravate him with his attitude?

But still who the fuck was Shizu-chan to yell at him like that?

“Not if you try to fuck those people over! Does that guy who tried to save your ass even know who was he trying to help?”

At that Izaya recoiled to the back of his wheelchair as if he had been slapped; his breath hitched and his eyed widened.

Had he realized Boss-san was that important? Why did he bring him up now of all times?

He wouldn’t do this right? Tell Kato-san? Rob him from his job? His friend? His human dynamics?

No matter how much Shizu-chan hated him, broke him and wished him dead - he would not hurt him that way, right?

Here it was again.. that teeny-tiny inexplicable part in him that made no sense, considering he was in a wheelchair for fucks sake because of that night!

He wasn’t sure where this conviction was coming from. But was it really conviction or just wishful thinking?

There was a lump in his throat; he started having trouble breathing, talking.

No, why would Shizu-chan would let such a golden opportunity for revenge slip away? Why Izaya trust him when he had no reason to, especially after how bad this whole conversation was going?
He held his enemy’s gaze and tried to compose himself so he wouldn’t stutter or tremble.

If he was to go down -again- at least he would do so with as much dignity as he had left; head held high and gaze clear from despair.

“What do you want? Name your price. Anything.”

If he wasn’t looking at Shizu-chan so intensely, he would have missed how comically the blond’s his eyes widened for a moment in shock.

Shizu-chan took his sweet time to grace him with a reply, considering his options when he started frowning so hard Izaya could see lines forming on his forehead despite the darkness in the park.

“W-what the actual fuck? I’m not like you Izaya! I’m not going to -to use you or anything! I don’t use people!”

It was Shizu-chan’s turn to start squirming at his seat before he started stuttering -good that it wasn’t only Izaya who acted ridiculous- angrily looking somewhere between uncomfortable, affronted and absolutely disgusted, as if Izaya had offended him greatly by stating the obvious.

That protozoan had threatened him just a moment ago with talking to Kato-san, hadn’t he?

No matter what how insulted he was acting now, they both knew that the protozoan had at least though of his offer at least for a moment before turning it down.

If Izaya wasn’t terribly mortified for having again shown weakness in front of Shizu-chan by jumping to conclusions and wheeling all over his pride by himself, he would have commented on the stupid way the other man had phrased his sentence.

Use.

It almost sounded -dirty!

He wasn’t surprised that Shizu-chan thought lowly of him but was it possible to think of him that much lowly?! Just how fucking stupid was that protozoan!

It was Izaya’s turn to start feeling uncomfortable, affronted and absolutely disgusted at the possibility of the other misreading his offer like that! And he was pretty much offended too!

Whatever. Regardless of what that amoeba had understood, Izaya had readily given him the chance for revenge just for the other to turn him down -like always.

“Oh touché! Well, since you don’t want to use me, you better stop testing my limits protozoan, before I’ll make you do so.”

What the fuck did Shizu-chan want from him? Did he got off just with the knowledge of him having the upper hand; putting him in positions where he was the weaker one and then sparing him after Izaya had just made a fool of himself until he decided to test him again the next time?

“I’ve been quite calm and I haven’t bashed your fucked-up head on the ground yet, despite you annoying the fuck out of me. So, don’t even think about threatening me flea…Why did you really come back?” the protozoan pushed again with that interrogatory tone going back to the questioning.

Shizu-chan obviously though Izaya was back to disrupt the “peace” in Tokyo, maybe take over Japan or whatever that stupid brain of his was able to come up with!
“You have some nerve ambushing me and questioning me like that days after you jumped me on the street like a mad dog when you didn’t listen to anything I said!”

At this point Izaya’s determination to have a civil conversation was starting to crack. He had again shown weakness, lost his composure and even embarrassed himself. Being punched into oblivion wouldn’t make much difference anymore.

“Right. You mean when you called me a “fucking monster”?... If you are pulling some shit again, I’m not going to let it pass. I am warning you Izaya.”

That threat was the last straw, Izaya’s somewhat goodwill completely obliterated.

The debt-collector had threatened him twice now, caused him distress for days, tried to beat him up on the street and all that just in a span of three days!

Why should Izaya try to act like the bigger person, especially when Shizu-chan didn’t intend to blackmail him -for now at least?

He was never supposed to be the bigger person when it came to these circles that he fell with Shizu-chan. Being a poisonous son of a bitch suit him better anyways…

“I’m not. You see I decided to lay low till I got back on my feet. Oh~ the irony! don’t you agree~?”

He couldn’t help but gestured at his legs, presenting them dramatically to the other as if he hadn’t noticed till that point.

The way the blond beast stiffened, his massive body going rigid and his throat constricting repeatedly as if he had trouble to swallow had been such a sweet reward!

“Did I...Did I really -do that?”

“Of course you did~!” Izaya couldn’t help but wear a gruesome smile! But this wasn’t enough…He had suffered too much because of Shizu-chan -this admission wasn’t nearly enough!

“I told you already, didn’t I?...What? Didn’t you think yourself capable of maiming another permanently? Well hats off! You finally succeeded!” Izaya was rambling excitedly; he sounded crazy probably but that just added to his performance!

“How do I know that’s true?... How -how did I do that?”

Hmm..The beast had lost his brashness now. Finally!

“That steel beam you hit me with, smashing me on that building did the trick, I guess~!”

“But- you were standing just fine afterwards!”

“Hmm I was, wasn’t I? Too much adrenaline makes one capable of inhuman things I suppose~? But then you would know better…wouldn’t you?” he shrugged in mock innocence.

“That’s hardly an explanation Izaya!”

“Too bad! That’s all I have to offer!” Izaya kept replying nonchalant and playful.

He knew Shizu-chan would start protesting and he had gotten the reaction he wanted.

“What was it? Your back? Your legs? What did I hurt? Why can’t you walk? What exactly is wrong
with you?"

But rather than satisfying him, the way the other was acting - it irked him!

In fact, he was starting regret bringing up his legs in the first place now!

“I don’t know! It doesn’t matter to me! All that matters, is the end result! Stop acting like you care!”

After this outburst another tense silence followed.

Just how many times have they started talking only to end up fighting which led to another silent pause and them trying to pick up the conversation from where they had left it pretending to be capable of civility afterwards? A new pattern maybe?

Shizu-chan was still looking at his legs.

Izaya didn’t know what he was thinking, nor what he had wanted the other to think either.

The only thing he knew was that Shizu-chan acting like he cared angered him!

“Admiring your handy work?”

That earned him a glare.

Good.

“If you expect an apology from me you are looking at the wrong place.”

But, Shizu-chan admitting he in fact didn’t, angered him too…

This indecision on his part made him need to lash out! Urgently!

“Oh, my mistake! I thought you were the good one! So now that your true colors are revealed, tell me: How does it feel to know you crippled someone with your own hands? Does it feel good? Are you happy? No wonder everyone runs away from you!”

“Why the fuck should I feel sorry, huh? I don’t give a flying fuck about you! You were asking for it! Didn’t you know that you can’t beat me? That you are weak? I though you knew, because you never had the guts to fight me fair; always acting like a coward! You are the smart one, shouldn’t you have seen it coming?”

Coward.

Weak.

The beast knew exactly how to use his insecurities in a way similar to what Izaya always tried to do to him. He knew how to hurt him with words too! Just how vast had the gap between them truly was?

“Who are you calling weak and a coward you, filthy beast? If I was asking for it what about you? You are the one who started the whole fucking mess in the first place from the moment you couldn’t control your damn tempter as usual! You threw that first punch just because you decided you didn’t like me! Who does that? You are an anomaly of nature!”

That was a weak argument but it was partly true. Izaya maybe had provoked Shizu-chan verbally, but the other had been the one to lash out first and attacked him!
“So, I threw the first punch and you fuck me up for life? That’s fucking fair! You turned my life into hell for a decade, you put Kasuka in danger, you hurt my friends because I threw one punch when we were teenagers for which you slashed me like a fish the moment I did? Not to mention all the shit you pulled the last time! You went out of your way to kill me, just because! Don’t try to guilt trip me flea! Don’t you fucking dare play the “you started it” card with me because we both know you were up to no good when you wanted introductions back then!

Sometime during Shizu-chans angry rant the corner of the wooded table in front of him shuttered when he danged his first on the poor piece of public property.

“……”

Izaya would have flinched if his brain wasn’t busy processing the information at the speed of light. Shizu-chan’s argument was stronger than his own. He couldn’t deny that if you put both of their actions on a scale his own wrongdoings -until that night at least- weighted more than the others.

But Shizu-chan was a danger to humanity, he was a danger to Shinra, his abilities weren’t normal and Izaya genuinely had believed that he was more of a monster rather than a human! Besides he was so easy to hate where Izaya was able at the time to love all other humans, so obviously something about Shizu-chan had to be wrong.

Obviously, there were even more reasons to hate Shizu-chan the more he got to know about him, but the basis of his initial dislike for the protozoan wasn’t entirely unjustified!

However, there was one flaw that disrupted the solidity of Shizu-chan’s argument: that comment on Izaya having an agenda when he had asked Shinra to introduce them back then.

Well, obviously he would have developed some sort of an agenda eventually, after they had been introduced to each other if everything went smoothly-he was Orihara Izaya! -but he hadn’t already decided back then what exactly he was aiming at, at that point.

That time at the field he had been surprised to realize that Shizu-chan was that boy who had sensed him looking from above and locked eyes with him for a moment, during their first day at high school.

Initially, he had looked like the standard delinquent in his eyes, but latter on, on that field, he couldn’t help but find him -almost- extraordinary!

Izaya had never seen anyone like him!

Awe, envy, amazement, resentment and confusion were only some of the feelings he had managed to identify before the other had jumped him and he had to start running.

There were many more layers beneath, but after that first fight he never bothered to try to analyze them since their routine had already been set.

So, he couldn’t deny the truth of that accusation completely but he couldn’t accept it as easily as the others as a fact.

Maybe if he had done more introspection after that first fight rather than let his amusement blind him, he would have a good enough counter-argument instead of swallowing his tongue right now.

“What, you have nothing to say now? Wow! That’s a first!”

“What’s there to say protozoan? Yes, I did all those things because it was fun; you deserved them!”
“Fun? Ruining my life was fun to you? Unbelievable! I swear I’ve never met a bigger psychotic bastard than you!”

“Yes, it was! You never knew your place! Seeing you to try and act normal and mingle with humans disgusts me! You are a danger so you should be avoided! You are avoided! Everyone sees you and just change sides on the road for fear you’ll beat them to death!”

“You say everyone avoids me, then what about you? Every unlucky bastard you’ve met you fucked them over! No wonder half Ikebukuro hates you! Everyone who gets to really know you hate you! I feel sorry for that guy who thinks you are worth anything because when you ruin him, he won’t know what hit him!”

“At least humans are not in danger of me killing them by accident with this freaky strength! Yes, I am hated but at least I am not feared because no one regards me as an abnormal threat! You don’t belong in society; you belong to a freak show!”

“You have fucking obsession! Do you think I chose this? You chose to act how you act; I was never given an option to be like this! You got what you deserved for a decade’s worth of mess you created. Would you feel bad if you had killed me? Would you feel bad if I was in that wheelchair now? I don’t think so! If you think you deserve a fucking apology then what about me? You should be grateful I spend so long holding back even though you didn’t deserve it, otherwise you’d be in that chair way sooner!”

“I don’t care what you think I own you monster! Because apparently you hate violence, but you don’t give a fuck as long as this person is me! You are mindless, impulsive and have no fucking filter in your stupid self-righteous brain! You take advantage of humans fearing you to do whatever you like! You were the one chasing me even when I did nothing, just to blow some steam with no repercussions, since I am the “bad” guy! And you have the nerve to call me obsessed? In case you haven’t noticed I hate you with every fiber of my being!”

“I hate you too! If only you had stayed away! Why the fuck did you have to come back? Why the fuck you are still tormenting me every fucking day? How many longer am I going to get punished for that fucking first punch? Isn’t a decade enough for you? When will you decide it’s enough? What more do you want from me to leave me the fuck alone?”

Suddenly Izaya was snapped out of the trance he had fallen.

He found himself grabbed by the collar of his coat again and lifted completely of the chair this time, his face mere inches from Shizu-chan’s; their noses almost touching and both of them punting like they had run a marathon!

Izaya’s left hand was grabbing with steady force the others forearm, whose fist was clenched around his clothing in order to remain steady, while his right forearm was placed horizontally under the protozoan’s chin, the handle of the metallic letter opener clenched tightly in his fist; the blade sharp and resting on the soft tissue of his enemies’ neck.

When exactly he had taken his “weapon” out of the briefcase and managed to bring him so close to Shizu-chan while dangling he hadn’t even realized. When exactly Shizu-chan had gotten up, grabbed him and lifted him he had no reconciliation of either.

A quick look at Shizu-chan’s neck told him that he hadn’t slashed him; he just kept it there in warning but nothing more, which had been astounding considering he was so charged with hate and anger only moments before; his self-preservation having gone to hell and yet he hadn’t tried to take revenge on the amoeba -he should pat himself on the back letter!
He registered also that while he had fallen into Shizu-chan’s clutches for a second time there wasn’t even the slightest of pain; despite everything Izaya had said just now the other hadn’t tried to harm him either in his frenzy -maybe he should also give a pat to Shizu-chan’s back!

The beast after a second, blinked as well, indicating that he also just realized what was happening and had snapped out of his own anger. He seemed to also register their position and be equally baffled regarding how they had ended up like that when moments ago both of them were seated and with a considerable distance between them.

To Izaya however, the most shocking part had little to do with their current situation but more to the fact that this was the first time in a decade that they had relatively tried to explain their reasonings to each other.

Though to be honest, he couldn’t remember half of the things they said; just that at time they had felt like some sort of -justification?

He really should do the best to remember every second of it when they were done from here - because now he was pretty sure that he would leave this park alive eventually.

Izaya was sure that in their inability to control themselves they had disclosed important -possibly confidential-information to each other! What if Izaya had said something he absolutely shouldn’t? What if Shizu-chan had said something important and Izaya couldn’t recall it afterwards?

After that sarcastic remark of the beast, his whole being had gone to autopilot!

He couldn’t track what he was saying from that moment onward! He didn’t have the time or the energy anymore to process his words and actions properly, neither Shizu-chan’s replies.

He remembered only bits of it and the whole thing had barely transpired a minute ago!

An ongoing name calling, insults, Shizu-chan saying everyone hated Izaya, that he didn’t deserve Kato-san’s support, Izaya saying everyone feared the beast, calling him obsessed and a freak…

Had he called him a monster too?

He thought it had slipped his tongue at one point, but he was still in one piece so maybe he hadn’t?

The only thing that his brain could register properly at those moments was that they were both screaming at the other long monologues about who hated the other the most and why, in a way they had never -ever- done so before!

Shizu-chan was a loud human with no filter but despite that he didn’t talk much about what was going over in his pea sized brain.

Izaya himself was level headed and quiet and certainly not one to scream his opinions like that.

But now, they were both reduced to animals!

Because no proper human should act like a deranged madman -like them!

The realization that their reactions could be so similar was scary!

Still, Izaya tried to assure himself that it wasn’t a matter of similarity but of need.

Because they both needed that; to let it all out -or most at least- of their system properly at least for once!
Izaya was still dangling from his coat in Shizu-chan’s fist, both still looking at each other in shock, each tried to sort their thoughts out, their bodies almost perfectly aligned.

Then Shizu-chan’s arm that was not holding him in the air clumsily encircled his waist; Shizu-chan’s palm resting on his small back bringing them even closer if that was possible, though their bodies refrained from touching.

“What the hell are you doing beast!?” Izaya bellowed.

Still, the action was so very unexpected and awkward and plain scary that Izaya’s hand that was clenching the letter opener flew to the other man’s shoulder -fist never unclenching the letter opener- and tried to push Shizu-chan away.

“Stop squirming flea! I’m putting you back to your stupid wheelchair!”

Shizu-chan yelled back and started leaning over the chair that was a few inches away from them-probably with the force the protozoan had grabbed him.

“I don’t need your help! Take your hands off me!”

“Stop being a pain in the ass and -keep -fucking -still!”

Shizu-chan’s arm locked around him yet still refrained from having full contact with his body and tried to lower him onto the seat of the chair.

With how weird this was and how lightly the beast was holding him and how no one of them kept the wheelchair from moving away, Izaya was feeling so unsteady that begrudgingly loosened his fingers from the metallic blade that was only held by his thumb now, in favor of wrapping his other fingers around the amoeba’s shirt on his shoulder.

The moment Izaya was back on the wheelchair they recoiled violently from each other, barely contained revulsion and uneasiness in both their expressions.

Shizu-chan remaining standing and reaching for a cigarette while Izaya ignoring him and busying himself with placing the letter opener back in his briefcase before straightening his clothing. Seeing the case that contained his glasses in that same pocket gave him a bit more strength to keep going till his aim had been achieved.

It was obvious that they had fallen for the nth time to another silence -this was the longest so far.

“I just don’t understand you…” Shizu-chan spoke suddenly his back turned at him while he kept smoking. To the beast’s credit he sounded as he truly tried to understand him for once.

“What’s there to understand?”

“Why are you like this? You have fucking everything you want! You always did! You succeeded in destroying my life in ways beyond repair… Just when you will be satisfied? I can’t take it any longer Izaya…”

Even when Shizu-chan almost said something right, in the end, he still ended up saying the wrong thing to him!

“I have everything I want? I have destroyed you? That’s funny considering I am the one who has lost everything to you once again, yet to me you seem to be perfectly fine! I always had to share everything with you otherwise you’d just take it as if you didn’t have enough already! You even
took my legs! Just keep everything, I don’t give a shit anymore!”

Izaya really shouldn’t have said so much but, to hear Shizu-chan claiming he had everything when Shinra liked him better and wanted to be around him all the time while he hadn’t even cared when Izaya had been stabbed, his own sisters liked him better and would chose him over Izaya any day and on top he had so many humans fawning over him despite acting like a brute and keeping them in arm’s length when Izaya was sunned away?

“What the fuck are you talking about? I never did anything to you other beating you to a bloody pulp because you fucking deserved it! You had so many opportunities yet you still ruined every chance I had to do well in anything! Because of you I disappoint constantly everyone I care about! You’ve taken my brothers respect, my sanity! Yet I am the one who takes things from you? You are selfish and delusional trying to justify the fact that you are an asshole instead admitting you are at least partly at fault too!”

Opportunities.

Chances.

Such things couldn’t compare to humanity’s acceptance and love!

And since when Shizu-chan cared about such things!

Respect.

Since when he cared about others opinions on him either?

Moreover, was he an idiot? Izaya hadn’t observed much his emotionless of a younger brother but he was pretty sure that the little freak respected the older one just fine.

Just because Heiwajima Kasuka wasn’t a social butterfly had nothing to do with Izaya, but obviously when Shizu-chan needed to blame someone for whatever reason, of course Izaya would be the one at fault!

He would have pointed out several of the loopholes of Shizu-chan’s melodrama when the other spoke again sounding to exhausted that his voice almost mirrored exactly Izaya’s feelings.

Moreover, what he said had taken Izaya aback more than any other insult they had exchanged that night.

“Pff..You know, I can’t believe I even though for a moment that you and I could have been friends if I hadn’t thrown that punch and have given you a chance instead. Protozoan, isn’t that how you call me? You are right again, I am protozoan.”

‘Friends. Me and you?’

When Shizu-chan had thought of that? Was it before that night or after? Why? What was the exact thinking process he had undergone? Had he actually though it could happen if things haven’t turned as they turned? Was he willing to try before that night?

Izaya didn't cared in the first place.

He didn’t want to know! He didn’t want that creature’s approval!

“That’s absurd. Do you think I’d lower myself to that level?”
“That why you were always alone. No one could reach your standards.”

It was said so simply, no anger or intention to hurt. A mere observation rather than an insult.

Maybe that’s why it was so insulting!

“Well, you might have even have been useful enough~.”

“Celty said that you’d think like that when I told her too.”

Fuck Celty!

Since when that creature’s opinions should be taken into account?

She wasn’t human, she couldn’t understand humans!

“Celty should learn finally to mind her own business and keep her opinions to herself.”

For once Shizu-chan didn’t seem to jump on his best friend’s defense.

“This is getting us nowhere we’re just going in circles. We can’t even talk like normal people!”

Circles.

Had Shizu-chan realized too that their whole twisted relationship was an endless circle?

“What did you expect really? We aren’t particularly normal.”

Another observation.

“Let’s end it now, Izaya. For good.”

Izaya stiffed a bit but he tried to mask it with irony.

“Ohh~ are you breaking up with me on Valentines~?”

“Shut the fuck up!”

“Or are you planning to finally kill me?”

He wouldn’t, right? He hadn’t hurt him the whole night, he was calm now even. Izaya was reading too much to the other’s words again. His had rested on the briefcase again -just in case.

“I’m serious. I’m tired. I’m tired of you Izaya. And I’m tired of me and I’m tired of this!”

Shizu-chan had turned to face him again at some point now madly gesturing between them.

“I don’t want to do this anymore, I can’t! I can’t spend another day like that, let alone another decade! I’m so fucking tired of everything! …I thought a lot these days.. and I think we should make a deal. Stay away from each other. Go on with our lives, never interact again. If you really want no trouble that is. As long as you don’t fuck with me, I approach you again and you can go on with your life. I will stay away from your work too. But, you have to leave me alone this time -for good!”

So Shizu-chan had arrived to the exact same conclusion he had and even made the same suggestion that Izaya wanted to make?

Moreover, Shizu-chan’s was even better!
A deal! No blackmail involved; a fair deal between equal parties!

Izaya couldn’t believe in his luck! This whole hour of going back and forth was worth it! Izaya’s life would be safe, he would be free!

He tried not to look too excited at the prospect in front of Shizu-chan.

“For once we came to the same conclusion. I’m stuck like that so I can’t fight anymore even if I wanted to thanks to you. As for your suggestion I agree. I have things at stake as you surprisingly figured out so I need you to stay away. But, you also have things at stake too. We both have common interests right now so neither should forget that. That day was supposed to be the last round after all. We have a deal.”

Oh, this was going perfectly now!

“Good. However, If one bastard approaches me, if one gang jumps me or anything happen to disrupt my peace or harm those I care about, I will consider you the culprit. And then the deal is broken. And no matter where you hide I will find you.”

And of course, Shizu-chan would say something to ruin his rapidly improving mood!

“I’m not afraid of you protozoan!”

“Yes, you are. And you are right to do so. Do you that I haven’t noticed how you cower from me even now. I can tell when you are lying no matter how good of an actor you are; never forget that.”

“You are delusional. And don’t act all familiar with me amoeba! You don’t know me!”

And he didn’t!

However, admittedly Shizu-chan was able to read him better than he read the protozoan, whether that was his body language, reactions or expressions.

That’s why Shizu-chan always seemed to be so unpredictable!

“Because you know everything about me, so you can act like you have me all figured out!.. Don’t tell me what to do.”

Before tonight he had truly thought he knew Shizu-chan -at least a few fundamental things about him, regardless whether or not the other was unpredictable or not.

But, that night had been full of proof that maybe Shizu-chan was not as one dimensional as he had first believed.

“I think we’re done here. Stick to your part of the deal and I’ll stick to mine.. It was a displeasure seeing you.”

Izaya finally said and started trying to turn the wheelchair towards the path that led to the park’s exit.

“Same. If you see me pretend you don’t and go your way. I’ll do the same.”

“Hopefully I won’t see you.”

“Hurry up and fuck off pest seeing your ugly mug gives me a headache!” Shizu-chan said in displeasure, waving his hand to Izaya’s general direction as if he was trying to send away an annoying bug -in his mind he probably did.
“Because I am all thrilled to be in your presence!”

Finally, he turned the wheelchair to the right direction, his back facing Shizu-chan now before he remembered.

“Oh... And keep the fact that I’m back between you and your headless friend.”

When he finally entered the path and was successfully reaching the exit, he heard Shizu-chan calling him.

“Izaya.”

“I thought we were done.”

“We are. Just -go see Shinra and your sisters. At least once.”

What the hell!

Izaya had clearly stated before that he didn’t want to see anyone of Ikebukuro; he was so done with everything and everyone from there!

Moreover, Shizu-chan was pressuring him again! Why was he putting him again in that position!?

And to go to Ikebukuro of all places, where he always screamed to Izaya to go away whenever he was finding him roaming in “his city”.

“I thought I should stay out of Ikebukuro. Besides I don’t feel like it! I already told you I don’t want more people knowing! We just made a deal, why are you breaking it now?”

“I’m not! But, Celty will tell Shinra! He’ll know whether I speak to him or not!”

Celty again!

She was even more annoying to him than Shizu-chan, if that was even possible!

“And your sisters and friend are not “people”! They’d want to see you! Try not to be a dick at least to those who still give a fuck about you!”

Did they?

Izaya wasn’t sure they cared as much for him as Shizu-chan claimed they did, for whatever reason.

“Right. If anything, my sisters would be disappointed you didn’t finish the job..”

He wasn’t bitter about that. It was the truth.

“A big brother should be there for their siblings pest!”

“Are we talking about me right now, or you?”

Because, Shizu-chan was really projecting right now!

“They need their brother, Izaya! And Shinra misses his best friend!”

Mairu and Kururi had long ago stopped needing him.

He very much doubted they liked him.
He doubted even more that he should be around them; he had messed them up by being close to them!

As for Shinra missing him, Shinra didn’t care about humans -not even friends. He only cared about his headless girlfriend.

But Shizu-chan had called him Shinra’s “best friend”.

So Shizu-chan didn’t think of himself as the doctor’s best friend but Izaya.

Why did he think Izaya was more important to Shinra than himself? He was the one Shinra tried to spend time with; being invited in whatever Shinra organized-never Izaya.

But maybe Shizu-chan was right, he knew Shinra for a long time now. Maybe he was right about Mairu and Kururi too... Apparently, the debt collector wasn’t as bad at reading others as Izaya had originally thought; he had read him accurately more than once tonight.

‘I’ll think about it…”

“What do you know protozoan? Ts! Giving me a lecture after everything tonight is the cherry on top!”

“Whatever. Do whatever you want; I don’t give damn. Just stay out of my business and go fuck yourself already.” Shizu-chan raised his hands in surrender before putting them in the pockets of his pants and left, heading from the opposite direction they had come from.

“Go to hell…” Izaya murmured and wheel to his way to the train station.

So from now on both him and Shizu-chan would be strangers to each other.

It felt a bit weird.

Izaya had given up on their circle almost three years ago thinking that he would never return to Tokyo, but now that he was back and they both had made an agreement there was this sense of finality between them; same as that night yet so very different.

They had met again barely three days ago after so long, but all of a sudden, the things between them had become so much more complicated, in ways they had never been before!

It was almost as if the time and distance between them had mixed everything up!

Or maybe they had mixed up everything themselves because they weren’t the same humans as before.

Izaya didn’t know for sure Shizu-chan had “changed” because he had never known him in his core and while he himself had changed a bit, he didn’t think his change was big enough to justify tonight’s events; it was a selective change -not an overall one.

Regardless the specific reasons for tonight’s fine mess, Izaya was really regretting that night now, probably more than when he realized he was disabled, if only because he was coming to the abrupt realization that with both of them making it alive, an unknown parameter had been forced into their previous dynamic that had turned everything that used to be simple well -complex!

During that whole ordeal tonight, Izaya didn’t know how to act, what he wanted to say, why he said some of the things he did, how Shizu-chan had perceived his words or whether what he had
achieved was the most sustainable result, even if logically speaking it had to be!

More importantly he didn’t know how exactly he felt about this whole thing! That “conversation” was so overwhelming he had difficulty to keep track of and analyze his emotions.

Even now he was still too emotionally charged to do so properly!

It was too soon!

But maybe later it would be too late.

He could tell Shizu-chan had been in a similar situation when processing his own thoughts and emotions; one moment trying to control himself, then snapping at him, then being civil again only to threaten him a moment later, acting like he gave a fuck about him only to deny it instantly and manhandle him and also, these weird moments where he was almost gentle -just to start screaming his head off again of course.

Izaya didn’t doubt that it would take him a while to make sense of their bizarre time together and probably he would get a lot of things wrong. He still had trouble to remember the exact words that had been exchanged from both sides.

But maybe he should be satisfied he got the other to leave him alone and go on with his life.

Overanalyzing tonight’s events didn’t serve any purpose, him and Shizu-chan wouldn't be anything to each other from that point..

But he still wanted to understand!

What exactly were these parameters that had suddenly overcomplicated their simple and twisted relationship? Why they had acted so bipolar tonight? Why Shizu-chan hated him -despite the obvious reasons? What was that moment and why he had reacted so strongly at their close proximity while Shizu-chan clearly posed no threat at the time?

He didn’t care whether him and the protozoan would see each other again after tonight.

He didn’t care if he would spend every available moment of his time revising and evaluating of tonight’s conversation.

But he had questions and he wanted answers!

So far, Izaya could be sure only about one thing:

The circle they used to fall again and again for over a decade was finally broken for good.

Chapter End Notes

Yay! Finally, the second meeting is done and we’re ready to move on with a plot…with small steps because after trash talking each other like that, they can’t just fall head over heels with each other -yet!
I’m convinced that nothing can make opposing parties make a truce better that common interests! So now that both Izaya and Shizuo's goals are aligned they are smart enough to know a truce is beneficial for both.
Also they desperately needed some "couple therapy" to let a few things off their chests!
XD
Btw they turned out a bit softer than I had initially intended them to be when I was first working on this dialog, I guess we should blame it on low-key maturity? xD
Also I am extremely curious to hear how you interpret both of our boys behavior and Izaya's tangled thoughts! (*v*)
Chapter 15

Chapter Notes

Hello mina-san! 😊
A new chapter is here! This time we’ll see how Shizuo perceived his meeting with Izaya and get some insight of his thoughts and feelings.
I’ve decided that I might go a bit back and forth with their interactions and show both perspectives whenever they interact because they understand things so differently but I’m not completely sure if I will always show both of their perspective regarding their interactions… we’ll see I guess! :)
I hope you enjoy this chapter and get hyped about the next too!
I’m not sure what we’ll see in the following chapter because there are lots of things that are coming but it could be the Shinra-Celty chapter -or not!xD
As always thank you all for the support! I really appreciate it!! <3
Next chapter will be delivered around the end of June!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

After Celty went back at hers and Shinra’s place, Shizuo was left feeling quite disorientated and disappointed and yet a bit lighter at the same time; surer of himself.

He wasn’t used to have such contradictory feelings.

But well...he would have never expected Celty to hide anything from him either, much less Shinra, especially about something like that!

He wouldn’t go as far to classify that bug as “important” to him because he would have been massively overexaggerating but begrudgingly he had accepted already that Izaya wasn’t someone he could -if ever- be indifferent about.

He was a constant in his life for so long after all.

They had -sort of- grown up together and shared an unwanted connection; they shared a past, were acquittance to the same people, were both parts of Ikebukuro.

Especially after what happened after that night, everything that had to do with Izaya was a concern of Shizuo’s!

How could it not be?

How could Celty not understand it?

Did she think of him to be such a nasty fucker he would be going on with his life being perfectly fine without knowing what had happened to the flea after he had -almost- gone too far?

How could she ever believe that what he wanted was to have killed someone; that this knowledge was what was the best for him?

And if she had kept something like that, then what else did she hid from him? What else had she lied to him about?
Could he take her word that her encounter with Izaya was what she had described?
Because if Izaya wasn’t seriously injured then why would she help him in the first place?

No.

Celty was a good and kind person. She would help anyone -or at least try to.

She had always been by his side.

She was his best friend!

He shouldn’t doubt her!....Nor be angry at her…

But, his trust had taken a blow.

Regardless of that, in the end her presence and support had helped put his mind at ease a bit; beat some of his fear and anxiety away; reassure him that everything would be alright.

She gave him an idea of how to handle Izaya and stayed with him throughout him freaking out. Run to his house within minutes from when he had called her asking for help. She had helped Izaya too!

Most importantly she was genuinely sorry for what she had done.

She would have to deal with Shinra too, Shizuo shouldn’t make things harder for her.

He should just take his time to calm down and get ready to deal with Izaya.

Besides, flea was his main problem right now.

Shizuo had to be really careful how to handle that insufferable prick.

He should have to make absolutely sure that Izaya wouldn’t try to get revenge on him nor involve other people in order to get to him.

They both had paid the price.

Shit had happened and both fucked themselves royally as a result.

Shizuo ended up with a broken mind and if Izaya had spoken the truth about Shizuo maiming him then he had ended up with a broken body.

It was almost like divine punishment had befallen both of them, because of their stupidity.

Ironic in a sense.

Shizuo’s strong point had always been his body while Izaya’s had been his mind. Their weaknesses were reversed too; his being his mind and Izaya’s his body. And thus, they were punished by their weak points becoming even weaker.

Both things weren’t something that one could surpass or substitute. Shizuo’s strength in body couldn’t heal his mind and Izaya’s wits could do shit in a physical fight.

So, the least they could do was to stay away from each other and try to find ways to cope with their own weaknesses in peace.

Shizuo still feared in the back of his mind that Izaya probably would have other ideas with his
asshole arrogant personality.

As long as Izaya wanted to lay low everything would go smooth but, the moment the flea accomplished what his most recent scheme was then Shizuo would have to overpower him; maybe even blackmail him as Celty had insinuated because there was no way Izaya wouldn’t try to fuck him up.

He hated the way he thought right at that moment; he didn’t want to use his strength deliberately to scare someone into compliance, nor take advantage of Izaya’s disability and inability to defend himself.

But Izaya wasn’t just like any other little bastard that he would punch once and they would learn their lesson!

No! Izaya would jump right back twice as annoying and provocative! He refused to see reason!

And that’s why they had ended up like that now!

So this time Shizuo had to make sure that Izaya understood his place.

Maybe all those times he had let Izaya go or had barely grazed him with the projectiles he was throwing at the flea’s way, he should have just smashed him with a street sign or grabbed him and beat the shit out of him so that the pest would put it in that stubborn head of his that he shouldn’t mess with him for his own good!

Ts!

No need to dwell on the past; he should work with he had now.

If Izaya finally had learned to fear him Shizuo should make him understand that he only had reason to consider him a threat if he tried to hurt him first.

It wouldn’t be an easy task to accomplish.

He shouldn’t be too direct about that; he should instead make Izaya come to this conclusion himself, if only because Izaya might want to prove him wrong, just to have the last word like he always tried to.

But most importantly he should not waste time, otherwise Izaya would have the opportunity to start planning a counterattack after that morning’s events.

‘Tomorrow’

Tom-san had given him tomorrow the day off.

So he would go again to that place and ambush the flea mush in the same fashion that he would be ambushing Matsuyuta.

And if Izaya run away he would sniff him out no matter where he hid!

He knew now at least one person who was acquittance to that pest and if the other was indeed his “boss” he must have known things about him -like where he lived.

Izaya would not run away from him again!

Shizuo finally got up from the couch and headed to his bedroom.
It wasn’t that late yet but he felt so drained and tired, he just wanted to pass out. It had been a while since he felt so exhausted.

Despite that, his heart rate was beating like crazy; he could feel the pulse on the side of his neck drumming so hard it felt like the veins would pop sooner or later.

He had smoked a full package of cigarettes hours ago; his throat felt closed and his voice raspy. His mouth was dry and there was a nasty bitter taste; it has been a while since he smoked that much.

And yet he would have to buy a new package for tomorrow; he would need it.

He wanted water; he was thirsty. But he didn’t have the energy to walk to the kitchen. It seemed so far away and his legs felt unstable.

‘Fuck it’ he would drink in the morning; one night wouldn’t kill him.

He felt like a log on his bed which cringed in protest under his weight and closed his eyes; tried to concentrate in regulating his breathing and emptying his head.

It took a while but he wasn’t sure how long; it mattered not.

After what felt like forever, he finally yawned and could feel some of the tension leave his body.

He fell into an uninterrupted and fitful sleep that night that thankfully didn’t last too long -Izaya’s broken figure being the protagonist in all of his dreams.

Shizuo couldn’t remember how many times he had killed the informant in his sleep and in how many different ways by the time he finally woke up.

He was just grateful that he was awake.

………………………………………………………………………………

Two days after that morning he felt like punching someone.

He had attempted to ambush flea a day ago and it had turned out futile; the little bastard never showing up at that company. He waited for hours and hours and nothing.

He went as far as to circle the building in order to inspect whether or not there was another way to enter it -through a garage, an emergency exit -anything.

It didn’t seem there was.

If Izaya was going to show up he would have to do so at that one main entrance.

And he hadn’t!

Why he hadn’t?

But that other man, who had interfered when he had been cornering the flea, had.

When noon came and Izaya had yet to show up he had momentarily thought to stop that other guy and ask him where to find Izaya. He had to hurry and locate that pest before he’d run away.

And yet he hadn’t.
He wasn’t sure why, but it was obvious that Izaya didn’t want that to happen if his uncharacteristic behavior that morning had been any indication.

Shizuo couldn’t care less; if Izaya was pathetic wasn’t his concern.

By the time he had arrived home he had reasoned with himself that he had taken the correct decision not to approach that man because his ignorance had most likely been his enemy’s weakness and the fact that Izaya had looked so small and pitiful when he had reached out for his hand had zero effect on him.

Izaya didn’t deserve any pity and if Shizuo started going soft and tolerant to Izaya’s bullshit it would lead exactly to what Celty had warned him -him being thoroughly exploited and manipulated!

Shizuo wouldn’t go easy on Izaya of all people!

He would go to that place every morning if he had to and if Izaya didn’t turn up within two working days -or maybe three- then he’d approach that person; he decided.

In the weekend he could go search around Chiyoda for Izaya.

The whole district should stink like hell; it wouldn’t be that hard to locate him.

How he was unable to recognize the flea’s familiar stunk was beyond him in the first place!

Could people forget a smell? Or was it maybe because the air in Chiyoda was always so nice?

It hardly mattered.

He knew now what to look for and he had plenty of time to do so!

Tom-san had given him an additional day of leave and together with the weekend he had four days to find that pest.

His sempai true to his word, had arrived the day after he had run into Izaya at his place with a food container with hot rice porridge and barely concealed worry to check up on him just like he had told him that he would over the phone.

“How do you feel?”

“Better. Thank you for dropping by Tom-san. Sorry for yesterday.”

“It’s okay. Here, eat now that it’s warm” his sempai had said pushing the bowl of hot food and a spoon towards his direction.

Shizuo wasn’t particularly hungry but he hadn’t eaten anything since his encounter with Izaya and even though he didn’t want to he knew his body needed it.

“It’s good! Did you make it?”

“Yeah...” Tom-san smiled sheepishly and extended him a white paper bag with a green cross on it:

“Oh, here! Just to be safe!”

“Em..Thanks” he reached for it and took out its contents; cough syrup, vitamins, cold medicine, throat lozenges, painkillers.

“These cost a lot Tom-san. I can’t...”
“It’s fine. I wasn’t sure what you had so I only bought the basics. Hope that covers at least a symptom or two.”

Shizuo couldn’t help to feel thankful again for having someone like Tom-san in his life. Once more he couldn’t help but imagine how much better everything would have turned out for him if he had followed his sempai after middle school rather than continuing his education at Raijin High.

“I will pay you back Tom-sempai.”

“That’s not needed…Just..Shizuo, are you really feeling better today?”

He couldn’t help but feel at that moment that his sempai, despite bringing him medicine and porridge, knew that sickness hadn’t been what had taken him down yesterday and that all the things he brought wouldn’t do anything to “cure” him.

He wanted to reassure him one more time that everything was okay, but he didn’t want to keep lying -especially when they both knew that he was.

And yet he couldn’t talk about Izaya with Tom-san. Not unless he wanted to go in detail regarding that night, Izaya being back and disabled and all the things that happened the previous morning.

“I am a bit. It’s just, sometimes my mood gets so bad and I have trouble to focus…”

He was sure that Tom-san had understood he was referring to those first months after the fight. “I thought it was over now but it seems to still happen sometimes. But not that much or that often! Yesterday was a bad like that.”

“Thank you for trusting me. I know you don’t like talking about it.”

He could sense the genuine gratitude in Tom-san’s tone. His sempai had seen him at his worst and lowest in a way no one else had -not even Celty.

And yet Shizuo had never acknowledged that properly before other than apologizing for the trouble he caused.

That was a first time he allowed Tom-san some insight regarding how he felt those past years.

He should learn to talk more about his feelings to those who mattered to him…The way Tom-san had spoken it was as if he thought Shizuo didn’t trust him!

“It’s not that I don’t want to talk or that I don’t trust you, sempai. It’s just -difficult. Also.. I feel like I am troubling you and embarrassing myself at the same time. I don’t like it and I don’t want you to think bad of me either.”

He offered some more of his thoughts to Tom-san but he already felt like he didn’t want to talk more about this. It was too closely related to Izaya and he absolutely didn’t want to tell Tom-san how his monstrous strength had crippled the flea.

“I understand. But I think that talking helps. It can’t be easy bottling up things for long. And... Have a bit more faith at those around you Shizuo. No one expects you to be strong all the time just because you are -well, strong. I don’t expect you to. And I will never think bad of you either.” His sempai said with conviction.

“Thank you for saying that Tom-san. And you are right. I’ll do better this time Tom-san, so don’t worry about me. And I will -emm..- try to talk more if I’m troubled from now on.”
Yes, actually he should really make use of Tom-san’s advice.

A lot of problems he had to deal with, Shizuo was coming to realize, was because he refused to talk about them to those surrounding him before they even became problems.

If he had talked to Tom-san earlier then his sempai wouldn’t worry about him at the first implication that something was wrong nor would he feel underappreciated by Shizuo.

If he had talked to Celty properly about how he felt about Izaya’s “death” she wouldn’t have make assumptions and kept from him that she had met the other.

If he had talked to Shinra about knowing that the doctor was trying to drug him with powders then maybe Shinra could have offered him proper help or at least advice on how to help himself before his mind had grown sick like that.

If he had talked to Izaya maybe… just maybe things wouldn’t have gotten that far…. That last thought had remained with him even after Tom-san eventually left to head to his own house that Wednesday night.

And that’s how Thursday morning had found Shizuo outside Japan’s Time building waiting to get Izaya.

He had purposely left some distance with the building in favor of hiding behind a building at the corner of the street and observed the passerby waiting.

Once again, he saw among several other people walking up and down the street in a rush that old man entering that place.

It was almost nine and he was starting losing hope of catching the little punk when he suddenly saw the now familiar figure on the wheelchair approaching.

There was some distance in between but Shizuo could see that once again the flea was dressed formally beneath his gray coat; once again looking deceptively decent.

He was agitated, Shizuo could tell from how the other had stopped in front of the entrance looking left and right for some time; searching; waiting. For him, Shizuo knew.

Suddenly the flea turned his stupid face towards his direction!

He hid himself fast behind the wall of the building; heartbeat suddenly increasing.

Had Izaya seen him?

He wasn’t sure why he hid while he should jump out and stop the flea before he escaped.

He shouldn’t be intimidated by the flea, it should be the other way around!

And why would he be intimidated?

Izaya was a weakling compared to him, if he wanted -if he didn’t control himself -if wasn’t careful enough- he could break him in half with bare hands!

Oh...That was an intimidating feeling...

He should calm down and make sure not to lose it; the goal wasn’t to rip the flea apart it was to force
him to leave him alone -maybe blackmail him a bit into it too.

He needed a clear head for that so he wouldn’t do any mistake; so that he could read Izaya and find a way to handle him; a weakness!

He took one or two breaths and checked once again at the entrance of the building.

Izaya was still there, back turned to him and talking to three other men who also appeared to be office workers.

They didn’t talk for long and soon they headed all together to the entrance of the building. Colleagues probably.

When he looked again no one of them were there, the flea nowhere in sight.

He had hours to kill until he got the chance to caught up with the flea; eight, nine or probably more. Office workers usually worked overtime and Shizuo was getting more and more convinced at that point that Izaya rather that dealing information to those people in the paper was most likely an employee there himself.

That would explain the whole makeover as well as the fact that he was casually talking to those other men minutes ago that on contrast to the old man didn’t look like “dig fish” so he shouldn’t have anything to do with them in other circumstances.

Shizuo didn’t know how he felt about Izaya working at an office like a normal person.

Izaya was the type to stray away from normalcy as if it offended him personally, so to see this normalized version of him was strange -surreal even!

He was a bit envious deep down too.

Not because he wanted to work at an office himself -he wouldn’t trade his working with Tom-san for a chair and a desk- but rather because it was obvious that no matter the shitty circumstances Izaya found himself he could always excel!

The flea was more of a cross-breed between a fucking cockroach and a chameleon rather than a flea; never being taken down no matter how hard you try to kill him and always adapting to any environment he found himself in; blending in perfectly -almost too perfectly.

That was way more than what Shizuo could say for himself who stuck out like a sore thumb ever since he could remember.

He could already feel irritation.

Izaya was so incredibly lucky to be gifted so generously and rather than making proper use of his talents he used them to spread distraction and make everyone around him miserable!

Shizuo couldn’t understand how anyone with such great qualities could be so fucking evil!

Ungrateful -and wicked- little prick he was!

With a sour mood Shizuo walked into a café opposite from that building and sat himself at the window seat so he could have a full view of the entrance of it.

The cute and overloaded cake he bought left a bitter taste in his mouth that morning.
Hours passed excruciatingly slow; the sun had gone down an hour ago.

Shizuo had spent almost 9 fucking hours of waiting; going from cake to café, walking up and down the street, smoking while looking at the passerby.

He probably looked a bit suspicious to say in the least being rooted at the same place for hours and hours.

But he couldn’t help it!

He didn’t dare to go too far away from that building from fear that Izaya would disappear again under his nose. He couldn’t risk it.

It was agonizing, agitating and plain fucking annoying!

He was growing tired...No. Had grown tired hours ago! His patience levels were disappearing gradually even though he knew that he had to be patient.

Fuck patience!

He had spent two days of patience!

Where the fuck was the flea?

Wait!

What if he had left without Shizuo noticing?

What if there was in fact another exit?

Shizuo could feel the blood pumping in his veins in the idea; heart trumping madly.

Izaya wouldn’t run away this time!

Not before they set things straight with each other!

Fuck!

The more the flea took his sweet time doing god knows what in there Shizuo was growing increasingly and rapidly agitated—not to mention worried as hell regarding how this night would turn out which obviously wasn’t helping with his short temper.

Just before he actually broke something someone exited the building.

No, it wasn’t Izaya.

That one was a healthy man standing on his legs and walking quickly to a random direction.

And then another came out. And another. Sometimes in small groups of two or three people nodding to each other, bowing, waving hands before going their way.

It appeared that finally their working hours for the day were over.

That only meant that Izaya would come out sooner or later!
Shizuo purposely stayed at his side of the road but moved to a part near to an alley, staying there obscured by the shadows.

Alerting Izaya wouldn’t do him any good now.

Finally, the doors opened and two men came out; one wheeling and the other walking.

Shizuo knew instantly that this was the flea and after a second or two he recognized the other as the old man who tried to interfere when he almost hit Izaya mere days ago; the “boss”.

Shizuo took his time to observe their interactions.

He wouldn’t risk take his eyes from Izaya for fear the other would escape. At the same time he wouldn’t jump him again with this guy in the way; it would certainly draw attention and things could get ugly -not to mention there where things to be discussed that didn’t need an audience for both his and the pest’s sake.

Izaya and that person were fighting, or so it appeared to him initially from the indignant way the other was moving his hands exasperated as if giving the flea a lecture and the obnoxious way the flea was shrugging it off in a way that was overly pretentious as if he intentionally wanted to betray to the other that he knew exactly what he was talking about.

And then the weirdest thing happened!

Izaya threw his head back and laughed and that guy who was acting all annoyed seconds ago was laughing too.

It was a weird concept; Izaya laughing with someone.

Izaya laughed at people’s expense not with people.

Well, he laughed with Shinra sometimes -or Kadota even more rarely- but Shizuo could never tell if Izaya was happy or if he was pretending to be.

He wasn’t sure if he was happy at that moment either.

Shizuo could never tell if Izaya enjoyed himself in ways that weren’t promising disaster.

He probably didn’t.

‘Ts.. Aren’t bored of each other already?’

They kept talking animatedly on and on in what felt like fucking forever, especially after waiting for that bastard for hours and suddenly he was there and Shizuo couldn’t get to him!

People would approach them to wish their goodbye’s and bow to them in respect. They would stop for a second to bow back and greet them and then they would go back at it.

Whatever the flea’s agenda was with that person it had to be big!

He light up a cigarette to take some of his tension off and started to inhale the much -much- needed nicotine.

And then another person excited the building.

A woman.
He couldn’t see her face well with the distance between them but she looked kind of cute with her frilly dress and nice coat, girly hairdo and small structure. She must have been around his and Izaya’s age.

He would have expected her to bow to the fleabag and the old guy and head her way too but rather than that she squealed excitedly when she saw them, running straight to their direction and planting herself suspiciously close to the flea’s side.

It wasn’t a minute after she arrived the other man bid his goodbyes leaving her and the flea alone.

Izaya and the girl talked a bit more looking way too comfortable in each other’s presence and then the flea extended a hand like a fucking gentleman indicating for her to start walking first in a way that implied that he would follow her.

‘Oooh!’

Suddenly it made sense why Izaya was talking with the other man for so long. He was waiting for her!

‘Flea’s woman..’

Shizuo couldn’t help but growing even more resentful at Izaya at this though.

He would have loved to be able to delude himself enough that he had only his already-existing reasons to hate Izaya and the fact that even someone as fucked up as that bastard had someone while Shizuo himself was doomed by his strength and temper to be forever alone had nothing to do with his increasingly darkening mood, but that would have been a lie.

Well, whatever.

Izaya wasn’t the kind of person who would be serious about anyone since according to him he “‘loved’” humans on equal terms and shit.

And yet he couldn’t ambush Izaya with her there for the same reasons he couldn’t ambush the flea with that man -or anyone really- on the way.

Besides, what if one in the zillion the girl wasn’t a just bed-partner to the flea and he was serious about her? Years had passed, maybe the flea had tied the knot with! Maybe they had a child at their home!

That was more reason to him to stay where the fuck he was and not act on impulse.

Honestly, he couldn’t imagine Izaya to be anyone’s anything apart either from a partner in crime, enemy or casual shag but anything more felt like a joke, but could he really take any chances?

Just because Izaya dragged the people Shizuo cared about in his shit, like he had with a Kasuka and Vorona, didn’t mean that he would do the same to any of Izaya’s partners. Having terrible taste in men was not a crime. Besides, he never laid a finger on flea’s sisters either; they had nothing to do with it.

He was about to leave and head home on the opposite direction of them when he noticed that Izaya’s eyes were glued on him, flea’s previous relaxed and carefree posture going rigid and stiff.

It took him a second to realize that Izaya had probably seen the fire from the tip of his cigarette in the darkness.
He had to be more careful the next time…

No! There wouldn’t be a next time!

He would make sure to deal with the flea today for a final time and then go his way!

He would!

A moment later the girl turned also her head to his direction but it was as if she saw right through him since she didn’t seem to really pick up the flea’s reaction.

He saw the flea telling her something and then they were both waving to each other as she headed down the street while Izaya stayed rooted on his spot.

Not trying to run or to approach him either.

He looked more composed that the previous time thought the way he stood with his back straight and body immobile betrayed him.

Still, he was waiting for him to make the move.

So be it.

Shizuo got out of the shadows and started walking towards the flea.

He was getting more and more anxious the closer he got; he had to handle things maturely and calmly -he had to make it work this time, he couldn’t fuck up.

But he was so tired at the same time for spending three days focusing on the pest, so betrayed from Celty’s behavior, so impatient to get his point across and so worried he wouldn’t be able to do so, so scared that Izaya would still try to fuck him over and more than a little bitter that Izaya was better than him in one more thing like always that his temper was threatening to get the better of him the moment he was standing in front of the other man.

“Izaya” he said because he wasn’t sure what else to say.

He didn’t want to start screaming his head of to the flea right at this instant; he had to make it work!

The pest raised his well-combed head and locked his eyes on him daringly.

“Hmm..You don’t waste time, I see~”

He said in that annoying voice and at that moment he looked like the Izaya he knew now; bold and obnoxious.

The only thing out of place on his face were those red glasses.

Shizuo hoped he wouldn’t take them off because it was the only thing currently that separated him from the pest he knew so it helped fool himself a little that he didn’t have to deal with a complete vermin but, on the other hand, he wished he would take them off out of fear that if he lost it and hit him in the face he would hurt him seriously if the lenses broke on his stupid mug.

‘Don’t hurt him. He didn’t say anything bad. Don’t hurt him!’ his brain repeated like a mantra.

He took a few breaths to calm himself down and clenched his teeth hard.
He was proud of himself for keeping his voice was calm and steady.

“I’m not here to play games. We need to talk.”

“Indeed, we do” Izaya’s tone thank god had changed to something less obnoxious. “We should take this somewhere else.”

Good.

The flea agreed easily so far and most importantly looked composed enough to be able to actually talk rather than stutter and whimper.

He wasn’t willing to spend precious time to deal with calming down a freaked out little fucker.

He had already wasted too much time of his life these days for Izaya’s bullshit.

Moreover, this time it appeared to have regained some common sense and understood that causing a scene in the middle of the street would serve them right.

“Whatever flea. Come” he said and started heading towards Shimizudani park.

It was quiet enough without too many passerby or tourists around. Moreover, it was obscured from the view in case things got bad and fairly close so Izaya wouldn’t have to wheel too far which seemed right to Shizuo since he had taken notice that rather than an electrical wheelchair the flea used a traditional one where he had to use his hands to roll the wheels; it must have been tiring, right?

Shizuo had discover the park the previous day while he was exploring the perimeter of the building and had decided it would be ideal to talk with the flea there.

“Where are we going?” flea’s cautious question stopped him on his tracks.

Maybe he should have said so from the start seeing Izaya getting all worked up suddenly though Shizuo didn’t think it necessary -he though it was clear that he just wanted to talk to the flea; he had said so from the start!

But, he should have figured Izaya wouldn’t trust him enough to follow him blindly.

To be fair he wouldn’t follow Izaya to the unknown either.

“Shimizudani Park.”

And yet even after he told him Izaya hadn’t even started moving; staying exactly where he was and being difficult.

“Do you really believe that I would follow you in a secluded park, at the night?” Izaya asked him as if he was talking to a toddler.

 Fucking annoying….

The what the fuck did he wanted to? To do this on the fucking street?

Ts!

He had been courteous enough to offer Izaya to move away from his seemingly working place because the flea had looked that morning like he would pass out or something from the stress when
he shouldn’t even care in the first place.

It’s not like Izaya ever took his own benefit into consideration. In fact, the flea made sure their interactions would be as public as possible to make a fool out of him and make him look like a monster…

“Suit yourself. I figured you wouldn’t want an audience but if you don’t care we can start already.”

Izaya seemed to considered his options and then decided to play it cool.

“Whatever. Let’s just go there..” he announced and passed in front of him heading towards the direction of the park.

He lighted up another cigarette and trailing after the pest leaving as much space between them as possible.

The five minutes it took them to reach the park felt for Shizuo like he was walking to his death sentence.

He was so incredibly tense, his heart threatened to pop out of his chest and his limbs felt like overboiled noodles -he wasn’t sure how he was able to walk on a straight line and not collapsing.

The cigarette did nothing to calm his nerves.

It was a good thing Izaya was a few steps ahead of him so he wouldn’t realized how terrified he was.

Terrified of everything going to shit, of Izaya refusing to leave him alone, of Izaya agreeing that he would and then not sticking to it, of him getting so angry and losing his mind to the point that he’d do something terrible to the other.

While they were walking, Shizuo willed so hard his mind empty from the anger and envy and resentment. He reminded himself that no matter what Izaya was to him, he was still a living breathing being, that he felt physical pain much more intense that himself, that he wasn’t invincible, that he could break.

‘Don’t hurt him!’ he repeated probably a million times like a mantra in a mock meditation.

“How do I know you want jump me again there?” Izaya asked stopping in front of the park’s entrance and turning his eyes on him.

 Seriously? He couldn’t even guarantee to himself that he wouldn’t harm him how he could guarantee that to Izaya!

“You don’t.”

Honestly that was up to Izaya way more than it was up to himself, so he though it would be better to be honest about it not only for Izaya to keep it in mind and not aggravate the fuck out him but also for the other be alert and ready to run for his life if needed.

‘He can’t run.’

The guilt he felt at that reminder almost choked him.

He ignored Izaya and entered the park heading for its center.

He could hear the flea moving behind him and he knew he was following him finally.
Shizuo headed for the seat of a picnic bench leaning one elbow on the wooded table on his left while fished with his other hand in his vest pocket fishing for another cigarette.

Izaya stopped in front of him and Shizuo was glad that the other seemed to leave a considerable distance between them.

Shizuo stole a glance at him taking of his red glasses and opening one of the pockets of a briefcase that rested on the chair next to him for what Shizuo could only guess was his spectacles case.

Shizuo would have thought them fake -something to add to the whole noble and sophisticated persona he had crafted- but something about the way the flea placed them inside the case with almost with religious reverence made him wonder for a second whether or not the flea had actually developed an eye problem.

Suddenly everything seemed to grow quiet around them.

Too quiet.

Shizuo couldn’t hear anything around them; no cars, no people, no sound of any animals lurking in the park, not even the air.

The more this silence dragged the more the tension grew.

He had to say something!

“So…”

So what? He didn’t know where to start; this was harder than he though!

“So…?” Izaya questioned.

He couldn’t even stand looking at Izaya’s face how the fuck he was going to talk to him?

What the fuck was he thinking? This was a terrible idea!!

“You were the one who wanted to talk” the flea stated sounding awfully mature and collected for a moment.

Their stared at each other again neither saying anything.

Since when it had gotten so hard to stare Izaya’s ugly mug?

“I thought you dead.”

He said a little louder than a whisper because he had trouble getting the words out with all the images of Izaya’s bloody face mocking paling rapidly and that knife stuck in his abdomen invading his mind, of the memory of his pained gasp when Vorona hit him -when he hit him.

He couldn’t focus; he balled a fist as hard as he could to ground himself because he felt his head would break!

‘Stop it. No more. Focus!’

Izaya’s annoying voice snapped him out of his trance and for once he was thankful for the flea opening his mouth!
“Sorry to disappoint you then.”

Disappoint?

No, he wasn’t disappointed. How could he be disappointed that he hadn’t killed someone?

The one good thing Izaya had ever done for him was surviving that night!

And yet he couldn’t deny it.

He couldn’t let Izaya see how affected he was and use it against him! He couldn’t tell him how fucking grateful he was for him being alive -even if it was only out self-interest…

So, he kept his mouth shut and ignored Izaya’s remark.

Thankfully, Izaya decide to move on to an easier topic.

“How did you know I was in Tokyo?” the flea asked and then for a minute there the conversation became almost smooth, taking turns to ask safe questions in what one could presume as an “ice breaker”.

Izaya even told him that they wouldn’t find Matsuyuta because the bastard had quit and run-away months ago.

It wasn’t good news but at least they had a lead now.

He was a bit skeptical to how Izaya knew that since he didn’t elaborate but Shizuo guessed Matsuyuta was his superior or something.

They worked to the same building so of course Izaya would know -he was an informant after all.

There was always the possibility of Izaya lying but Shizuo guessed it was more beneficial to Izaya to speak the truth in this case.

Knowing Izaya he would have hand him over the other’s new address in an instant to save his own ass rather than risk angering Shizuo with false information when he could perfectly well return to that company in search for that other man.

And then everything started going once again because Izaya asked him who else knew he was in Tokyo and he mentioned Celty.

“Then Shinra knows too?”

He could see how agitated the flea was becoming at the prospect of Celty and Shinra knowing but he couldn’t understand what was so bad about it.

“He doesn’t. She told me she had sealed your wound days ago. I didn’t know you two had met after-. Shinra doesn’t know either. He thinks you’re dead. But Celty will talk to him too.”

Okay, Izaya had enemies in Tokyo and Izaya and Celty sure didn’t get along well but she wasn’t his enemy! She had helped him! Shizuo even though he was annoyed at her still was sure that she wouldn’t go around announcing Izaya was back!

And Shinra…Shinra was his friend! Sure, the doctor had some unorthodox opinions and priorities but he cared about Izaya a great deal!
Hell, he had spent the whole night waiting for Izaya with the medical equipment ready to help him after they had fought the last time!

Not to mention that even though himself and Izaya didn’t get along he never took sides and regarded them as his friends equally!

Why was Izaya acting like he hated him?

The flea would start fuming at any moment with the way his face was turning even uglier from frowning so hard and Shizuo was trying to brace himself internally not to react impulsively himself when it happened and made things worse.

“Well, your bestie sure loves you a lot! Saving me so you wouldn’t become a murderer! Touching~!”

“Shut the fuck up! You should be fucking grateful she saved your sorry ass!”

So much for maintaining his composure!

“Well should I? She only did it for you and we both know it! Said so in my face too.”

Shizuo would have like to pretend Izaya was lying but the words he had used were pretty close to Celty’s wording the other day which was too much of coincidence.

Celty had told him that while the flea had the crap beated out of him and a knife in his body?!

Shizuo winched internally.

That was harsh; even though he understood that Celty was probably very angry at the pest for stealing her head, otherwise she would never say such a thing.

“You stole her head Izaya! You said nothing when you knew how much she wanted to get her memories back!”

“Shinra is as much to blame as me for that! Though I am always the one getting the short end of the stick, while everyone else is let of the hook with a pat on the hand, ne?”

He winched again.

Izaya wasn’t unreasonable no matter how much he hated to admit it.

Shinra was as much to blame as him and yet neither himself nor Celty -as far as he knew at least- so much as even scolded the doctor while Izaya had ended up being blamed entirely.

But Izaya wasn’t Celty’s partner, Shinra was.

What he had done was shitty but wasn’t what Shinra did even worse?

However, Izaya shouldn’t complain either for always being blamed for every little wicked thing because he had brought it upon himself with his behavior!

How could anyone regarding objectively when he did everything in his power to persuade everyone that he was behind every single disaster that happened?

Of course, people would force the blame on him!
He was like that brat that was screaming “Wolf!” that in the end no one took seriously even when he was honest from that old western fable mother had read to him and Kasuka when they were little, wasn’t he?

“Anyways, we have our own problems here, Celty can choose her own battles.”

“Whatever flea..” he said nonchalantly but he was secretly glad that Izaya could take the lead of the conversation and knew when to stop them before things escalated.

“Since when do you work outside of Ikebukuro?”

“Recently. I’ll be working in Chiyoda too now. Chuo and Minato as well.”

“I see.”

It was his turn to ask now.

There was one thing he wanted to know more than anything else: “Where have you been all this time?”

Because really, where the fuck was he, while Shizuo was trapped to Ikebukuro being hunted every day by that night and gradually losing his mind?

“Osaka. I’ve been there since that night.”

Osaka.

Three hours away by train?

Shizuo had to live in hell for three years while Izaya had been three fucking hours away?

Why Osaka; he would have asked but then it hit him!

A big city with lots of people to mess with!

Of course, Izaya would hide to one of the largest cities in population to create distraction! Where he should have expected that fleabag would escape to, fucking Kumamoto?

“Were you scheming and making a mess there too?”

“No. In fact, both there and here I was enjoying my quiet life -until recently” the flea said suddenly full of himself.

“Right..And You expect me to believe that?”

It was a rhetorical question.

Of course, he wouldn’t believe him! That was Izaya -the self-proclaimed superior human being!

“You won’t. You always assume the worst anyways.” Izaya replied with barely concealed annoyance.

“Am I wrong to do so? Some things don’t change flea. You don’t change!” he challenged him.

He snapped because really what Izaya expected that he would pout and say in that voice that Shizuo had so little faith in him to guilt-trip him even more into forgetting that the man in front of him was an
absolute scam who tried to fry him alive?

No, if Izaya wanted to convince him, he had to prove himself worthy for the benefit of doubt!

Not that he’d earn it even then but still…!

He had some nerve screwing him over for years and then being all like ‘Why you assume the worst every time?’.

Moreover, Shizuo didn’t go about such things as heart to heart conversations with his most hated person in any delicate or refined to match Izaya’s intellect and tastes.

He just pressed for evidence!

If Izaya had them he’d better presented them!

“I don’t care what you think. You are not particularly important to me, in case that slipped your mind~.”

Fucking aggravating flea! One moment acting like he wanted him to believe his claims and then telling him he didn’t give a fuck!

Then why complain like that before in the first place?!

“Of course, you don’t! You only care about yourself!”

He pressed again.

Izaya was speaking the truth to him for the first time ever that night or so it seemed.

But he suddenly had clamped up and was acting insufferable.

He knew that doubting the flea repeatedly and snapping at him was partly the reason the other being a prick at that moment but he couldn’t turn the time back now and take it back.

Besides, he didn’t care that much, he simply wanted to know why Izaya had implied that Shizuo was wrong to doubt him this once.

He just didn’t know how to take the conversation at that point but it didn’t matter now because he could get his answer based on Izaya’s reaction.

As long as the flea snapped at him again and told him to fuck off and that he was speaking bullshit it would be good enough for Shizuo. Anything, as long as he argued that he wasn’t a complete bastard.

Then at least Shizuo would have some faith that maybe just this once he was wrong about him even a tiny bit and had judged him too fast because he was biased against him as Izaya had -rightly- accused him of, moments ago when he had mentioned Celty’s head.

“Hmm..Can’t really argue with that~!” the other told him grinning like a mad man, red eyes shining in the darkness.

He hadn’t denied it.

He hadn’t changed even a little after so long!

He was just using everyone and everything like always!
He didn’t care about his sisters, Shinra, that girl!

It felt like Izaya had punched him.

His need to desperately be reassured that Izaya being alive was the best outcome of that fight despite everything getting gradually better for Shizuo himself even with the false knowledge that the pest had perished was confusing the hell out of him!

He couldn’t deal with Izaya when he got so affected of every little thing the other did and said.

He didn’t want to look at him anymore.

He was getting tired.

But Izaya’s admission meant that he was right; the pest had an agenda and something in the city would sooner or later go to shit!

He was getting angry.

“Why come back now?” he demanded and was surprised to see that the flea abandoned the playful persona only to yell back at him just as loud.

“Why do you just have to butt your nose in my business constantly?”

“Enough with the attitude Izaya! What business you have in Tokyo?”

“My job is here! Are you afraid to use your one single brain neuron to figure out the obvious, huh protozoan?”

“I’ve already done so fleabag! I’m not stupid on contrast to what you seem to believe!”

“Then since you’re not stupid as you claim, which I have trouble to believe, you should know to stay the fuck away from my job from now on!”

“Not if you try to fuck those people over! Does that guy who tried to save your ass even know who was he trying to help?”

The moment these words left his mouth everything went deadly silent.

Izaya had stopped talking all together.

He started acting really weird all of a sudden; Shizuo didn’t understand what was wrong with him.

‘Is he in pain?’

Izaya had pushed his body as much as possible towards the chair, as if it would swallow him, eyes wide and his breathing getting more and more irregular and shallow.

And then, just like it started, it ended.

It was sort of mesmerizing witnessing the transmission from panic to calmness as it happened; within seconds flea’s body and facial features relaxing more, his chest moving at a normal pace as if nothing had ever happened.

Shizuo didn’t know what had happened nor which of Izaya’s expressions was real but when the flea spoke again everything started to make sense.
“What do you want? Name your price. Anything.”

Izaya though that Shizuo was blackmailing him and had panicked at the idea of Shizuo talking to that man!

Once again, he had wondered briefly what Izaya had gain from that person that was so very important. As long as it didn’t concern him, he didn’t give a fuck really.

More importantly he had managed to blackmail the flea without even trying!

This was gold!

He could be done with this thing in mere minutes and go home!

‘Anything’ Izaya had said!

Izaya was desperate even if he was trying to hid it; Shizuo’s initial instinct hadn’t been wrong!

Well…how could he let this chance go like that? Who would?

Izaya had just offered his worst enemy fucking anything!

He could ask for fucking everything and Izaya -the bane of his existence- would do it!

He could get revenge for all the hardship Izaya had put him through without moving a finger -just like that!

‘How can I make you pay for all the shit you put me through without beating the crap out of you, huh flea?’

The instant he realized what he was thinking so casually, how willing he was to make Izaya suffer despite the flea being disabled and defenseless and how easily his priorities changed and rather demanding from Izaya to leave him alone he was willing to get even more tangled with him if that meant the other would suffer, he was left more terrified than he had ever been before in his life!

This fear he was stronger than fearing of being burned alive; stronger than the one he felt the time he thought he had lost his mind for good and saw things.

It was the fear of turning into something you would hate!

Because surely if he found himself having so much power over Izaya so suddenly and with how much they hated each other, things would get so much more twisted between them and the situation would escalate so much and so fast that they would be both doomed beyond belief and it would be all his fault!

No.

Absolutely not!

He was convinced now that the best thing both for him and Izaya would be to stay as far away from each other as possible; severe all ties between them once and for all.

But he wouldn’t go about it like that. He refused to black mail the flea all together!

He didn’t want any power over Izaya -ever!
A deal would be much better.

Yes.

A deal between equal parts with terms and conditions for both sides!

Sure, this decision would come bite him in the ass eventually when the flea somehow turned the tables against him but even that would be better than the dark alternative that Izaya had just tempted him with. Anything would be better than that!

“W-what the actual fuck? I’m not like you Izaya! I’m not going to -to use you or anything! I don’t use people!”

He wasn’t like Izaya, was he? He was supposed to be a good person!

Fuck, with his mind all over the place his phrasing turned out sounding really weird, not to mentioned he stuttered in a freaked-out-Izaya-fashion!

And more importantly, what the fuck Izaya had been thinking in the first place suggesting such a thing to him? Was he that stupid?

Fucking fleabag used to get off in risky situations but did he have zero self-preservation going in his fucking condition and offering anything to someone with anger issues who was so much stronger than him and not to mention hated his guts? To someone he had almost killed him?

Seriously?

‘Stupid Izaya’

Shizuo felt suddenly relieved that the flea had admitted earlier of caring about none other than himself because, for the love of him, he couldn’t begin to imagine how much more impulsive and idiotic the other could act if he actually cared for someone!

“Oh touché! Well, since you don’t want to use me, you better stop testing my limits protozoan, before I’ll make you do so.”

Izaya threatened and now thank god these uncomfortable moments from earlier were already erasing from his mind!

“I’ve been quite calm and I haven’t bashed your fucked-up head on the ground yet, despite you annoying the fuck out of me. So, don’t even think about threatening me flea…” Now he was back on track to figure out what that pest was scheming “Why did you really come back?”

“You have some nerve ambushing me and questioning me like that days after you jumped me on the street like a mad dog when you didn’t listen to anything I said!”

“Right. You mean when you called me a “fucking monster”?... If you are pulling some shit again, I’m not going to let it pass. I am warning you Izaya.”

He said in a way to hopefully indicate that it was a threat of having his ass being handled to him and he was not being blackmailed into anything.

And then Izaya did the worst possible thing he could have done.

He changed again back to the annoying playful attitude and gestured his legs that rested on the footrests of the wheelchair like he was presenting him with the most interesting specimen.
“I’m not. You see I decided to lay low till I got back on my feet. Oh~ the irony! don’t you agree~?”

“Did I...Did I really -do that?”

He wanted -hoped even- that Izaya would tell him that he hadn’t but he already knew this wouldn’t be the answer he would be getting.

“Off course you did~! I told you already, didn’t I?...What? Didn’t you think yourself capable of maiming another permanently? Well hats off! You finally succeeded!”

Izaya had fallen into a runt and the more he was speaking the more lightheaded Shizuo felt.

He had hurt someone irreparably this time because of that strength; because he was so thoughtless and stupid and in a fit of rage had decided to kill that bug.

He couldn’t get the words out of his mouth for his mouth was suddenly dry; he should take off the bow tie -it was chocking him and everything was getting to hot suddenly despite being mid-February and him not having a coat; it wasn’t helping!

“How do I know that’s true?... How -how did I do that?”

No, no! It wasn’t true, his brain refused to believe it even though he already knew.

Deep down from the first moment he saw Izaya he had known he was responsible for what happened to him.

“That steel beam you hit me with, smashing me on that building did the trick, I guess~!”

Lies! Izaya was standing and running and was able to fight him one on one with little to no trouble! It couldn’t have been caused by him – there was another reason for that right?!

“But- you were standing just fine afterwards!”

“Hmm I was, wasn’t I? Too much adrenaline makes one capable of inhuman things I suppose~? But then you would know better…wouldn’t you?”

Adrenaline rush?

So what was happening to him had happened to Izaya only instead of too strong the flea had grown momentarily a high enough pain tolerance to be able to stand and run?

He knew for a fact something like that was possible when humans were under extreme situations of duress; Shinra had told him it could happen.

“That’s hardly an explanation Izaya!”

But still it wasn’t enough! He needed to know how exactly he had hurt Izaya -he just needed to know!

“Too bad! That’s all I have to offer!”

No! Shizuo needed to know! He had to understand! Maybe there was something to be done to be fixed! Maybe Izaya go back to the flea he was! Maybe he hadn’t doomed someone for life!

Shinra would know how to make Izaya better; he always fixed them after their fights! He could help him right?
“What was it? Your back? Your legs? What did I hurt? Why can’t you walk? What exactly is wrong with you?” he yelled because he was growing desperate now!

“I don’t know! It doesn’t matter to me! All that matters, is the end result! Stop acting like you care!” flea yelled right back at him the playful persona being sent to hell again.

‘But I care!’ Shizuo almost yelled back but restrained himself just on time.

How could he think he cared when moments ago he was so tempted of taking revenge; thinking how much more he could hurt Izaya, who was already hurt...

Everything was silent again.

But on the other hand how could he not care when it was his fault that Izaya was like that?

How the fuck could anyone realize their mistake and not care while looking at their victim?

He didn’t know what person he was anymore. Was he good and kind like Celty said or was he vengeful and monstrous?

He couldn’t help but glue his eyes to Izaya’s legs.

Where they also this boney?

Shizuo couldn’t remember because he had never bothered paying attention to Izaya’s appearance or body before.

Izaya was always on the thin side -nothing more than a scrawny disgusting little insect- he knew that much, but his legs looked like sticks covered in fabric now!

The rest of Izaya didn’t look like that, although with the coat he was wearing he couldn’t be sure about the pest’s physique.

And yet, just looking at his legs Shizuo felt like he would double over and throw up in front of the other right then and there.

“Admiring your handy work?”

‘What’s there to admire, asshole?’

Shizuo wasn’t admiring anything; he couldn’t bare to look and yet he couldn’t tear his eyes away!

But he wouldn’t let Izaya know what he thought. The fleabag was toying with his feelings already; could reduce him to a wreck with one word and a gesture to his half-limp body. If Izaya picked up on his inner turmoil he would tear him apart!

“If you expect an apology from me you are looking at the wrong place” he said evenly.

And then Izaya snapped and he started screaming at him in such an uncharacteristic way that Shizuo was taken aback….

“Oh, my mistake! I thought you were the good one! So now that your true colors are revealed, tell me: How does it feel to know you crippled someone with your own hands? Does it feel good? Are you happy? No wonder everyone runs away from you!”

He was taken aback, before getting so fucking impossibly angry that he had to remind himself that he
didn’t want Izaya to get hurt more, that was.

But why shouldn’t he hurt him really?

During the whole time they were together Izaya was throwing his mistakes back on his face; making light of his condition just to spite him, toying with him and now he was once again using his insecurities against him!

Hearing that everything runs away from him fucking stung!

To hear that from Izaya who could charm his way into everyone’s gullible little hearts just to screw with them stung even more!

"Why the fuck should I feel sorry, huh? I don’t give a flying fuck about you! You were asking for it! Didn’t you know that you can’t beat me? That you are weak? I though you knew, because you never had the guts to fight me fair; always acting like a coward! You are the smart one, shouldn’t you have seen it coming?"

He didn’t know if his words had any impact on Izaya for he had never understood what the flea’s weakness was but he hoped that he got something right and the bastard’s ego was at least a little bruised!

“Who are you calling weak and a coward you, filthy beast?”

Bingo!

So he had gotten two out of two?

Nice!

‘See how you like it now flea!’

But then Izaya kept going on and on: “If I was asking for it what about you? You are the one who started the whole fucking mess in the first place from the moment you couldn’t control your damn tempter as usual! You threw that first punch just because you decided you didn’t like me! Who does that? You are an anomaly of nature!”

What the fuck?

That was Izaya’s reasoning for making his life hell for a decade? That Shizuo had started it first? The fucking logic behind that!! The nerve he had to put everything they had done to each other, until that final fight, on a scale and deemed them of equal depravity when hardly anything that Shizuo ever did up to that point had hardly any personal cost to Izaya!

He had to restrain himself so hard before he pounded Izaya for all he was worth it that his body had gone rigid!

“So, I threw the first punch and you fuck me up for life? That’s fucking fair! You turned my life into hell for a decade, you put Kasuka in danger, you hurt my friends because I threw one punch when we were teenagers for which you slashed me like a fish the moment I did? Not to mention all the shit you pulled the last time! You went out of your way to kill me, just because! Don’t try to guilt trip me flea! Don’t you fucking dare play the “you started it” card with me because we both know you were up to no good when you wanted introductions back then!”

And yet he was unable to control his body and heard the sound of something break that snapped him
out from his anger instantly.

He exhaled a sigh of relief when he realized Izaya was still in front of him in one piece and a look to his right revealed the corner of the picnic table was gone and currently laying at his feel.

He realized Izaya never replied but as the seconds were ticking his anger wasn’t diminishing.

“What, you have nothing to say now? Wow! That’s a first!”

“What’s there to say protozoan? Yes, I did all those things because it was fun; you deserved them!”

And that was the last-fucking-straw!

He had tried to restrain himself so badly, he was willing to let Izaya go for a second time without any bloodshed, hell, he even dropped his chance of revenge because he feared he would do something terrible to the pest and yet Izaya was unappreciative of his effort!

How many times Izaya had threw any kindness Shizuo had shown him back in his face since they met?

“Fun? Ruining my life was fun to you? Unbelievable! I swear I’ve never met a bigger psychotic bastard than you!”

“Yes, it was! You never knew your place! Seeing you to try and act normal and mingle with humans disgusts me! You are a danger so you should be avoided! You are avoided! Everyone sees you and just change sides on the road for fear you’ll beat them to death!”

Izaya’s insults his so close to home; calling him dangerous, implying that he is abnormal and “try to mingle” with humans as if he was not a human himself…

Saying that he should be avoided…maybe he should.

But Izaya had no right to say that because he was equally bad himself! How many times had Izaya turned out to be a danger to those around him?

“You say everyone avoids me, then what about you? Every unlucky bastard you’ve met you fucked them over! No wonder half Ikebukuro hates you! Everyone who gets to really know you hate you! I feel sorry for that guy who thinks you are worth anything because when you ruin him, he won’t know what hit him!”

He almost wished the bastard would keep saying things to aggravate him so that he would have an excuse to go on and on and tell Izaya exactly what he thought about him!

And boy, did he get his wish!

A screaming match started between them unlike any other! It felt fucking endless!

The next minutes had passed on a daze.

“I hate you too! If only you had stayed away! Why the fuck did you have to come back? Why the fuck you are still tormenting me every fucking day? How many longer am I going to get punished for that fucking first punch? Isn’t a decade enough for you? When will you decide it’s enough? What more do you want from me to leave me the fuck alone?” he found himself yelling suddenly however once he stopped, he realized that Izaya’s face was uncomfortably close to his own.

There was something cold resting on his neck.
A switchblade?

A quick look down showed him Izaya’s hand close to his throat holding some sort of weapon.

When had he taken it out?

Was he stabbed?

It didn’t hurt so he couldn’t be.

‘The fuck just happened?’

The flea was looking almost as lost as he felt at that moment.

The second thing he realized was that he was standing and Izaya himself was also standing right in front of him.

But since when Izaya was that tall being able to be nose to nose with him?

The more awareness he gained every millisecond that passed he begun to realize the flea wasn’t standing.

That he was actually holding Izaya; had grabbed him by the collar again and dragged him out of his chair; lifted him up.

‘Shit, shit, shit, shit…’

Was Izaya okay?

Did he hurt him again?

Wh-what if he did?

Izaya didn’t know what he had hurt during that fight he had said, whether it was his back or legs.

Shizuo shouldn’t have him dangling like that, it was dangerous!

What if something moved from his spine and the flea got worse if he had shaken him in his frenzy?

The flea didn’t look in pain but what if he had an adrenaline rush too and he was but didn’t realize it yet?

Could something like that happen?

He- he should do something!

Keep the flea’s spine as steady as possible so he wouldn’t risk his vertebrae ending up being misplaced and put him back in the wheelchair before he broke him again!

He was already chocking him, having him grabbed by his collar, he had to take some pressure off of his throat too!

He didn’t want to touch Izaya but he had to making sure he hadn’t hurt him -that he wouldn’t!


He had never touched anyone that way -hold them so close to him since he was a child and hadn’t
start showing signs of inhuman strength yet. No one, except from Celty that is, for he knew he couldn’t hurt her since she wasn’t human herself.

He didn’t know how to do it right with another human.

Let alone a human who wasn’t healthy!

His hand was trembling so bad when he reached for the pest and encircle his waist: palm opening and shaking fingers making ever the slightest contact with the base of the other’s spine before opening and his full palm come in contact with Izaya’s body over his coat, pressing lightly to make sure the other would stay still rather than dangle like a rug doll.

The flea wasn’t paying attention to his movements -still looking lost- so he wasn’t anticipating his touch, Shizuo realized, because when he did touch him the weirdest thing happened.

For that split second Izaya’s face changed: eyes opened wide in shock; eyebrows raised somewhat in question; the corners of his mouth soft; lips ever so slightly parted in surprise.

It was such a weird look.

Shizuo didn’t understand it, but only for that second it was easy to look at Izaya’s face.

He was scared; he could tell fear when he saw it.

He thought that it was obvious that he posed no threat nor intended to harm him with how slowly and lightly he had initiated physical contact.

But, apparently Izaya had still misunderstood.

It made sense, with their shared history.

And yet, something about him off.

Shizuo had seen people looking at him with many kinds of fear -fear of being beaten to a pulp, fear of the abnormal, fear of death- more times than he’d care to admit. Izaya had looked at him like that too, that morning they’d met again after so long.

But right at that moment that look wasn’t much like that.

It was almost -childlike; naïve; unguarded… like that person wasn’t Izaya anymore.

He looked so oddly…innocent; it had shaken him down to his core to witness it!.

How the muscles on flea’s face knew how to fall so naturally into such a weird expression was beyond Shizuo and yet it didn’t feel as out of place as he would have thought had he not seen it with his own eyes.

It was stupid really; Izaya had most likely misinterpreted Shizuo’s action for an attack and was alarmed by it like the previous times.

Shizuo knew he was reading way too much into it, probably because no one had ever looked at him so -softly?

It urged him to be gentler, so the pest wouldn’t hurt himself accidentally with how much he was suddenly trashing to dislodge himself from his grip, pushing him away and yelling all the while for him to let go.
Shizuo found himself yelling right back at the flea to shut up and stay still while at the same time struggling to make sure Izaya would remain unharmed within his grip.

Yes, he didn’t want to hurt Izaya accidentally but his guilt was making him act stupid.

Izaya was no china doll!

That blade on his neck seconds ago proved that the flea could still handle himself in shitty situations to an extent -and that he was a dangerous little shit, regardless of his disability, so why bother?

The whole thing gave Shizuo a headache, he couldn’t deal with it; it was too complicated and most importantly it wasn’t worth it!

He preferred to pretend it never happened.

He didn’t want to be at Izaya’s presence any longer than he absolutely had to so the moment he put flea’s scrawny ass on the wheelchair and the other’s fingers had finally disentangled from his person he turned his back on him and light up a cigarette to occupy his body and hopefully calm his mind a bit with the much -much- needed nicotine.

He wanted to be done with this; leave this fucking park and never see Izaya again!

It took everything he had not to start running towards the exit!

Why the fuck did he have to go through this fucked up “thing” with Izaya while he was originally supposed to force flea into submission quickly, make him agree into a truce and fuck off already?

‘Make the deal with him right now, go home and forget Izaya ever existed’ his brain screamed.

Yes, that’s exactly what he had to do.

He should focus to his reward after tonight: a life free of Orihara Izaya.

Yet, that expression had messed with his head more than any other mind-game Izaya had forced him to play.

It made him feel so very bad -so shitty and sorry and angry he felt something between crying and wanting to break something!

Because just for that one millisecond when Shizuo touched him, Izaya’s asshole personality had been obliterated and what was left was that inexplicable reaction. And his eyes, that for the first time ever, rather than red had seemed to be chocolate brown.

“I just don’t understand you…” stupidly slipped from his lips before his brain could catch up with his tongue.

But, that moment had made him genuinely curious when it came to the flea; he wanted to hear him out for once.

That look had made Shizuo hope that maybe Izaya wasn’t fundamentally such a terrible and disgusting piece of shit; that at least a tiny -the tiniest- part of him could actually justify Izaya’s face knowing that expression.

Not that it would make any difference between them -there was way too much water under the bridge for anything to ever change.
Maybe things could have eventually turned better for them if that night hadn’t ever occurred, but it had, because Izaya had decided to and now that fight was a stain in their past; no one can change the past.

Shizuo wanted to be a good person, even if his temper obscured any good traits of his. Honestly, he tried his best to become a better man, especially these last years in order to repent for his “crime”, but he wasn’t nearly kind enough to forgive and forget when it came to Izaya -he didn’t think he’d ever be!

The only thing he soundlessly asked though was the reassurance that Izaya didn’t deserve to die for more reasons than just ‘because he was a human being’.

“What’s there to understand?”

The other had shrugged off his question as unimportant with one of his own -so nonchalantly when Shizuo’s brain was swirling with so many questions.

It got him pissed off all over again!

He couldn’t explain to Izaya what he really wanted to know and he could explain him even less how and why his mind went to the directions it did!

Despite how much of his brain Izaya had messed up yet again with the shit he pulled this time to make him doubt his better judgement, Shizuo couldn’t just ignore the fact that Izaya had always been a privileged asshole who always got his way and had everything he wished for and yet the only thing that seemed to satisfy him was Shizuo’s downfall!

No, Izaya wouldn’t got his way again!

Not for one fucking ambiguous look!

He didn’t deserve the benefit of doubt no matter how much that weird face had suited him.

Not after what had happened their final -physical- fight where Shizuo was suffocated and almost set on fire just because according to Izaya’s logic he “deserved it” and “it was fun”.

Shizuo was so tired suddenly; He wasn’t sure he wanted answers anymore, even though for a second there he had wished to understand.

His head was starting to hurt.

No matter how he had thought he felt Shizuo realized that he wasn’t really ready or willing to listen to Izaya, much less understand him.

The flea very obviously shared the sentiment too since he was so very obnoxious and poisonous the whole night.

Shizuo asking such questions made everything difficult for the both of them, increasing in duration this mentally draining meeting and making an already shitty situation even worse and dragging it over.

So, he decided he’d spare them both and wouldn’t address their weird behavior tonight, their hateful words and the others they’d used trying to explain their viewpoints in vain, his momentarily willingness to understand the flea, that look…Nothing.
Instead he just addressed the fact that Izaya was an absolute bastard!

“Why are you like this? You have fucking everything you want! You always did! You succeeded in destroying my life in ways beyond repair… Just when you will be satisfied? I can’t take it any longer Izaya…” he spoke with hostile exasperation.

The moment the words left his mouth and turned back to look at Izaya he was met with one of the hardest glares Izaya had ever given him; mouth shaped in a scowl, thin eyebrows frowned so hard lines where forming on his forehead and eyes a furious red.

He knew the flea would start screaming his head off probably before Izaya even decided to do so.

He had heard the flea raise his voice that night so many times already -Izaya had long ago abandoned his calm and collected persona; probably since that morning.

It wasn’t familiar yet but at least it wasn’t alien; he knew how to deal with that.

“I have everything I want? I have destroyed you? That’s funny considering I am the one who has lost everything to you once again, yet to me you seem to be perfectly fine! I always had to share everything with you otherwise you’d just take it as if you didn’t have enough already! You even took my legs! Just keep everything, I don’t give a shit anymore!”

He had been prepared that Izaya would say something just to shift the blame to him for everything that had happened as he always did, but he could ever be prepared for Izaya to go as far as claiming that Shizuo stole things from him!

To hear that scum of all people saying that with a straight face made him beyond fucking furious!

Izaya had robbed him almost from everything; never let him enjoy in peace even the smallest things in life!

He had fucked his head so badly with his stunts for so long that his self-esteemed kept crumbling after every encounter more and more, until he fucking started believing that he was indeed freakish!

And in the end, Izaya had even convicted him leaving with his poisonous thought every single day for almost three years; always degrading him and reminding him he was a dangerous nothing!

The fucking nerve!

“What the fuck are you talking about? I never did anything to you other beating you to a bloody pulp because you fucking deserved it! You had so many opportunities yet you still ruined every chance I had to do well in anything! Because of you I disappoint constantly everyone I care about! You’ve taken my brothers respect, my sanity! Yet I am the one who takes things from you? You are selfish and delusional trying to justify the fact that you are an asshole instead admitting you are at least partly at fault too!”

Shizuo was shocked to realize he was disappointed.

He was disappointed at Izaya for proving him right yet again for the duration of the night, rather than man up and stand his ground, rather than accept all of his accusations so readily while being all obnoxious and at the same time refusing even part-responsibility for the way things had turned out.

He was disappointed at himself for being disappointed when he realized that Izaya spectacularly failed to live up even to his smallest of expectations.
Their confrontation a few days back along with the flea’s now “proper” persona and his behavior with those other people had almost fooled him; he hadn’t realized that at first but he did now.

“Pff. You know, I can’t believe I even though for a moment that you and I could have been friends if I hadn’t thrown that punch and have given you a chance instead. Protozoan, isn’t that how you call me? You are right again, I am protozoan.”

He was so emotionally numb that he had stupidly voiced that one thought he had dared to say only to Celty until that point and to Izaya of all people!

Izaya didn’t say anything for a few moments but his face didn’t betray anything.

Not that it was necessary.

He knew Izaya would shame him for such stupid thoughts.

“That’s absurd. Do you think I’d lower myself to that level?”

And the fleabag was right; they did belong to different leagues.

Izaya was the kind of person who was so good at everything he did that had all sorts of crazy expectations from those surrounding him.

Even if they’d never grew to hate each other so much, Shizuo would have never been capable to tick all the boxes on the list with the flea’s requirements to be even considered an acquaintance let alone a friend.

He doubted anyone could.

“That why you were always alone. No one could reach your standards.”

“Well, you might have even have been useful enough~.”

It was funny.

He wasn’t even offended at such remark.

Why would he? It was just another case of Izaya proving him right; same old-same old.

This was a drop in the ocean.

“Celty said that you’d think like that when I told her too.”

Yes, Celty had said that.

He didn’t know why he admitted that to Izaya.

Maybe because he was suddenly too indifferent to even be embarrassed.

“Celty should learn finally to mind her own business and keep her opinions to herself” the flea snapped again at him this time out of the blue.

He would have expected Izaya to make fun of him even more saying something along the lines of even someone without a head and brain could what Shizuo couldn’t but instead Izaya got annoyed.

He wasn’t sure what Izaya had against Celty but he guessed it had something to do with her helping
him for Shizuo’s sake, so he decided to let the flea of the hook for disrespecting his friend this once.

Besides he begrudgingly had to admit that Izaya had a bit of a point.

Despite her good intentions Celty had messed up several times from what Shizuo had realized so abruptly days ago and if he was completely honest, he was still mad at her for hiding from him the fact that she had seen Izaya because she had thought at time that it was doing the best for him.

So, while he wouldn’t put it as harshly as “she should mind her own business” he would agree with the flea that maybe she should be a bit less -em..-“intense” about helping?

Moreover, they were back at talking about Celty!

They’ve been fighting for god knows how long just to get back to the starting point!

The mere thought of having to go through over every single moment of their initial conversation made him feel he’d blow up all over again!

He had to stop procrastinating and hurry the fuck up to get to the much-needed point of this whole fiasco!

“This is getting us nowhere we’re just going in circles. We can’t even talk like normal people!”

“What did you expect really? We aren’t particularly normal.”

Izaya was once again right; they were two fucked up individuals so obviously they couldn’t do normal -not separately and not together.

“Let’s end it now, Izaya. For good.”

Finally! He had said it!

“Ohh~ are you breaking up with me on Valentine’s~?”

“Shut the fuck up!”

’Was it Valentine’s today?’

“Or are you planning to finally kill me?”

Unbelievable!

Izaya was making jokes, ready to start with the mind games now of all times -right at the most crucial moment of this whole fucking conversation!

“I’m serious. I’m tired. I’m tired of you Izaya. And I’m tired of me and I’m tired of this!”

He locked eyes with the pest and made his proposal looking deadly serious before more precious time would be wasted with Izaya’s bullshit!

“I don’t want to do this anymore, I can’t! I can’t spend another day like that, let alone another decade! I’m so fucking tired of everything! …I thought a lot these days.. and I think we should make a deal. Stay away from each other. Go on with our lives, never interact again. If you really want no trouble that is. As long as you don’t fuck with me, I approach you again and you can go on with your life. I will stay away from your work too. But, you have to leave me alone this time -for good!”
The flea’s eyes had one again widened in surprise momentarily but within a second it was masked into contemplating his options.

Shizuo knew the pest was far too pleased with himself.

How could he not when Izaya had readily offered him “anything” when he had misunderstood Shizuo’s remark for blackmail, while Shizuo had ended up suggesting a simple exchange -not any complicated shit that would force them both to interact any more that they had to.

“For once we came to the same conclusion. I’m stuck like that so I can’t fight anymore even if I wanted to thanks to you. As for your suggestion I agree. I have things at stake as you surprisingly figured out so I need you to stay away. But, you also have things at stake too. We both have common interests right now so neither should forget that. That day was supposed to be the last round after all. We have a deal.”

Shizuo mentally applauded Izaya for his performance.

The pest had acted very convincingly that he was still in any position of power even though they both had finally realized that it was far from true.

“Good. However, if one bastard approaches me, if one gang jumps me or anything happen to disrupt my peace or harm those I care about, I will consider you the culprit. And then the deal is broken. And no matter where you hide, I will find you.”

Regardless, Shizuo had to make sure Izaya knew he wasn’t stupid and any more potential “misfortune” that bug dared to bring his way would be met with dire consequences.

Shizuo wouldn’t kill him no matter what Izaya did but, if he pushed too far, he would hurt him right where it hurt; just like Izaya had done to him for a fucking decade!

The moment he tried anything shitty that involved him or anyone close to him Shizuo would demand compensation and then he would really ask “anything” and if Izaya refused, he would make sure to blow whatever cover Izaya was using right into his stupid face!

“I’m not afraid of you protozoan!”

If the flea had yelled this exact same thing a couple of years back Shizuo wouldn’t even doubt him.

But a lot had happened since; he wasn’t the same man nor Izaya was exactly the same as back then. Shizuo knew better now.

“Yes, you are. And you are right to do so. Do you think that I haven’t noticed how you cower from me even now. I can tell when you are lying no matter how good of an actor you are; never forget that.”

He pushed to make even surer that Izaya also understood that the both of them truly knew who was the one in power and set the rules, even though neither stated it out loud.

He needed Izaya to be aware of it but not rub it to his face too much so the flea wouldn’t try shit to prove himself like he usually did.

“You are delusional. And don’t act all familiar with me amoeba! You don’t know me!”

Izaya’s explosive reactions, sort sentences where he’d have started rumbling in the past and the fact that he didn’t threat Shizuo back spoke volumes of Izaya’s awareness of his position.
Moreover the fact that the flea argued that Shizuo didn’t know him was laughable!

Shizuo didn’t “know” him but he knew enough! Everything that mattered Shizuo had learned and experienced firsthand, like the fact that Izaya was a fucked-up train wreck that run over everyone in his way. He didn’t care to know more, no matter how confused he was for a moment back there.

Moreover, Izaya always acted like he knew everything about everyone yet he thought himself an unsolved riddle, despite the fact that anyone with an internal bullshit-detector could sense Izaya was trouble from a mile away.

He never understood Shizuo either, even though he acted like he did so who he thought he was to act high and mighty again! Talk about narcissism!

“Because you know everything about me, so you can act like you have me all figured out!.. Don’t tell me what to do.”

“I think we’re done here. Stick to your part of the deal and I’ll stick to mine.. It was a displeasure seeing you.”

The pest said in disdain and started wheeling towards the exit without a second glance at him.

Yes they were done.

Fucking finally if you’d ask Shizuo!

“Same. If you see me pretend you don’t and go your way. I’ll do the same.”

“Hopefully I won’t see you.”

“Hurry up and fuck off pest seeing your ugly mug gives me a headache!” he couldn’t resist waving his hand as if he was trying to send away something nasty; he did. If only that movement could make Izaya disappear faster!

“Because I am all thrilled to be in your presence!”

‘Always wanting to have the last word!’

Shizuo ignored him and reached for another cigarette.

He hoped he’d reduce the amount he spoke yet again.

In those three days he had smoked more than he had the past three months!

Before Izaya disappear from his view turned back and spoke again.

“Oh..And keep the fact that I’m back between you and your headless friend.”

Shizuo didn’t even bother to reply.

He wasn’t planning going around discussing Izaya with anyone.

As for Celty…

‘Fuck!’

This could mess things up right when they were getting back on track!
He threw down his cigarette half-finished and walked with long strides to the same direction Izaya had disappeared.

However, while chasing after Izaya one final time he realized that there was something way more important that had to be said, other than reminding Izaya of the fact that Celty would speak to Shinra. He had already said so at the start of their “conversation” but with everything going it didn’t register with Izaya probably.

“Izaya.”

“I thought we were done” the flea said ever so cautiously.

They were.

Shizuo however needed to tell him that Celty would speak to Shinra -if she hadn’t already.

But there was also this other thing too.

Looking down at the flea regarding him with poorly concealed uneasiness he couldn’t help but be reminded of Izaya’s other expression and messed with his head again so he almost plead with him keeping tone light and the tiniest bit encouraging.

“We are. Just -go see Shinra and your sisters. At least once.”

Regardless of whether or not Celty spoke to Shinra, Izaya should reunite with those few that they’d quietly wished for his return.

There were people that still waited for his return and Izaya should know that!

“I thought I should stay out of Ikebukuro. Besides I don’t feel like it! I already told you I don’t want more people knowing! We just made a deal to leave each other alone, why are you going back at it now?” flea’s voice almost broke at the end in exasperation -or despair.

Yes, Izaya should stay the fuck away from Ikebukuro.

But his sisters lived there, so did Shinra.

Shizuo didn’t want him there but he couldn’t demand from Izaya not to visit his family and friend, not after the flea had been estranged from them for so long; that was cruel and he had already done so many cruel things to Izaya.

But apparently Izaya took it as if Shizuo was breaking their deal himself if his tone of voice was any indication.

To be fair Shizuo had just opened his mouth without rearranging his thoughts properly so instead of explaining to the flea that those people wanted him back he sort-of-ordered him around.

Shizuo tried to resonate with him without letting his temper once again to get the better of him, even though he was annoyed at the fact that Izaya didn’t “feel like seeing” his own sisters and their mutual friend as if they were unimportant to him.

They probably were, but even if the flea didn’t care about them, they cared about him -well, he hoped they did at least- so what was the harm in making them happy?

“I’m not! But, Celty will tell Shinra! He’ll know whether I speak to him or not!....And your sisters and friend are not “people”! They’d want to see you! Try not to be a dick at least to those who still
give a fuck about you!”

He had thought Izaya would be pleased with that; this loophole would make things a bit easier for him considering his condition and all!

From what it looked Izaya didn’t have anyone around him that actually knew him; he doubted he had anyone to rely on and right now he wasn’t invincible; far from it! He needed some form of support now that he was back because Shizuo wasn’t the only one he had fucked over in Tokyo; laying low could only help him that much -Shizuo being the first to run into him was indication enough that he wouldn’t be able keep at it forever!

And what would Shinra think if he learned from Celty that Izaya was back in Tokyo and realized Izaya didn’t want to see him! Surely he’d be very hurt -and displeased with the flea!

And what about Mairu and Kururi? They were his family. They had to love him at least a little right?

“Right. If anything, my sisters would be disappointed you didn’t finish the job..”

Izaya seemed to doubt the fact. Shizuo wanted to reassure him just this once because while they were enemies, they had only one thing in common they could relate.

They were both big brothers.

And a big brother’s job is to protect their siblings -always-even if said sibling act like they hate you!

Why did Izaya should benefit from every situation, couldn’t he be selfless for once and try to benefit his family instead for once?

“A big brother should be there for their sibling’s pest!”

“Are we talking about me right now, or you?”

Apparently, they couldn’t even relate to that.

He didn’t care if Izaya denied it he just wanted to get through to his thick scull at least this one thing.

Because if anything happened to Izaya because he was like that now, it would be all Shizuo’s fault!

But that was a responsibility he couldn’t take -he wouldn’t!

But the flea was disabled now, he needed acquaintances -people who knew his full extent of assholeness and wouldn’t abandon him!

Who were more suitable than Shinra?

Moreover, Mairu and Kururi had the tendency to get into trouble just like the fleabag!

That time they have been jumped by thugs and even if they kicked their butts, they were still little girls! Just like Izaya they had the tendency to get into shaddy shit!

Shizuo couldn’t only do so much to make sure they were okay.

He wasn’t their family; he didn’t have any real authority over them!

That was Izaya’s job!

“They need their brother, Izaya! And Shinra misses his best friend!”
He added the last part as an afterthought.

He knew Shinra missed that pest, if only because of the way he disregarded their fight and acted like it never happened and Izaya never existed, refraining from talking about him in front of Shizuo even though he never had a problem before to always annoy him with mentions of Izaya, before that night.

Shizuo couldn’t once again to explain himself to the flea.

If he said those things Izaya would think Shizuo was mocking him but Shizuo had seen how Shinra’s attitude with certain things had changed. One didn’t change their ways if they were unaffected!

So he only said that Shinra missed him; even though the doctor had never outright said it and hoped that it would be enough.

Izaya once again paused momentarily as if contemplating his words.

He almost though that at least this once they were on the same page; that Izaya had taken him seriously and had seen his point at least this one time -even though he had hardly explained himself!

“What do you know protozoan? Ts! Giving me a lecture after everything tonight is the cherry on top!”

Of course.. he didn’t know what he was thinking trying to resonate with the fleabag of all people! Doing him a favor he didn’t deserve just for the flea to be once again ungrateful.

That was the last expectation of his that Izaya would through back in his face.

He shouldn’t have been bothered anyways; it was troublesome.

“Whatever. Do whatever you want; I don’t give damn. Just stay out of my business and go fuck yourself already.”

He said grumpily before his hands in his pockets and left, heading from the opposite direction they had come from.

“Go to hell …” he heard Izaya murmur behind his back.

It doesn’t matter.

Let him have the last word.

Shizuo kept moving forward.

Chapter End Notes

So..Shizuo is confused as much as Izaya but he is possibly even more bias and stubborn right now.
But then Izaya gets under his skin without even trying to do much I guess...;P
Good thing he let his chance of revenge go because then this fiction would get twisted (when the goal is to untwist things here ;-) and I would have to add warnings
everywhere! xD
Chapter 16

Chapter Notes

Hi everyone! :) 
I am back with a new chapter I hope you will enjoy!!
It was about time to get some more of Shinra POV :P
I hope you'll find him in character and enjoy this chapter too! :) 
Btw I started watching a really awesome anime lately called Black Clover! If you have
time check it out, it can really get you hooked! (*//v//*)
Also I am thinking of trying to write some one shots in another fandoms but we'll see
how this goes :P

Finally, a massive thank you to all of you for the kudos and comments!<333 (^V^)/

See the end of the chapter for more notes

To Kisitani Shinra life was perfect.

How could it not be? He had everything he ever wanted!

His amazing Celty was his after years of waiting and longing and rejection; she had finally grown to
love him just as much as he loved her!

If Shinra didn’t believe solemnly in science he’d call it a miracle!

And on top of that they had the absolutely perfect relationship!

It was loving, understanding, forgiving, honest - from Certy’s part mostly- and selfless -from Celty’s
part mostly again.

Their relationship wasn’t only perfect from an emotional aspect though, but from physical too; it was
passionate and oh, so very hot!!

Shinra could never keep his hands of his beautiful headless girlfriend and he felt proud to say that his
beloved was always as eager for his touch, often teasing him and provoking a reaction of his...em...lower region with her little surprises!

But that information was to strictly be off the record!!

And how could their relationship not be perfect when his lovely Celty was perfection personified?

Obviously, everything it involved her was as flawless as her!!

Moreover, he had Shizuo-kun!

Even if he was not Shizuo-kun’s best-best friend, he was Celty’s and of course everything that was
Celty’s was also Shinra’s, since Celty obviously belonged to him, thus, in a sense he was Shizuo-
kun’s best-best friend too in correlation!

And Shizuo-kun was doing so much better!!
The fact that his friend was showing an increasing number of symptoms of declining mental health over the years had almost made Shinra feel powerless to turn the tables and make things work his way.

But who was he kidding?

Shinra would have never given up on Shizuo-kun!

Then he'd have no friends!

That and he also cared about him; he had to!

Shizuo-kun belonged to him just like Celty did after all!

So, he had tried to do some damage control and preserve Shizuo-kun for as long as possible!

He wasn't really any good at being a decent friend because human relationships never interested him enough to put some effort into it, yet for his the other man he tried!

And now Shizuo-kun was almost fixed!

So, everything was perfect now!

Right?

He had everything he wanted just like always did!

Nothing was missing so he didn't have to act, or think, or feel like it did, because if Celty knew then Shizuo-kun would realize too and if he did realize then Shinra would be friendless, which would be unacceptable!

It's not like he needed things or people. Other than Celty off course!

He didn't have the heart for that; he was too twisted and he never had a problem with it.

He only cared about Celty anyways; Celty!

And Shizuo-kun too -but he was a secondary priority.

That’s all he had to care about because he shouldn't make his easy life difficult.

Shinra hadn't realized at first that he could feel such unnecessary emotions as regret or guilt.

He never regretted working for the yakuza or knowing about the human trafficking first hand and keeping quiet about it; he never regretted using others or not caring for anyone apart from himself and Celty, nor for stealing his beloved’s head and keeping its location a secret for years -and hell, she was the most important person in his life!

He wasn’t sorry for any of these things! In fact, if he could turn back the time he’d do everything just like before.

To be fair he was a bit sorry about his last misdeed.

It wasn’t due to him “realizing his mistake” or anything of sorts. He really believed he had done what was best for him!
He was just sorry he had gotten caught in the end.

So off course he would have never expected to feel guilty about his treatment of these particular two men, who, admittedly, were so much less important than Celty!

But losing Orihara-kun for good had been a wakeup call.

And then, being close at losing Shizuo-kun too he was hit with such sudden fear that he didn’t know what to think of it!

He probably felt remorse about his treatment of Orihara-kun and Shizuo-kun exactly because they were of such a lesser importance to him than Celty, because, regardless of that fact, they still they meant more to him than the rest of humanity did so probably he could assess the current situation balancing between emotion and logic in a healthier way than when it came to Celty he had decided.

It made sense as he held no twisted passionate love nor lust after either of the two men that would mess even more with his already messed up head.

But that’s where the problem started!

Shizuo kun was here.

Shinra could try to become a better friend to him; being more supportive and engaged to the other’s life.

But Orihara-kun was nowhere!

He didn't exist anymore; Shinra couldn’t make it up for him!

So what’s the point to be bothered about something that he couldn’t do anything about anyways? He shouldn’t care..

But to erase Orihara-kun wasn't possible!

He didn't want to let him go; Orihara-kun belonged to him just like Celty and Shizuo-kun did and Shinra never allowed to those who belonged to him to abandon him!

So, he leached to Orihara-kun’s memory much like he did to Shizuo-kun’s physical entity.

If one thing Shinra was that was a stubborn selfish bastard so he wouldn’t allow himself to let Orihara-kun go in any way he could: through habits, through ootoro, through the gakurran in his wardrobe..

He knew what this was; he wasn’t stupid!

Denial: one of the seven stages of grief.

And Shinra had done his best to live through each stage in the privacy of his mind until he reached acceptance: the seventh and last stage so he could be done with everything.

Because what was the point of mourning anyway? Would it bring Orihara-kun back?

No.

It would only upset Shizuo-kun further and make Celty worried and make himself feel bad.
Shizuo-kun never talked about Orihara-kun, by the way.

Orihara-kun had wrecked irreparably him with the last stance he had pulled, that sly asshole.

The fact that Shizuo-kun indicated signs of being capable to move on had been surprise enough!

Shina really hoped his initial judgement of Shizuo-kun years back had been correct and that the other man’s heart was as strong as his body like he had used to believe -before all these had happened- because he didn’t know what would he do if he ended up friendless!

Oh, how much Shinra regretted introducing these two to each other!

On his defense he had really though they’d get along well because they complimented each other really well in Shinra’s opinion; what one lacked the other had -though Shizuo-kun and Orihara-kun didn’t seem to share his opinion...

Why couldn’t they see things from his perspective though? While he himself shared lots of similarities with Izaya-kun he shared very few common points with Shizuo-kun and yet they got along just fine, so why couldn’t him and Izaya-kun also be friends?!

Shinra had used to hope during school that eventually the three of them -and maybe Kadota-kun too- would form a group and do normal things so that would make Celty happy and put her mind at ease!

And maybe ...just maybe they could have fun too?

This dream died after they graduated though.

Until that time he used to believe his two friends weren’t really serious about harming each other and that it was sort of their “thing” to chase one another around because teenage boys needed a “rival”, if they didn’t have girlfriends to keep themselves occupied and their energy levels at bay.

But when high school ended and their attempts to hurt one another continued and increased in severity he had come to realize that their rivalry had turned into enmity and things could only continue moving further south from there.

Because if one thing these guys were that was stubborn assholes!

If they had decided they didn't like someone then that was it!

Honestly, he rarely regretted his actions but, in that case, if he could do things over again then he would have never introduced Shizuo-kun and Orihara-kun to each other!

And yet, had a feeling that their meeting would have been inevitable no matter what.

Orihara-kun was bound to find at some point of the existence of an extraordinary human and he'd have been fascinated with Shizuo-kun regardless their age and circumstances and when they would have meet eventually Shizuo-kun would have been disgusted with him and Orihara-kun would have taken offence and things would have turned up exactly how they had…

Well, what happened-happened and life went on...Without Orihara-kun....

On a more positive note it would have been Valentine’s soon so Shinra really shouldn't think of unecessary things!

Valentines was one of his favorite days!
Along with White Day, his birthday, the day he dissected something for the first time and all of his anniversaries with his darling Celty; the first time he saw her when he was just a child, the day she finally accepted his confession and they became a couple, the day they first became intimate and the day they got engaged.

Ohhh everything would go perfect this week!!!

However, his beautiful fairy was a bit distant lately.

He had come home one afternoon to find her unusually agitated, said agitation increasing as the days passed.

Her smoke was darker than normal and the the edges of it were flinching uncomfortably whenever he was around.

She was keeping something big from him, that much had been obvious, though Shinra wasn't really worried because he knew what was this all about!

His Valentine's gift!

He was sure his love was preparing something grand for him this year with all the secrecy and the weird texting at Shizuo-kun at random hours!!

He knew Shizuo-kun was in for the surprise!

Him and his Celty had met on Monday evening because when he returned home that day he had found the house empty, even though it was his beloved’s day off which she always preferred to spend watching her series.

So off course he had inquired about her whereabouts because he absolutely had to know who was taking his beautiful fiancé’s precious time when it should be occupied by himself -for most of the part at least...Like 70% of her maybe?...Hmm, 75% actually!

But thankfully it had turned out to be just their mutual friend.

Shizuo-kun had almost punched him once that Shinra had stupidly and in a fit of jealously dared to interrogate him regarding whether his feelings for Celty were really platonic or if he had the hots for her and was trying to steal her away from him!

And then he had ignored him for a whole week because apparently Shizuo-kun had been offended quite a lot with the way Shinra had gone on about his questioning.

When he was finally forgiven, his friend had begrudgingly admitted that he in fact didn’t have an ideal type -which could have made him a potential love rival- but when it came to looks at least then pale skinned, dark haired, bespectacled onee-sans with pretty faces always caught his attention; and of course such features demanded the existence of a head attached to a woman’s neck.

Such basic tastes!

Shinra had laughed -internally of course because he didn’t want to get punched- mostly at the knowledge of his friend having a big sister complex without even having a sister!

So if he didn’t know for sure now that Shizuo-kun posed no threat to his relationship he might have been worried with how restless his beloved was around him since she had returned from the other man’s place.
It was almost as if she had done some misdeed, which was madness of course because his Celty was perfection body and soul, so she would never do anything wrong! Just the notion was ridiculous!

And yet she was flinching whenever he approached her suddenly and was more distracted and distant than she had ever been since they had gotten together.

A few times she had asked him if he had spoken with Shizuo-kun so Shinra was sure then that whatever she was preparing for him for Valentine’s, his friend was assisting her to her plan and she was worried their friend might accidentally spoil her surprise!

It had to be something grand this year!!

Maybe it would be a marriage proposal even!!!

Shirna was ecstatic at the idea of his beloved asking him to get married herself!!

It would prove how much more she wanted to tie her life with his!!

He would have loved to be the one to ask her though; over a romantic trip somewhere exotic and dreamy with the prettiest and most expensive ring he could afford for her over champagne and while watching the full-moon!!

Ohh why had he delayed doing it first? He was so stupid!

But Orihara-kun’s absence spoiled his plans for the perfect wedding and since his and Celty’s wedding had to be perfect he couldn’t find it in his heart to propose until he found a way to make it happen the exact way he wanted to or at least until he wouldn’t feel the necessity of Orihara-kun’s presence around him anymore; This weird mourning phase of his really messed up with his priorities!

But well, if that would be his surprise then of course he would accept his darling’s beautiful hand in marriage since he would never deny her anything she asked from him!!

Surprisingly, Valentine’s Day had been a bit disappointing.

It wasn’t his dear Celty’s fault of course; he had just built his expectations way too much with all of his love’s weird secrecy so when he had received a delicious three course western-style dinner and a new leather briefcase rather than an engagement ring he couldn’t help but feel a tiny bit disappointed.

However, his disappointment was quickly forgotten with the steamy night that followed that had his mind completely blown away, especially when his amazing Celty was more willing than ever to engage to all his kinks and role-plays and gave in to any dirty little fantasy he had off her without even a tsunder-ish punch at his solar plexus!

That night when he thrusted to his heart’s content into her slippery cold insides that had only ever been pierced by his cock and no one else’s -human or nonhuman- which pulsed and clenched like a perfectly tight vice around his burning rod helping it cool off and with her soft and cold arms and legs clinging on him like her eternal life depended on it, thick shadows encasing them both and separating them from the rest of world while they reached their climax together and he released insider her for the nth time, Shinra had felt like that perfection was not a strong enough word to describe their relationship!

However, this assurance of his would slap him in the face the next day.

While the Valentine’s had turned out to be perfect even without the much-awaited wedding proposal his lovely Celty’s behavior had continued being off, which didn’t make sense anymore because he
had received his gift now!

The weirdest thing was that on Friday afternoon she had urged him to contact Shizuo-kun and invite him over -which was really unnecessary because he would anyways!

He had decided that 3 to 6 hours of his free time every weekend, which could potentially increase in the case of a sleepover, would be devoted entirely to Shizuo-kun and it was up to Celty whether or not she wanted to join them or not; which to be fair she did most of the time at least for a bit.

Shinra would have loved to dedicate 100% of his free time to his love but now he had to work also to improve and maintain high standards of his and Shizuo-kun’s friendship which was bound to require some sacrifices!

Anyways, when Shizuo-kun’s decline came Celty had grown even more restless, her smoke flinching repeatedly a few times before retreating almost completely into her neck leaving only a small puff of it trembling in frustration.

Shinra was starting to realize at that point that all of Celty’s weird behavior had little to do with him from the start and more to do with Shizuo-kun.

“Ne, Celty~, did something happen with Shizuo-kun?” he asked in feigned innocent curiosity.

She waved her neck from one side to each other in denial however Shinra wasn’t planning to stop pushing for answers any time soon.

Anything that concerned Celty concerned him!

Anything that concerned Shizuo-kun also concerned him!

And anything that concerned them both concerned him even more!!

“You are acting weird all these days...Why won’t you tell me? I thought we can rely on each other for everything!” he guilt-tripped her easily and knowing her she was bound to break eventually.

[There is nothing to tell, Shinra. Come on, let’s watch some TV.]

“I can’t Celty, I am all worried now~! If you won’t tell me what’s wrong, I will call Shizuo-kun and ask him!” he declared reaching for his self-phone.

Celty leaped on him while he was about to call Shizuo-kun -or pretending he would at least- and dragged him to the couch sitting next to him and taking her own self phone out to begin typing rapidly.

‘Score!’ he couldn’t help but cheer internally.

[Me and Shizuo had a fight recently. We sort of made up but he is very upset still and he hasn’t been talking to me much since and I am worried about him. I think he is avoiding me…] she finished her shoulders slumping in defeat.

A fight?

Shizuo-kun and his Celty had fought?

That was a first; they had never fought before!

Moreover, Shizuo-kun avoiding Celty as if she was on the wrong!? Ridiculous!
Shinra couldn’t help but being annoyed at his short-tempered friend for upsetting his love! He didn’t even have to know what the fight was about to know Celty could never do wrong!

His face probably showed his irritation because soon the phone screen was in front of him showing something new had been typed:

[It was my fault Shinra!]

“Now-now, my darling we all know how irritable Shizuo-kun is!” Shinra frowned in displeasure.

[I lied to him and now he knows and he was so angry...He said he’ll forgive me but what if he won’t? He is not talking to me like before!]

Him trying to make light of the situation didn’t seemed to help ease his darlings worried at all so he decided he had to use a different approach.

Moreover, he was growing increasingly curious regarding what had transpired. Shizuo-kun was only giving someone the cold-shoulder if he had been hurt greatly -Shinra knew from experience as he had been on the receiving end that one time and boy, he didn’t like it at all!

“Okay, what did you lied to him about my love?”

He thought it was the best question he could ask in this case since he couldn’t help his beautiful Cety if he didn’t have a clear picture of the what had happened, nor did he know if he should start worrying about the impact his love’s fight with their friend could have on him which was of equal importance!

However, this didn’t seem like a good question to ask because his lovely Celty start waving her arms and neck madly indicating that she wasn’t willing to talk about it.

He grabbed her hands gently to stop her and moved close to the smoke oozing from the tip of her neck.

“Why don’t you want to tell me Celty? I am very concerned right now and I don’t like seeing you upset!”

Could it be that Shizuo-kun and Celty were in fact a couple behind his back and they fought because they couldn’t decide how to tell him? Oh, that would be a tragedy; what would he do if it was something like that?!

“Celty, please tell me what’s going on because I’m trying really hard not to jump in conclusions here but I am not sure I can when you act like that...What did you and Shizuo-kun fought about?” he asked again slowly and seriously.

When she finally took her PDA and typed something, he wasn’t prepared for the one word that was typed on the screen.

[Izaya]

Orihara-kun?

“Orihara-kun?” he laughed out loud already thinking of ways to avoid this topic.

He didn’t feel like continuing this conversation anymore.

Whatever it had happened with Shizuo-kun and Celty they could resolve it themselves eventually!
Surely, they’d make up soon; they were best friends; they didn’t need his input on something like that!

Before Celty had time to type anything he had jumped from the couch and was heading to the kitchen rumbling in his most cheerful voice:

“Ne Celty~ I am sure everything will be resolved soon so don’t worry to much, okay? Ohh! I am so thirsty right now! Do you want some oolong tea too? Ups! How stupid of me; you can’t drink anything, how could I forget?” he laughed a bit to hid his discomfort and started walking away.

He knew he was a jerk for leaving Celty feeling bad right now and ignoring her problem, but if her problem concerned Orihara-kun and Shizuo-kun he wanted nothing to do with it because then it would be his problem too and he already had enough problems concerning this particular duo!!

He didn’t want to add more; Celty would understand!

Though apparently, she wouldn’t because the moment he reached for the fridge his whole body was engulfed by a shadowy cocoon and he was dragged back to the couch despite his squealing in protest.

”Celty~!! Stop that my love, I want my oolong tea!” he was whining in vain.

[You ALWAYS do that Shinra!! Stop it already!!] the PDA’s screen wrote; the beautiful hand shoving it to his face trembling in frustration.

“Eh? Doing what? I don’t understand my love..”

[Stop ignoring the issue whenever Izaya comes up!!!!]

“I don’t ignore anything Celty~! I am just thirsty! Can I have my oolong tea now, pretty please~!” he putted in what hoped was a cute way and tried to dodge the subject in another failed attempt.

[You are doing it again! I am telling you this is serious Shinra! You have to listen to me!]

“Fine-fine my beautiful Celty! To prove my love to you I will ignore my thirst for now. Tell me now, what happened with Shizuo-kun?”

[It’s not only him I lied Shinra. I lied to you too!! I was trying to protect you and Shizuo, I swear!!]

Oh!

Now Shinra really didn’t like that!!

He didn’t like it because what was going on involved him too somehow and even worst his dear Celty had just admitted to have lied to him!!

“Wh-what did you lie to me about my darling?” he asked sounding way more affected than he would have liked.

And there it was again the same answer.

[Izaya]

“What about Orihara-kun?” he asked but his mind have started to caught up already to where this was going.
For Shizuo-kun to be so angry with Celty; for Celty to admit to have lied to both of him and Shizuo-kun for something concerning Orihara-kun…..

Did Celty knew all along where Orihara-kun’s body was buried and she hadn’t said anything?

Shinra didn’t know how he’d feel for something like that…He knew Orihara-kun had died so having his corpse wouldn’t really made any difference…It wasn’t as if he could have preserved it somehow and keep it around!!…..

Though there were ways for him to do so, if he had gotten his hands on it early enough for it to start decomposing that is…

“Celty do you know where his body?” he asked almost breathless his stomach tightening in anticipation.

[There is no body.]

“What?”

….

“Come one Celty I have to know!! What about Orihara-kun?”

[After he fought with Shizuo that night I found him and I sealed his wound. I am sorry I didn’t say anything, he was bad Shinra! I didn’t want him to die on you!]

He should have inhaled after he read the last text but he had forgotten how to breath!

There is no body.

Sealed his would.

It couldn’t be…

It wasn’t possible; Celty would have told him, right? She should have!

“Celty, Orihara-kun is dead. Isn’t he?”

He could feel the tension in these milliseconds he waited for an answer he already knew. Shizuo-kun wouldn’t have made such a big deal just for a rotten corpse!

Him and Shinra both believed that’s all Orihara-kun had become; it wouldn’t draw such an intense reaction from him.

The other man would have been surprised, yes, but he had no reason to be so angry at his lovely Celty for getting conformation and proof of what he had already known to be true.

Or at least, what he had thought he had known to be true.

On the other hand, if he learned about something he didn’t know to be true but it was then…

[Izaya is alive. He is in Tokyo. Him and Shizuo run into each other the other day…]

Orihara-kun…..alive?

In Tokyo?
Shizuo-kun had met him and had told only Celty and not him and Celty had kept it a secret so Shinra was only finding out about it now?

And when the hell exactly was the ‘other day’?

Celty had been acting off for days!!

“Ne, Cely? Why am I only hearing about it now? You haven’t learned about it now, have you? You have been acting weird this whole week..” he didn’t even bother to hid how betrayed he felt both at Shizuo-kun and Celty’s behavior.

Shouldn’t they had told him from the start?

Shouldn’t Orihara-kun had let him know he was alive himself?

[I didn’t know how to tell you!! I hadn’t told anyone I helped Izaya that night...And when Shizuo told me he had run into him, I lied that Izaya wasn’t in danger and everything got out of hand! I was only trying to help!!! I am really sorry Shinra, you believe me, right??]

Shinra didn’t know what to say to all this!

Of course he didn’t know if he believed Celty! What she expected? She had kept that she had seen Orihara-kun that night a secret form him!! She hadn’t brought him to Shinra to try and help him!!

She was his partner -his fiancé! She shouldn’t keep secrets- any kind of secrets- from him!

And yet she went and did something like that behind his back and then lied to him?!

Once a liar always a liar -Shinra knew this from experience!

Suddenly he felt like he was about to react like Shizuo-kun when the other man was having one of his fits of rage!!

The only thing that kept him from doing so was his fear that if he reacted too strongly this could lead in a break up and him having to live without Celty was never -ever- an option!!

No matter what she did he would never leave her, nor allow her to leave him!!!

She was finally his he wasn’t going to risk his relationship with her for anything in this world; not even Orihara-kun or Shizuo-kun!!

It didn’t mean that he had to trust Celty to love and want and lust after her!!

Love and trust were two different things anyways...

And yet he felt the sudden need to put some distance between them.

Something weird; akin him needing space…

This was unusual; he had never such an urge to be away from her before...

It was a too strong of an urge to suppress no matter now much he tried; he would asphyxiate at any moment!

He got up and reached for his keys on the kitchen counter, trying not to betray his need to be as far away from his beautiful treasure as possible at that moment.
“Ne, my lovely Celty, I will be going out now! I will be back soon okay?”

Celty jumped from the couch in an instant and rushed to him to stop him, however no matter how much his body ached to respond at her small frame clinging to him his mind was interfering.

He untangled himself from her gently and gave her the best smile he could master trying to act as casual as possible.

“Let’s talk more when I come back alright my love?”

[Where are you going?]

He knew she expected his answer even before he gave it.

“Shizuo-kun.”

[Why? You haven’t heard everything yet Shinra! Please leave Shizuo out of this, I’m the one who messed up!]

“Shizuo-kun and Orihara-kun are my only two friends in this world Celty. I will never let go of them no matter what they do; Whether they are monsters or murderers, whether they kill each other or die I don’t care; they are my friends.” he said with conviction for he knew what he said was true.

Seeing how his beautiful Celty shrunk to herself at his passionate declaration he couldn’t help but hug her and bring her close nuzzling at her.

“But you are the one I love above everything else in this world Celty~! I will never let you go no matter what you do either!”

He declared his hands raising to the air and spreading to indicate the magnitude of his love and then disentangled himself from her, but not before leaving a gentle kiss to the side of her neck.

“I will see you in a bit okay? Itterasai!”

Once he was out of the building, he finally felt like he could breathe again.

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“Shinra?”

Shizuo-kun was standing at the door eyeing him in disbelief.

He looked worn out again like he did most of the time, but Shinra was happy to say he expected a lot worse considering hi recent run-in with Orihara-kun.

“Won’t you invite me in?” he raised the package with the beer cans he had bought from the convenience store down the corner.

“Come.”

Shinra entered the small apartment and made himself comfortable on the couch opening the package he carried and taking out one of the cans throwing it to his friend’s way who caught it midair and eyed him like he had never seen a can of beer in his life before.

“Let’s get drunk together tonight Shizuo-kun!!” he said excitedly taking another beer can out and opening it taking a few large sips!
“Ahh!! Refreshing! Come on Shizuo-kun, drink!” he squealed happily because he could already feel the alcohol taking effect; Orihara-kun always teased him for being a light weight.

“Why are you here Shinra?” his friend asked suspiciously taking a seat on the armchair opposite from him.

“I didn’t feel like being at home. One of the perks of having friends is that you can always crash at their place, right?” he giggled.

“You are not crashing here tonight Shinra.”

“Eh~! Why not?”

“What about Celty?” Shizuo-kun asked accusatorily. No matter how much Orihara-kun thought of Shizuo-kun being a blockhead the man was really perceptive.

“My dear Celty knows where I am Shizuo-kun! I would never worry my angel by leaving without saying a word!”

“So, everything is okay then?”

“I don’t know..... But just having a minor issue every now and then doesn’t really change anything!”

“No, it doesn’t.. If you don’t let it...Will you let it?”

Shinra didn’t doubt that the other man had already caught on.

“Of course I won’t Shizuo-kun! Have you lost your mind?!”

Because of course he didn’t want things to turn south when everything in his life was going perfectly fine until that point!

He didn’t want to fight with Celty! He didn’t want to fight with Shizuo-kun either regardless the fact that neither had bothered to tell him what was going on all these days! He couldn’t risk losing either!

They stayed silent for a while, silently sipping from their drinks; Shizuo-kun’s face morphing in disgust every time he took a sip; he hated beer because it was too bitter.

Shinra knew; he had bought it on purpose as a form of punishment for Shizuo-kun keeping him in the dark all these days regarding what was going on.

“Oi, Shinra...” his friend was the first to break the no so comfortable silence that had settled in between them.

“Hai~?”

“You know, don’t you? Celty told you, that’s why you are here..”

It wasn’t really a question.

Moreover, the way he phrased his sentence suggested that he had though that Celty had to be the one to inform him about Orihara-kun being alive.

“I do.”

There wasn’t really a point in beating around the bush with Shizuo-kun; he was too direct a person
for that anyways.

“I didn’t want things to turn out like that…” came a whisper.

“Mmm…Didn’t you, now? I thought you were out for the kill~.” Shinra tried in vain to contain the irony from his happy tone but he couldn’t!

Shit!! He really didn’t want to challenge Shizuo-kun, but admittedly it was easier to be honest about his annoyance with his friend than it was with his beloved! He was in love with her!!

“…”

“…”

“…”

“…”

“…”

“Do you hate me now?” Shizuo-kun raised his head finally after moments of silence and locked eyes with him.

Shinra didn’t even have to think twice how to answer such stupid question!

“Off course not!”

“Then?”

Then.

That was a good question actually.

Could he really tell Shizuo-kun what he thought? He hadn’t talked to anyone about his feelings regarding his two friends’ fight -not even Celty!

Moreover, if he talked to Shizuo-kun would he be at risk of losing his friend?

His mission was to preserve Shizuo-kun not causing him further grief and pushing him over the edge!

“Shizuo-kun, can I be honest for once? Just for tonight. Is that really okay?”

“…..Y-yes.”

“I had decided I wouldn’t be mad at you since it wouldn’t be fair to for you to take all the blame for a mess you and Oihara-kun created together.”

“But?”

“BUT! Now that Orihara-kun is alive I can finally be angry!!.....Oh! It’s so liberating to be able to finally admit it!” he laughed.

It really was liberating!

He almost felt like an invisible weight had been lifted of his shoulders!

He should do that more often!
“Shinra…I understand why you feel like that. I don’t know what to say to you other than I’m sorry…”

“What’s there to say?! I am really annoyed at you Shizuo-kun! And I am really annoyed at Orihara-kun! And worst of all I am really annoyed at my beloved Celty which is something I have trouble to warp my mind around because my Celty is perfect and could never annoy me at all so I shouldn’t want to have my space and be away from her right now -this is not normal!!”

Honestly he had never been this conflicted about anything in his life!!

This whole thing was alien to him!

Being angry at Celty? He didn’t even know how the hell that was possible! It shouldn’t be! He didn’t know how to deal with it!!

“I’m sorry for what happened okay? Izaya pushed me too far Shinra; he tried to kill me! Several different ways too! I know I am to blame too because I went along with it, I do! And I am sorry for everything; I am sorry you and Celty got hurt! But more than anything I am sorry I put him on that chair! All this time thinking I had killed him -I was going crazy Shinra!”

Shizuo-kun’s speech had snapped him out of his Celty-induced problems suddenly.

That was the longest sentence he had heard Shizuo-kun speak ever!

He wasn’t even sure Shizuo-kun had the capacity to use more than two sentences at the same time or provide more than yes or no answers with how laconic he was about everything!

And of course he believed Shizuo-kun was sorry!

Shizuo-kun was a kind person at heart, just like his Celty, unlike himself and Orihara-kun who were assholes most often than not and couldn’t care less about it.

Moreover, it was obvious that Shizuo-kun was aware of his mental condition which was good because now that they had finally stopped ignoring the elephant in the room Shinra wasn’t going to let this matter untouched either!

The bit about Orihara-kun being put in a chair Shinra hadn’t really got what it was about but chose not to inquire about it; maybe he should have left Celty explain more of the context before storming out of their home?

But now that the damn was open there were more pressing matters at hand like talking about his feelings!

Shizuo-kun had to understand where he was coming from too!

That his anger wasn’t unjustified!

“I know. You are very easy to read. But Shizuo-kun, you understand, don’t you? I am really not used to be this annoyed to all of the people who are important to me at the same time! Especially at my darling!! I don’t really know how to deal with this whole thing! I mean why did you and Orihara-kun decided to go kill each other? Did you even think about me at all? I have been telling you both for years Shizuo-kun: you are my only two friends! If you both died, I would have zero, Shizuo-kun! Zero! How could you and Orihara-kun be so selfish?”

Shizuo-kun exhaled and lower his head again and Shinra thought for a moment that he had stopped
listening to him!

But then he looked at him again and started speaking unusually slow and calm as if Shinra was a child!

It was surprising he could be this calm after Shinra had yelled at him and called him selfish and everything!

He couldn’t help but be proud of him for maintaining such composure!

He thanked his lucky stars too because seriously, what the hell he was thinking yelling at someone as strong sd Shizuo-kun!? The other man could tear his head apart if he chose to and Shinra doubted he would look as alluring headless as his beautiful Celty did!

“Shinra, I know Celty is sorry for keeping such a secret and I know she meant well! She loves you more than anyone! All she was trying to do was protect everyone! I mean I am pissed as hell at her too for letting me believe I had killed the flea! But if I learned something out of this fucked up mess is that we have to talk about things, otherwise people get hurt! And it’s not my place to speak about Izaya but I am sure he even would agree that what happened between us had nothing to do with you! We weren’t trying to hurt you! Just -don’t make this about yourself too Shinra...It’s already fucked up as it is…Please.”

Eh? He wasn’t making it about himself!

It was about himself!

However, his brain didn’t register his excellent point because its attention was drawn to something else Shizuo-kun had said.

His lovely amazing beautiful Celty loved him more than anyone and apparently it was common knowledge!!!

Ohh his heart couldn’t help but flutter happily despite his annoyance!!!

“She does, doesn’t she?”

And the Shizuo-kun face palmed then and he didn’t even bother to be discreet about it!

“Off course out of everything I said your brain would be stuck on that! And yes she does. She just did a mistake, everyone does! Like you did. When you stole her head” the other man said pointedly.

Shinra couldn’t help but giggle at that!

Shizuo-kun was so innocent!!

“That wasn’t a mistake Shizuo-kun~! I couldn’t risk my dear Celty abandoning me! I had to become the villain!” he admitted happily putting his empty can aside and reaching for another one.

Shizuo-kun looking at him completely unimpressed by his confession.

“I know. And since we are being open here, that was a dick-move to do. Izaya I can understand but you love Celty!”

Hmm..It was obvious that Shizuo-kun had never fallen in love, Shinra thought with pity.

“Love is a twisted emotion Shizuo-kun! It makes one selfish! That’s why no matter how many times
I hurt my dear Cetly with my selfish actions I will never let her go!"

“That’s fucked up Shinra!”

“It is~! But unless you’ll be in my shoes, you’ll never understand Shizuo-kun!”

And it was true!

Unless Shizuo-kun felt that kind of love he’d never understand the selfishness that came with it! He shouldn’t be so judgmental!

“It doesn’t matter if I “understand”. What matters is that she forgave you anyways and even gave up her head for you. The least you could do is talk things out with her. You -own- it to her!”

Hmm Shizuo-kun had a bit of a point actually.

He did own it to Celty to try and be more understanding.

He had kept her head from her for around four years and she had kept her secret from him for around three and they both kept information from the other about something each of them considered important so he supposed it was only fair to try and be a bit more considerate.

(Of course I will talk things out with her Shizuo-kun! That’s my darling Celty we’re talking about! She is the light of my life and we belong together, nothing will change that! Besides Celty is the number one person in my life obviously not you nor Izaya-kun!”

“As if I don’t know that already.. Also, if you hurt her again, I’ll kick your ass. I don’t care if you’re my friend or not.”

Shizuo-kun threatened and Shinra didn’t doubt one bit that he’ll do it!

He was surprised the other had even put thought in what had happened with his beloved’s head as he had never brought the matter up before, so Shinra believed he had blamed entirely Orihara-kun for that -like he always did about everything- and Shinra’s part hadn’t really registered with his mind, or if it had he had let him to get away with it.

Hmm.. it seemed as if both of them had more things in their minds than they usually let on! Who would have thought that him and Shizuo-kun who were so different would have something in common and don’t even realize!!

Anyways, it’s not as if he wanted to hurt-hurt his love again but if worst came to worst, he wasn’t above of manipulating her. It’s not like he’d say it to Shizuo-kun anyways if he did; he could do without the ass-kicking -thanks a lot!

“But Shizuo-kun~! We are both guys, we should side together when it comes to the matters of the heart, ne?!”

“Cut the bullshit Shinra, this thing is giving me a headache and you are not helping!” the other grumbled pointing at his beer-can making Shinra laugh.

He left much better talking with Shizuo-kun and getting a few things out he wouldn’t dare share with his beloved out of his chest.

Watching his friend still struggling to with his beer made him feel warm inside.

If only Orihara-kun was there with them, he thought bitterly…
“Shizuo-kun..”

“What?”

“I do care about Orihara-kun...I can’t really kick your ass if you hurt him so I can only say that; I don’t want him to die...” he pleaded.

Shizuo-kun squashed his now empty can in his fist making an ugly face.

“I know... I am really sorry things turned up that way Shinra... I know I disappointed you...”

Shizuo-kun was sorry for so many things! Shinra couldn’t even begin to understand how he must have felt having so many annoying and useless feelings in his chest! Shinra had one or two and he couldn’t handle them at all!

And yet Shinra had yelled at him and acted like Shizuo-kun had personally beaten him to a pulp while he had forgotten that the other man was the one who had suffered the most out of what had happened.

‘Don’t make this about yourself too Shinra’ he had pleaded with him and yet Shinra had done just that making Shizuo-kun feel even worst and keep apologizing!

Shinra really deserved to be friendless!

“You both disappointed me. But, I suppose that’s fair. I’m a terrible person. You were right earlier Shizuo-kun, I always make everything about myself. I shouldn’t expect you or Orihara-kun to be good friends to me I guess.”

He shrugged nonchalantly but inside he felt shame; another thing he wasn’t used to feeling.

“You aren’t a bad person Shinra... You are just -I don’t know..you? But you are trying, I know you do. And well, it’s good to be able to talk with each other like that now. I wasn’t sure we could really do that before tonight.” Shizuo-kun smiled softly to him and reached out to pat his knee, his compassion making him feel twice shameful.

And yet he was grateful for the small comfort he knew he didn’t deserve.

“Thanks, Shizuo-kun. By the way I care about you too, you know. I don’t want you to die either... You and Orihara-kun are my friends. I don’t really care about humanity but I guess I love you and Orihara-kun a little bit” he admitted sheepishly his cheeks flaming in embarrassment.

The only person he had ever admitted to feel love for before was his Celty!!

“Baka Shinra...The feeling is mutual... Just so you know...” Shizuo-kun replied puffing his own red cheeks and turning his head on the other direction.

“Ahh! Shizuo-kun is so cute~!!” he giggled happily swooning at his friend’s tsundere-ish attitude.

“I am not! Shut up!”

“Of course, my love for you and Orihara-kun could never surpass my love for my dear Celty so you and Orihara-kun have to be satisfied with sharing the second place together okay?”

“I didn’t even know there was enough room for a second place with you! Well, I guess I’ll have to share with flea then...”
After a few more silent moments now that the tensions from before had evaporated Shizuo-kun spoke again.

“Izaya cares about you too by the way.”

Eh? He really wasn’t expecting Shizuo-kun to say anything like that about Orihara-kun!

He wished Shizuo-kun was right about that but honestly, he wasn’t so sure.

“I don’t know about that..” he confessed. “Orihara-kun didn’t even tell me he was alive..I guess I deserved that. I was an even worst friend to him than I was to you! In fact, I was an asshole to him most of the time since I met him!”

Of course Orihara-kun wouldn’t let him know! The last time anything terrible had happened to him Shinra had turned off the phone in the other’s face!

Orihara-kun was a very sensitive person and he took things at heart easily -just like he had with Shizuo-kun’s rejection- even though he acted like he didn’t care.

But Shinra knew it and yet he played along rather than comforting Orihara-kun about this habit of his to rid himself of the responsibility because it would be too troublesome to deal with such a fragile-hearted person. It was easier if he pretended to believe Orihara-kun to be insensitive.

More feelings of shame were coming his way.

“Izaya and you have been friends for a long time Shinra, not to mention you are into doing shitty things together and you are both jerks! That’s a bond you have there! He was just trying to save his ass like the fleabag he is; trust me in that, it wasn’t personal that he didn’t tell you -he wants to see you.”

Eh? Orihara-kun wanted to see him?

He wanted them to continue being friends?

“Did he say that? What did he say Shizuo-kun?”

“Well he didn’t say it like that but me and him aren’t close to discuss such things. He sorts of implied it.”

“He did?”

How one implies that he wants to see someone? It was a pretty straight forward thing to be implied in Shinra’s head.

“Yes. But he might not do it -I don’t know -tomorrow! You have to give him some time..”

Of course, Shinra would give him time! And then they would meet and things would go back to how they were before!

No, they would be even better!

Shinra would see into it!!

“Like a week?”

“Maybe a bit more?” Shizuo-kun shrugged casually as if what they were talking about wasn’t
important!

“How much?” he really had to know!

“Like a..em..month or two..or something? I don’t know, he’ll come around when he is ready Shinra! Just if he takes his time don’t take it all at heart and don’t be too hard on him if he doesn’t do it right away, okay? You know how he is, disappearing and reappearing whenever he feels like; parasite!”

“You almost sound like you are defending him Shizuo-kun!” Shinra laughed because to be fair Shizuo-kun sounded like he almost cared about Orihara-kun!

If only Orihara-kun knew that Shinra had no doubt that he would have been thrilled, especially considering how much Orihara-kun admired Shizuo-kun, despite the fact that he hated him with a passion of course, contradictory as it was.

“Ts! Like I give a flying fuck about him Shinra! I just don’t want you to be further upset because Izaya’s an asshole!”

“It’s okay Shizuo-kun! When Orihara-kun comes home I will talk to him too and try my best!”

“Keep up the hard work Shinra! I’m rooting for you!” Shizuo smiled at him and Shinra had no doubt that he really did want him to succeed in mending the bridges with Orihara-kun despite that meaning he would have to share the second place in Shinra's heart and of course his Celty-free time with his worst enemy.

There was one thing they hadn’t talked about yet though.

“Ne Shizuo-kun..what happened when you saw him? How was he?”

“I run into him on Monday, I cornered him but then he escaped. Then we met again yesterday...”

“Valentines?!” he couldn’t help but laugh because it was too funny to imagine them fighting in a pink and red Valentine’s setting among happy couples sharing milkshakes around them!

“Do you want to listen?...Good.. Okay, so we fought some more then; the usual. No weapons or street signs involved though so you don’t have to worry the little bastard’s in one piece.” Shizuo-kun started listing leaving out basically all the details and important parts!

“That’s all? After so long you just fought -only verbally- and after that you left and are both unharmed? Just like that?”

“Well, we made a deal to leave each other alone and never interact again. So yeah, fought, made the deal, left.”

A deal?

Now this sounded wary to Shinra!

He really didn’t want them to hurt each other again but knowing them he couldn’t really rule out the possibility.

Did Shizuo-kun think he would believe they had just agreed to a truce without one trying to use force?!

“Is Orihara-kun blackmailing you?” because that would have been the obvious! Orihara-kun was a shitty person after all!
“Wha-? No! He doesn’t, why would he?” Shizuo-kun to his credit looked absolutely scandalized at the mere idea of Orihara-kun blackmailing him -as if both of them didn’t know Orihara-kun was perfectly capable of even worse!

“So you agreed to leave him alone despite what happened?” he couldn’t help but ask again in disbelief.

“Am I speaking Chinese Shinra?” Shizuo-kun demanded in annoyance.

Shinra didn’t buy it.

There was another possibility but that would be too extreme; Could it be…

“Are you blackmailing Orihara-kun?”

“NO! Why does blackmail have to be involved somehow? We just talked and decided it was for the better! Izaya is in a wheelchair Shinra, he can’t fight!” Shizuo-kun said in exasperation.

“As if that could stop Orihara-kun!” Shinra said before Shizuo-kun’s comment about Orihara-kun being in a chair truly registering with his brain.

Wheelchair?

Disabled?

He had to find more about it but he had to be subtle!

Why the hell didn’t he get more context from his dear Celty before coming to Shizuo-kun’s place!?

“Well it better does because I will rip him in half if it doesn’t!”

“Will you tell me where I can find him?” he asked to take the conversation away from the wheelchair for now.

“No. It’s part of our deal to keep quiet about his whereabouts.”

So, they had even conditions about this deal of theirs?

Still Shinra was friend to both he should be an exception to those conditions!!

“I am your friend!”

“No.”

“I am Orihara-kun’s friend!”

“Still no.”

“Shizuo-kun!”

“Stop whining Shinra you’re annoying!”

“Then tell me and I’ll stop!”

“Not happening. Izaya is more annoying than you and I don’t want to have him on my back later! When he comes and see you, you can ask him yourself about it.”
Shizuo-kun was so secretive!

Shinra wanted to tell him now that himself and Orihara-kun weren’t the only annoying ones but he didn’t fancy to fly through the window so he kept his mouth shut.

“And will he come?” he still wasn’t convinced!

“I told you he will! Just be patient and let him take his time!”

“Fine!”

…

“Is is really disabled Shizuo-kun?” Shinra hoped that didn’t betray that he had no idea what was going on.

“Seems like it..” Shizuo-kun flinched again and then reached for another beer.

“How did it happen?”

“He is not sure. At one point I hit him with -with something and he didn’t realize how serious it was so he pushed himself and something in him body got fucked up..I don’t want to talk about it Shinra…” his friend’s voice broke a bit at the end and his eyes had trouble to meet his own all the time he talked. Instead he focused on rolling the still closed can in his hands slowly.

“It’s okay! I might be able to fix it Shizuo-kun! I always fix you both successfully after you fight!” he told him in an attempted to cheer him up but he knew it would be a failed one even before he tried.

“I don’t know Shinra…”

“Don’t be so negative Shizuo-kun! You’ll see, you’ll see! And I’ll fix you too!”

Shizuo-kun having the knowledge that he had hurt Orihara-kun irreparably made Shinra worry regarding what the consequences to the man’s mental condition would be!.

Shinra decided that he really wouldn’t sit and watch this time around!

“Wh-what are you talking about?”

Here goes nothing!

If he got punched for that at least this punch would be worth it!

“Shizuo-kun, since tonight we are honest, I have to confess something. I do believe that you have been indicating signs of depression and post-traumatic stress disorder and you need professional help.”

Shizuo-kun didn’t say anything for a few moments, still rolling the closed beer can absentmindedly in his palms.

“I’m not sure about it..I mean yes, I thought about talking to someone about it but…”

Talking to someone was not an option though.

It would be too risky to do so!
“You can’t. Therapists are obliged by law to disclose confidential information that concern a patient if said patient is involved in a serious crime. In your case we talk about attempted murder and assault. I don’t think we should take our chances here Shizuo-kun just to be safe.”

“Then you say I can’t get help? Shinra I think I really need it!”

If Shinra could feel empathy like a normal person his heart would have clenched with how desperate Shizuo-kun sounded in that moment.

Shinra however, wasn’t a normal person.

“I would offer to act as your therapist Shizuo-kun but let’s be honest here! I am not the best candidate for that nor I have the knowledge. However, there is something I can do for you.”

“Go on” the other urged him and some of the hope seemed to return into his eyes.

“I want you to do a full circle of anti-depression medication. 12 weeks for starters. I will prescribe medication for you and monitor you closely rather than dosing you randomly and hoping for an improvement.”

“12 weeks?”

“Anti-depressants take long to take effect and have side effects in several aspects of the patient’s life: appetite, sleep pattern, sex drive, health. Also, your unique physical attributes lead me to believe that your body might not react to them in the way of a normal human. You might need to take for them even longer or they may have an instant effect on you with the way your body works.”

“That’s a lot to take in.”

“Please Shizuo-kun trust me! I told you I want you to be better! I don’t want to keeping drugging you without you knowing!” Shinra pleaded! He really needed to test this theory; he couldn’t risk Shizuo-kun relapsing now that Orihar-kun was back!

“You are not exactly subtle...”

He wasn’t? Shizuo-kun had known and was letting him?

“Do you really think it will help Shinra?” his friend’s voice interrupted his thoughts.

“We can only test my theory and see how it goes. If I see that it doesn’t work, we’ll change the medication or the doses or stop the treatment all together and search for alternatives.”

“I felt better lately you know... But now that Izaya is back I’m scared....Okay, let’s give it a go.”

“Yay! I won’t let you down Shizuo-kun, you’ll see I’ll fix you!”

This was perfect! He could start working in a cocktail of medication for Shizuo-kun already and make him as good as new!

“But you have to keep it a secret.”

“You are making a big deal out of it~.”

Seriously, Shizuo-kun was being too sensitive about it; it’s not like Shinra was going to tell the world of his mental problems! Only his dear Celty -but she was already aware of them!
“You speak too much Shinra! I can’t have Izaya finding out about this! Promise me Shinra!”

Oh!?

It was a stupid thing to worry about if you asked Shinra.

It’s not like Orihara-kun could use this information to harm Shizuo-kun in any way! What would he do? Steal his meds?

“Fine! I promise!! Jeez..No need to be so sensitive Shizuo-kun~!”

It’s not as if Shinra was going to start talking to Orihara-kun about Shizuo-kun’s whereabouts first thing he saw him!

“Good.”

“I’ll get some medicine for you so we could start your treatment next week then!”

“Thanks Shinra.”

“Don’t mention it Shizuo-kun!”

“Can we talk about something else now?”

“I haven’t heard about Orihara-kun enough though!” Shinra didn’t want to talk about something else, he wanted to know what happened between his friends and how Orihara-kun was.

“Another time. The atmosphere is heavy as fuck enough, I don’t want to keep talking about Izaya anymore. Sorry.”

“Fine.” Shinra pouted because, really, he needed to hear more about what had happened but he supposed he could let it be for now if Shizuo-kun’s health depended on it!

So, they changed topic and talked about other things, Celty and their friendship among others.

It would be okay; he would talk to his beloved as soon as he got home and find out more and then he’d try to talk again with Shizuo-kun about Orihara-kun in a few days.

“Will you make sure to calm down and talk to my dear Celty soon? It’s not only me who’s upsetting her now” he couldn’t help but ask upon leaving.

“I know. I will, I just need some time to cool my head off.” Shizuo-kun scratched his head and laughed awkwardly.

“Okay, I will accept this answer then! I’m heading out Shizuo-kun~!”

“Take care.”

“Goodnight!”

While Shinra was heading for the stairs Shizuo-kun’s voice called after him.

“Shina..Tell Celty I said hi and I’ll drop by next Saturday, ‘kay?”

“Hai~!” he couldn’t help but make a little happy dance hearing Shizuo-kun’s words.

~~~~~~~
When he returned home it was already midnight.

The moment he unlocked the door he was engulfed in his lovely Celty’s arms.

“Celty~!” he squealed happily hugging her back and spinning her in the room.

“I am sorry I worry you! Please forgive me!”

His Celty happily nodded her neck and hugged him more, dragging him into their room.

[What happened?]

“Nothing my love. We talked a bit and hanged out; drank some beer too. By the way Shizuo-kun says hi and that he’ll visit next Saturday!”

Celty raised her neck to him at that: [So he is not angry at me?]

“A bit but not as much!”

[Are you angry at me too?]

“I could never get angry at you Celty~!” she didn’t have to know that he was in fact very angry at her.

Celty had given up her head for him, Shizuo-kun had been right to point out how much his beloved had sacrificed for him!

[You seemed angry though…]

“I was just surprised you didn’t tell me Celty but I could never get mad at you! You are the most important person in my life!”

[It’s okay if you were. I don’t know what you talked about with Shizuo but please will you let me to tell you what really happened?]

So, things weren’t as it seemed then?

“Of course Celty! You can tell me everything my love!”

So Celty did.

They spend a long time talking; Celty typing long paragraphs and Shinra inquiring here and there.

He was positive he knew everything after their talk; more so than Shizuo-kun knew in fact.

Celty had told him how she had found Orihara-kun dying in that alley and patched him up; how she believed it was Shizuo-kun the one who had stabbed him originally only to find out later it was Vorona; how those other two people showed up and took him with a car somewhere unknown; how she was positive Orihara-kun wouldn’t survive and chose not to revealed he had meet him for fear it would strain Shinra’s friendship with Shizuo-kun if Orihara-kun died because of him and that Shizuo wouldn’t react well to the knowledge he had killed someone.

She also told him everything Shizuo-kun had told her had happened when him and Orihara-kun had run into each other in Chiyoda; how Orihara-kun was in a wheelchair; how scared Shizuo-kun thought he was of him; how someone unknown interfered and separated the two before things got out of hand.
She talked about what happened when she went to meet Shizuo-kun after he called her in panic. How strongly he had reacted at the knowledge he had crippled Izaya and how he had opened up about his troubles. That she had decided to lie to him to make him believe Izaya-kun wasn’t in danger to spare him from the additional anguish the truth would caused him; that they fought afterwards because Shizuo-kun believed she had let him believe he was a murderer while in fact she had spared him the knowledge of how close he had came to actually becoming a murderer. That Shizuo-kun believed Celty should be the one to talk to Shinra about everything and not himself because they were partners and she had lied to him. That he was planning to meet Izaya again - something that Shinra knew had happened however he knew no details regarding the matter.

That was a lot of information to take in!

Shinra wished he had given his beloved a chance to fill him in the details before storming out just so to have a better understanding of what was going on.

Because now that he knew the whole story he understood why his Celty had chosen to act as she acted -lying to him included- despite not agreeing with some of her decisions.

Not that it would change anything if he knew all the details from the start.

Celty worried for nothing where he was concerned.

Shizuo-kun -murderer of Orihara-kun or not- was still his friend and nothing would change that, however, he did agree that is was for the better that his ingenious beloved had manipulated him into believing Orihara-kun’s condition was not life-threatening.

Orihara-kun -alive, dead, healthy, disabled, in Tokyo, elsewhere- was still his friend and nothing would change that either, though he couldn’t help but feeling extremely grateful to Celty for saving him because Shinra had no doubt that if Celty was right in her diagnosis then he would have eventually bled to death that night!

“Ne Celty..Thank you for protecting Orihara-kun and Shizuo-kun. You really are an angel my love~!” he said dreamily sleep coming rapidly to him now that the tension of the day was finally leaving his body leaving him sleepy and disorientated.

Shizuo-kun, Orihara-kun and most importantly his lovely Celty.. everything he wanted he still had within his grasp.

Life would go back to be perfectly perfect soon!

His selfish little heart swelled in happiness!

In the end everything would be okay.

Chapter End Notes

Communication is the key and finally everyone has started taking now that Shinra is speaking to.

Hmm..so basically Shizuo has a thing for milk ladies..Nothing of interest here..xP
Hi Everyone!
I’m finally back with another huge chapter!
It took longer than expected and I’m not sure I can update monthly anymore because I’ve started a new job and the workload leaves me pretty tired so I can’t get the time to write every chapter in one go as I prefer. Instead I’m writing this fiction piece by piece on my work-breaks on my phone which makes it incredibly difficult to edit and make sure there is consistency between my thoughts.
Anyways, I figured it’s better to update less often but keep the quality the best I can rather than rush and update chapters that I’ve written halfheartedly.
If I can guarantee you one thing is that this fic will keep going until the last chapter as I’ve grown to really enjoy writing it and I want it to reach it’s full potential.
So here it is!
Izaya’s POV this time.
I hope you will enjoy this chapter too and keep supporting me 😊

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

So, him and Shizu-chan were done after what; 13 years of being at each other’s throat.
All it had taken was one sort-of-conversation; barely a little over an hour.
Had he known that from the beginning, what would he have done?

~~~~~

A few weeks had gone by after Valentine's Day and that surprisingly not so disastrous meeting.
If the months prior that particular night could be described as the calm before the storm, then these past weeks after their most recent encounter were the stillness that followed the catastrophes.
Apart from his confrontation with Shizu-chan everything else was pretty much the same.
He was the same.
Which wasn’t necessarily good.

He kept focusing on his new-found priorities which demanded him to avoid troublesome situations so he wouldn’t stupidly gamble his humans’ presence by his side again.

It wasn’t a particularly hard thing to do however a situation or two required carefully-planned handlings simply because even if he really -honestly- tried to mind his own business and not stir trouble for humans, he just couldn’t let some things to slip…

Like the fact that Matsayuta Gin had indirectly screwed him over for example..

It was only fair, okay?
Anyways, work was the same too.

Articles to write or edit; information to be brought to light; formats and antivirus programs for Jo-san’s sad excuse of a laptop; Jajangmyeon Fridays to Kato-san’d favorite restaurant at Ueno; his boss barging into his office announced at random times to fill him in about things he hadn’t heard nor cared about in the least, bringing the usual randomness to his not so exciting life.

His dual home life was the same too.

On one hand there was still his studio apartment in Edogawa which served as a quiet shelter that separated him from the rest of the world where he could gather his thoughts and have some precious -and very much necessary- alone-time to relax, reflect and think -and think some more.

On the other there was the usually peaceful -based on Kato-san’s antics of course- house in Bunkyo where he would spend time with his eccentric boss and his melancholic wife.

Only one thing didn’t fit the equation.

Something he couldn’t have predicted.

Something he had least expected.

Something he was so very pleasantry surprised with.

There was not an ounce of a bleached-blond protozoan -anywhere!

He hadn’t seen nor heard of Shizu-chan since their most recent encounter -at all!

It was late March now.

Over a month had passed and no beast had disrupted his life again so far.

This outcome was totally unforeseen considering that the other had said that he would be working in Chiyoda.

Minato and Chuo as well, wasn’t it?

Of course, over 50,000 humans resided in Chiyoda so the probability to run into someone you knew was slim to begin with -even though his bad karma had caught up to him and had him run into Shizu-chan four weeks ago.

But on the other hand, running into someone you knew in Toshima should have been almost impossible to begin with, considering there was six times the population of Chiyoda residing there and yet it seemed to have been a common occurrence considering he used to run into more than one human he had been acquittance with on the same day more often than not.

Now that he had meet with the protozoan twice already, he had thought that would become sort of a thing -it was only logical.

Him and Shizu-chan run into each other every other day in Ikebukuro so of course it should be expected that the same thing would happen in Chiyoda, especially now that him and Shizu-chan were once again working on the same area.

Not to mention that the protozoan could smell him or sense him or whatever he used to claim he could do in that non-human way of his so he should have known for sure where Izaya was at all moments.
And of course, there was the fact that Shizu-chan had a habit of keeping tabs on him at all times to make sure Izaya wasn't causing any trouble to his beloved city.

And yet, it was like that time it had been Shizu-chan who had run away and disappeared.

There wasn't any distraction; no rumors about abnormally strong humans. <p>

The urban legend that Shizu-chan was in Ikebukuro was unknown there.

It was like he never existed!

Amazing, really!

Izaya had only taken notice for self-preservation purposes.

He had to stay alert and wait for his enemy -or was it ex-enemy now that they had come to a some sort of an agreement? - to make an appearance sooner or later, if only to bully him again by making his presence known; maybe throw him an angry look from afar too.

And yet nothing!

Now that the tables have turned and Shizu-chan was the one who was nowhere in sight it almost felt as if he hadn’t actually met him these to times.

It was surreal.

Unnatural.

Just like Shizu-chan himself.

Staying away from each other and refraining from interacting in any way was of course part of their new arrangement but there wasn’t any strict rule regarding to which districts they could enter and which not.

And Shizu-chan had said Izaya should get used to his presence in Chiyoda, hadn’t he?

Why would he say that if he wasn’t going to come to Chiyoda anymore?

Was he even in Tokyo anymore?

The other loved this city; he wouldn’t abandon it like that.

Just because him and Izaya had run into each other once or twice and fought a little bit wasn’t big enough of a deal for him to up and leave!

It was extreme.

Of course, Shizu-chan was extreme himself but that was a bit much even for someone like him.

Besides, the protozoan wasn’t the one in disadvantage.

He wasn’t the once on the losing end.

He had absolutely no excuse to disappear!

How dare he vanish like that after bullying the shit out of him?
And where the hell was he?

Was he trying to pull an “Izaya” on Izaya himself, the amoeba!?

And yet Izaya had to begrudgingly admit that he had very recently reached the conclusion that he couldn’t be 100% sure about how Shizu-chan’s brain worked; what sort of human he was.

During their last encounter the amoeba had unexpectedly indicated what could be faint signs of intelligence or at least a slight capability to use his pea-sized brain and support his opinions with almost well-structured arguments.

Not to mention it seemed that he was apparently capable of holding some sort-of-conversation - because obviously he lacked the level of intellect required to have a proper one- and controlling his beastly-self enough to be around him almost a full hour without touching him.

Although technically that creature had touched him.

Izaya couldn’t help but shudder in disgust at the memory of his enemy’s touch.

A hybrid of a touch.

Hostile, yet soft.

A hybrid -just like Shizu-chan who, from an illogical nightmarish monster had some moments where he looked deceitfully human.

Not that Shizu-chan wasn’t a human; even though Izaya still had complicated feelings regarding how he should classify him.

It shouldn’t matter anyways.

He had stopped pretending to love all humanity so whatever Shizu-chan was wouldn't change the fact that he hated him.

But, even if Shizu-chan’s physical presence wasn’t around, his stupid words from the last time they had met remained and that was nuisance enough.

Izaya had analyzed that night again and again and again.

He had spent so many hours to try and fill the blank spots of his memory; to recreate the feelings he got during that night so he would be able to break them down and identify the causes and results of his words and actions better; to figure out what that whole mess meant -other that what was already obvious that was.

He had spent days trying to categorize his and the protozoan’s words to several mental lists; to reach conclusions and search for possible explanations about what had gone wrong in what otherwise would have remained a straightforwardly twisted relationship between two humans who hated each other.

He had stayed awake for more than a few nights trying to figure out why being that physically close to Shizu-chan had terrified him so very much; why he hadn't slashed the other man’s neck when he had the perfect opportunity to do so and possibly succeed.

Didn't he desire Shizu-chan’s death?

Apart from the few conclusions he had ended up regarding Shizu-chan's intellectual capabilities and
ability to control himself, he had zero answers to all the questions which really mattered.

What happened?

Why things had changed now?

How much they had changed?

What those changes meant?

Could they go back to the how things were before if these changes didn’t suit them?

Should he decide that on his own?

And why was he thinking about these things so much?

Why did he want to put himself in such a position again now that his biggest problem had been solved?

Was he that problematic that he couldn't act like a normal human whenever Shizu-chan was concerned?

Thinking back on that night always made him uncomfortable for more reasons that he cared to list to
the point that he wished to take everything back.

He had lost his cool and made a fool out of himself.

Screaming like a madman; speaking before registering his words; hearing without actually listening
or processing; showing weakness, uncertainty and fear so many times in front of Shizu-chan with
how easily his poker face wavered; allow the other to realize that he had bested him yet again; that he
wasn’t his equal.

Why would he even consider of putting himself in such position again for the sake of some
imaginary discomfort?

It wasn’t worth the trouble!

Sure, things now didn't feel right but he would get used to them eventually.

Humans could learn to deceive themselves that they could adapt to any situation they'd found
themselves in.

There were numerous syndromes that this self-deceit tendency of humans had created in the search
of solace.

It was a matter of time before he got used to the new order of things like he had done when Shizu-
chan had become his enemy; like he had done when he had realized he was bound to live the rest of
his life on a wheelchair; like he had done in Osaka where he had learned to introspect and live like a
respectable human; like he would do living again in Tokyo with the knowledge that Shizu-chan had
humiliated him and then disappeared.

It would be just fine.

.....

It was just-
He wasn’t satisfied with the outcome of that night and he couldn’t pinpoint exactly what the unsatisfactory factor was!

Which happened literally every single time the protozoan was involved - even those times where things had seemingly gone his own way.

Whether he got the reaction he wanted or something completely unexpected, it was just never the right result!

Even now he couldn’t figure out how he had really wanted Shizu-chan to react during their last confrontation for himself to have been pleased.

Had he wanted him to be indifferent or had he wanted him to feel shame for what he had done to him?

Had he wanted him to care or not give a shit?

Every little thing Shizu-chan was saying or doing that night had set him off even worse because of his own confusion.

And yet his relationship with Shizu-chan was so uniquely twisted he couldn’t compare it with any other to draw conclusions regarding any deeper meanings it might hide.

If it's hadn't been for their latest confrontation it wouldn't have even crossed his mind that there were in fact deeper meanings hidden in it - at least from the protozoan’s side.

He knew that he himself envied Shizu-chan because he was everything Izaya wasn't; strong, loved, invincible, godly, and all that when Izaya himself was weak, wicked, twisted and despised.

So, naturally he hated him.

And Shizu-chan hated him because he deemed him to be an evil piece of shit that was responsible for everything wrong that happened in the city in combination with the trouble Izaya was causing for him personally.

But Valentine's Day had given him a tiny new insight.

'You have everything you want.‘

Shizu-chan had said something along those lines.

Izaya had been so enraged that Shizu-chan of all people was saying that to his face when he always robbed him from everything he had that it hadn't even registered to his brain at that point that the other man had sounded genuine and so very bitter about it.

If he didn't know any better, he'd think that Shizu-chan actually believed what he had said.

Yet this notion had to be incorrect because no matter how much Izaya hated to admit it, he had been reduced from one of the strongest and most influential men in Tokyo to a forgotten nobody that not even his family or friend had bothered to look for when he had left.

Moreover, he had been bested and beaten like a stray dog.

All that, while Shizu-chan had turned himself to an urban legend in Ikebukuro who would be envied and admired; who would live forever.
When Izaya had lost to that fight he had lost his right to consider himself an equal to Shizu-chan.

He had lost his right to be a part of Ikebukuro.

And Shizu-chan knew that as well; it had been obvious by his attitude.

That was the only reason Izaya could go to Ikebukuro now if he wanted to see Shinra or the twins.

Because Shizu-chan had given him permission.

It hurt inside him.

He felt like after that latest meeting, he had sacrificed his freedom to Shizu-chan in order to be able to be in Tokyo.

What was he thinking letting things escalate that much and believing he stood a chance in the first place?

It hadn't really come as a surprise that the first time Shizu-chan had offered him some insight to his non-existent brain he had expressed so much hate and anger towards him.

That was the only safe conclusion Izaya had gotten from that night when it came to Shizu-chan but it didn’t give him further understanding regarding what kind of human that protozoan was.

But either way, Shizu-chan was a simpleton therefore someone as intelligent as himself should have been able to make at least a couple of correct assumptions.

Once he had recalled as many things Shizu-chan had said, he had started categorizing them based on their similar characteristics to sample pools that he would use to draw potential explanations behind the unusual behavior of that amoeba.

For that purpose, three major categories had been created.

The first was ‘The usual’.

‘Flea.’

‘Psychotic bastard.’

‘Asshole’

‘Selfish’

‘I hate you.’

This category didn’t include any useful information as it didn't offer any new insight related to Shizu-chan other than the obvious fact that the other man detested him with every ounce of his being.

The second category were the ‘Insightful’.

This category included new and unexpected things that Shizu-chan had said -which were mostly extremely well-placed insults, that as the name of the category suggested were surprisingly insightful for someone with the attention span of a unicellular organism and the emotional depth of a tea spoon to be able to notice.

‘Everyone that truly knows you hate you.’
'Coward.'

'Weak.'

'You don't change.'

And worst of all Shizu-chan realizing that Izaya had been truly afraid of him and rubbing it to his face.

Even if Izaya had denied with his words that Shizu-chan's insults affected him he couldn't deceive his own self.

He had accepted long ago that no matter how hard he tried these weren't things he could change about himself easily so having them thrown at his face one after the other made his heart pound in resentment.

Resentment for Shizu-chan.

Resentment for himself.

Shizu-chan figuring out those things about him shouldn’t have been possible in the first place.

To be able to have done it supported all the more his previous notion that perhaps the protozoan was not completely stupid.

In fact, the other’s words suggested he was perceptive and observant as much as he was intuitive.

Therefore, Izaya had concluded that he should be incredibly careful when -if- he ever dealt again with Shizu-chan and he should filter his words, actions and general behavior nth times before he opened his mouth or took any sort of action.

The amoeba couldn't only tell when he was involved in anything shady; he could sense everything about him: his intentions, his thoughts; his feelings; his weaknesses.

This was extremely dangerous, especially considering that Shizu-chan could change his mind at any given moment and decide that he wasn't noble enough to be above getting revenge -even thought he had so passionately declared that he wouldn't.

And that brought us to the last category.

‘The Uncomfortable Ones’.

This was the most important category.

It involved the most crucial information as the impact these ‘samples’ had on him was considerably bigger than the ones in the other two categories.

This was also the category he intended to focus the most on examining and yet had ended up to focus the less.

The reason for that was that he didn't have enough information to decipher his own feelings and thoughts about Shizu-chan.

That and the fact that Shizu-chan was so very different than usual during those moments that Izaya could barely guess the logic behind his actions and words.
Moreover, the samples of that category filled him with uneasiness in ways that he couldn’t pinpoint for he had never experienced so strongly such suffocating emotions until the other had opened his mouth.

Overall, the information this group provided on Shizu-chan was incredibly blurry and indistinct so the more he thought about it the more annoyed he felt.

'I'm not going to use you'.

'I just don't understand you.'

'I thought you and I could have been friends if I hadn't thrown that punch. If I had given you a chance instead'

'What did I hurt?'

Izaya didn’t have an explanation as to why those bits affected him so much but if he had to guess he would say it was because they were unusual.

Anything more would suggest that Shizu-chan was more than a way to kill time and entertain himself in times of extreme boredom.

Which would be ridiculous because Shizu-chan was a meaningless toy to him to torment.

An interesting conclusion he got about himself from this category was that he was a creature of habit.

He liked predicable and safe apparently.

Anything remotely unexpected; situations; actions; words, pushed him greatly out of his comfort zone.

Despite the pleasure he got by watching humans react to unanticipated situations -that usually were created by himself- whenever is own life was concerned, he would choose stability over unpredictability any given day.

As for what he gathered about Shizu-chan was that the blond amoeba was an unintelligent unpredictable idiot -which also contradicted his findings based on category two.

That and that Shizu-chan had thought about something insidious when Izaya had stupidly offered him revenge but had decided to spare him so he wouldn't taint his hero image.

It wasn’t that much surprising that Shizu-chan had declined.

He always declined anything Izaya had to offer.

He could never be good enough for Shizu-chan for anything apparently.

Not good enough to befriend.

Not good enough to kill.

Not good enough to take revenge on.

Not good enough to use either.

Despite feeling even more unworthy, not to mention greatly offended, Izaya couldn’t help but feel a
tiny bit relieved too.

Whatever had crossed protozoan’s mind, things could have potentially ended up very bad for himself.

Because if one thing Heiwajima Shizuo could cause him with that barely-functional brain and monstrous body of his, that was tremendous pain.

He knew that well.

And yet that touch hadn’t hurt.

Shizu-chan had touched him and it hadn’t hurt.

He hadn’t made it hurt…

Izaya didn’t know how it was possible for someone like Shizu-chan to touch another human without breaking them.

That new-found knowledge made his stomach twist in knots.

He felt like throwing up whenever he was thinking back to that moment.

Shizu-chan being that close with another human wasn’t impossible it seemed...

Another miscalculation on his part.

For the longest time when he thought about Shizu-chan his thoughts were associated with incredible physical pain.

The pain of your bones being shattered.

The feeling of your blood spilling before your eyes.

And yet that time there was not an ounce of any of that.

Only some mild discomfort from hanging in the air by your clothing.

But the protozoan’s other arm wrapped securely around him had prevented him from suffocating.

So, it was only mild discomfort he had felt.

And heat.

He had felt the protozoan’s body heat emanating during their close proximity.

He hadn’t noticed at first but the moment he was put back on the wheelchair the air that had hit him was unusually cold considering he had been wearing his coat.

He was so warm it seemed.

Shizu-chan.

That inhuman body must have had an animal’s body-temperature because surely it wasn’t normal for a human to be this warm!

Maybe that’s why he never bothered to wear a coat while Izaya himself was cold most of the time.
There was one other thing too.

After he had realized how closely him and Shizu-chan were he couldn't hold the other's gaze - until he was safely back on his wheelchair that was.

Why couldn't he meet Shizu-chan's eyes when he had challenged him during the whole night, he kept wondering.

It could have been because his inferiority complex had grown larger than ever before.

It could have been because he had really grown that much terrified of him.

It could have been because he had a sudden crisis of conscience.

It could have been because Shizu-chan being so warm had caught him of guard.

Being that close he had felt his enemy's heart beating steadily beneath his palm when his half-closed fist had slipped from the protozoan's shoulder down to his chest.

It had been overwhelming.

Feeling another human's heart beating under his palm.

He had been so very conscious of Shizu-chan being alive during that moment.

It was odd to think he had tried so hard to make a heart who had been beating in almost perfect sync with his own, stop with such vigor.

It was almost physically painful; the memory of that heartbeat.

Izaya could hear it in his head afterwards which had aggravated him even more!

The only conclusion he could make from all these random observations was further evidence of Shizu-chan's mortality and the fact that the beast wasn’t nearly as scary as his brain had made him out to be which disturbed him greatly; he still had trouble accepting his previous miscalculations, he didn’t need more!

But then, Izaya had been so scared at the time because he hadn’t been really scared?

That was contradictory.

He couldn’t use such inaccurate evidence!

Most of his conclusions regarding that night were useless like that!

He had spent so much time going through all that information to end up with no answers!

He had confirmed things he had already known and learned some new meaningless bits.

Shizu-chan knew how to use his brain; he could actually form arguments, he cared about things like reputation and opportunities, he was warm, his touch didn’t always hurt.

There was no grand revelation!

No major conclusion!

All that information was useless!
A big brother should be there for their siblings.’

‘Shinra misses his best friend.’

Shizu-chan thought Shinra and his sisters cared about him.

So what?!

What did the protozoan know in the first place?

A little over a month's worth introspection was all it had taken him to decide that it was pointless.

He was one step away from giving up.

It’s not like he wasn’t known to be a quitter.

And Shizu-chan wasn’t around anyways.

And yet whenever Izaya caught a glimpse of blond he would expect to see a certain protozoan to pop up.

But those humans were all wrong; too short; too skinny; too fat; too young; too old; no bartender uniform.

He needed something else to keep his mind occupied.

Shizu-chan’s unwanted thoughts interfered with his introspection about other more pressing matters.

One problem at a time.

The only solution he got for the major pain in the ass named Heiwajima Shizuo was to occupy himself with other things so he wouldn’t have the energy or time to think about the protozoan.

He could always stay in Bunkyo during the weekdays too but it didn't sit well with him since he wasn't allowed to contribute to the expenses and his Boss-san was one of the few humans whose kindness he refused taking advantage of.

So instead he had chosen to go out for a couple of hours during his weekdays after-work.

His colleagues had social gatherings once or twice mid-week, whether that was for drinks, dinner or -god forbid- karaoke, to supposedly survive until the weekend or release some stress.

If someone asked for Izaya’s opinion he would tell them that the supposedly “stress-release” was nothing more than an excuse to party, get drunk or search for partners.

It was quite obvious that those frequent outings didn’t contribute at all to their quality of work if the mediocre performance of half of those people was any indication.

Regardless, some of the Paper’s higher ups were joining sometimes too in an attempt to adopt some kind of western leadership style and appear approachable.

Jo-san had been to a couple herself as well since she was a newcomer in Tokyo and lacked any social circle outside work -much like Kato-san and -sort of- himself.

Boss-san always rumbled on how he considered these outings necessary in building a positive company-atmosphere -apart from monitoring his subordinates’ behavior like a hawk and picking up
the latest gossip which were obviously his main priorities - and had tried to drag Izaya with him in vain to get him to broaden his social horizons.

Izaya guessed that probably his multiple declines had worked in the older man’s favor since was pretty sure that his boss’s other objective was to be able to drink unauthorized and without himself or Mayumi-san counting his gulps.

Regardless, Izaya guessed that he could kill many birds with one stone if he gave it a go himself.

He could keep his brain occupied and away from Shizu-chan, spend extra time with Boss-san and keep track on the elder’s drinking habits and observe humans that lost their inhibitions and how that affected their behavior.

Maybe some human-watching would give him some inspiration regarding his situation with the protozoan too..

If he had to push himself slightly out of his comfort zone once or twice a week, it was a small price to pay.

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The first time he had announced to Kato-san that he would also be joining him at the company dinner the man had stared at him like he had grown a second head.

He hadn’t gotten much time to question his motives thought because Izaya had made his decision literally at the last moment which hadn’t given them much alone time for Boss-san to give him a third degree.

Not to mention Boss-san had been way too ecstatic to prob him about it.

Nearly a month after Izaya had been repeatedly joining the group outings he was finally met with Kato-san’s raised eyebrow.

All in honest he was a surprised Boss-san had managed to hold out for at least four weeks without making a comment on his behavior before he finally brought it up.

“You go out a lot lately” he had observed casually one day while they were enjoying a short coffee break at Izaya’s office.

“Company dinner hardly counts as going out. It’s an obligation more than anything” Izaya replied in the same nonchalant matter and kept sipping at his coffee.

He didn’t have a strong argument regarding his sudden change in behavioral pattern and he knew he would have to lie to Kato-san again.

He couldn’t really explain himself without saying more than what he wished to say.

“Still you’ve been to five in a row and you never went before. I thought you don’t like these things because they are a waste of energy and time if I quote correctly.”

“They are. But I was thinking that it might enforce the team dynamic’s and increase the its productivity in the long run if I started joining.”

“Seriously, who do you think you are kidding? You never bothered before in Asahi.” Kato-san crossed his arms in front of him looking like a chubby inspector.
“I was an assistant in Asahi, Boss-san. Here I have a team to manage. It’s not the same~.”

Izaya he could already see the conversation going off the rail as it always did whenever Boss-san inquired about something that he couldn’t explain.

While he really enjoyed their conversations even when they took a random turn, part of him wished he could just properly discuss the issue and ask for the other man’s direction.

Yes, Orihara Izaya was in need for direction.

Because no matter how good he was at decoding other human’s behavior, he was still pretty bad at understanding himself, let alone the people he felt strongly about.

Most of the time he couldn’t properly understand Boss-san either.

His feelings made him weak because they always got in the way of himself observing from a detached outsider’s perspective.

That’s why he eventually always screwed up any sort of personal relationships he had; with his parents, with his sisters, with Mikage, with Shinra.

Shizu-chan however was the only human this connection of his was so complicated, so he had to take a second opinion from someone who could be objective.

Besides, if there was one human out there who had always his best interests at heart and would try to make things for him easier that was Boss-san; who was currently no doubt ready to start scolding him at any moment if the frown on his face was any indication.

There wouldn’t have been a best candidate for the role of his confidant.

“You definitely put a lot of thought in your excuse Izaya-kun, I applaud you!” the man said looking at him like a blasé hamster would.

“Whatever do you think you have caught on to again Boss-san?” he eyerolled.

Talking to Kato-san about everything, he wasn’t brave enough to do so yet.

“It’s not only your team going Izaya-kun.. It’s a general gathering..” Boss-san pointed out.

“It doesn’t affect the fact that my juniors are also going.”

“Sure Izaya-kun, whatever you say...” Kato-san said somewhat dismissively.

“Ne, why are you complaining Kato-san? Weren’t you the one pestering me for being a wall flower? I’m taking your own advice and you’re all grouchy~!”

“I’m not grouchy you brat, I’m just jealous you can go to all of them!” the other man pouted.

“Such a social butterfly, Boss-san~! No need to be sour with me because Mayumi-san gave you an ultimatum because you were again out after curfew the other day!” he laughed.

“It wasn’t an ultimatum brat! It was a recommendation!” Kato-san said looking absolutely scandalized at the possibility of getting himself in trouble with his wife.

As if that didn’t happen all the time, Izaya thought.
“Right~. A recommendation…To sleep on the couch!” Izaya couldn’t help himself.

That story had been one of his favorites!

“So annoying…Besides that’s not why I am mentioning it!”

“You mean grilling me over it~.”

“Insolent brat. What I want to know is why you are suddenly roaming all over Chiyoda with half the company!” Boss-san pressed -the blush still evident on his cheeks from Izaya’s earlier teasing.

“That’s hardly all over Chiyoda Kato-san. Also, half the time you’re there with me; don’t you see what I’m doing?”

“Fine! You want to do it the hard way Izaya kun?” Kato-san all but threatened in his detective voice.

“Be my guest Boss-san~” he challenged the man with interest.

He knew Kato-san’s random conclusion was about to hit!

“Who is it?”

Naturally off-track as always indeed!

“Again, with this Boss-san?”

And as always, the direction was the one concerning his potential reproduction!

“Someone has caught your eye, that’s why the sudden interest in company gatherings!”

“As you can see Boss-san, you both of my eyes are currently firmly placed in the sockets of my skull..”

“Come on Izaya-kun, don’t be all prickly! Tell me who is it? I’ll help you out!” Kato-san was getting all hyped.

“I think you forget who was helping who not so long ago, Boss-san..”

“And I think you suddenly feel the need to write a two-page article about the US-China trade-war, Izaya-kun~!”

“Yada! Kato-san’s a bully~!”

“So…You are not trying to get close with someone then?” Boss-san asked conspiratorially for the nth time.

“Ne Boss-san, do you think of me as such a weak man to be swayed by such primitive emotions like attraction and lust? Don’t you know me at all?”

“The flesh is a worse enemy than the devil himself, boy!” Kato-san had just quoted some random human if the theatrical edge of his voice was any indication.

“No man is free who is a slave to the flesh, Boss-san~!” he quoted himself in a similar fashion.

And no man is free who is a slave to his boss either, he chuckled internally.

“So, you are only going because you suddenly feel social? And you are not trying to see anyone?”
“Hai~! I think the spring is getting to me!”

“You hardly talk during any of those times unless someone addresses you first. In my books that doesn’t scream socialization, just so you know..”

“I’m an introvert Kato-san! I need my time! Robot-secretary-san doesn’t speak to anyone at all but I don’t hear you pestering her over it~!”

“Izaya-kun are you mad? That’s Hora-san we’re talking about! She hardly speaks to me as it is!” Kato-san said with eyes growing large as saucers in indignancy.

“So, naturally, you came to the conclusion that I’m interested in someone?!” he crossed his arms in front of his chest and pushed his glasses on his nose a little dramatically.

Boss-san was so funny!

“Well, yes!” the old man squealed in his chair.

“Your logic astounds me Boss-san!”

“Well, I prefer that reason..” Kato-san mumbled; his body language becoming a bit more averse suddenly.

“What’s my other option?”

“Are you feeling unwell again?” Boss-san asked hesitantly.

Izaya couldn’t help but marvel on how much transparent he must have been unconsciously allowing himself to become in front of his boss for the other man to read him without even trying.

“I assure you I am fine Kato-san. You worry too much...” he said in what he had thought would be a reassuring tone of voice.

“Whenever you are unwell you don’t like to be alone... I do know you Izaya-kun” Kato-san smiled to him and Izaya couldn’t help but avert his eyes.

“It’s nothing Kato-san.”

But his tone wasn’t as reassuring that time.

“You know that won’t happen just because you tell me not to” Boss-san talked softly again and that was it.

The point where Izaya could feel his resistance crumbling.

It didn’t take much for the Boss-san to push past his defenses anymore it seemed.

He had been so desperate for answers he didn’t know where to look for.

Perhaps he could mention at least the outline of the story to Kato-san; he didn’t have to go into detail if he didn’t want to -which he really didn’t.

Boss-san was an intrusive human but he knew when to take a clue.

Here goes nothing!
“Ne, Kato-san…Do you remember bartender-san?”

Bartender-san.

It was weird referring to Shizu-chan as if he was some random human.

It felt detached, calling the protozoan by his -former- profession rather than his name – obviously he wouldn’t refer to him as a debt collector nor a bodyguard. Both professions held a lot of shady implications and Kato-san was too curious of a human for his own good.

From the way Boss-san paused in alarm for a second Izaya could bet his boss still remembered the angry protozoan.

“Bartender-san?! Your classmate? The delinquent?”

Bartender-san.

It was even weirder than addressing him as Heiwajima-san but he couldn’t do that either for the risk of Kato-san remembering the name that was associated with lots of distraction around Tokyo; which was also associated with his own name too.

Izaya would have laughed at that if his mood wasn’t turning south.

“That one.”

“What about him?” Bos-san asked somewhat suspiciously.

“We met again a few weeks back.”

Kato-san bolted out of his chair and strated checking him here and there for what Izaya assumed would be injurers.

“Izaya-kun why didn’t you tell me earlier? Are you okay?”

“I’m fine, I’m fine Boss-san! Don’t worry ne? It’s not like Bartender-san is some monster! We just run into each other and didn’t get along again, but we never do so it’s fine; I told you before about that. I’m not going to get into detail because it doesn’t matter so don’t ask me more okay~?” he went on a rumble in an attempt to prevent Kato-san of making wild assumptions or worse asking questions.

“Then why bring it up if you don’t want to talk about it?”

Why had he brought it up indeed.

“It’s just..”

“Yes?”

“He is not a human I can understand.” ‘..to put it lightly..’ “And I don’t like not knowing things. That’s all.”

“Why would you bother with that boy after he assaulted you in the middle of a street, Izaya-kun?” Boss-san asked exasperated looking at him like he was crazy.

He probably was.
“I don’t.”

Because he didn’t!

He was just uncomfortable with their shift in dynamics.

“Then why did you bring it up now? That means you think about it still. It happened weeks ago you said.”

Honestly, Kato-san was asking practically the same questions he had been asking himself.

“I don’t know! It’s not like I can control my mind!”

But of course he should be able to!

He wasn’t a random human. He was Orihara Izaya!

He wasn’t the type of person to put much though when it came to his pawns…

Only Shizu-chan was not his pawn; an annoying voice whispered in his mind.

A pawn is something that can be controlled.

“Without seeking, truth cannot be known at all.” Came Boss-san’s dramatic tone.

“John Ruskin?”

Any human questioning god’s existence and human society’s foundation was worth studying about in Izaya’s books.

“Good job Izaya-kun!” Kato-san praised him.

Seeking the truth.

That was easier said than done.

He wasn’t exactly sure which truth he was seeking.

There had been too many questions unanswered.

Some many truths to be unfolded.

How one seeks the truth?

In Izaya’s books truth must have always been based on facts.

But he was too deep in the situation to be able to view it objectively enough to figure out why everything had been so uncomfortable and complicated when all of a sudden when there was so simple and obvious before.

However, at the same time truth was always affected by one’s self too.

Truth wasn’t a universal thing.

It was a personal one.

Humans observe their surroundings and based on the events and influences that have shaped their
lives they reached their own truth based on the evidence they believed they have discovered. There is never a guarantee that someone’s truth is actually real.

In most cases it probably isn’t.

“Ne, how one seeks for the truth?” he asked absentmindedly, lost in the analysis in his mind.

“We’re reporters Izaya-kun! Well, kind off.” Boss-san chuckled as the answer was obvious.

Izaya knew he wouldn’t like where this was heading.

“In seeking the truth, you have to get both sides of the story” the man declared passionately.

Both sides.

Shizu-chan’s side of things?

He knew that protozoan’s side already.

He didn’t like him just by looking at him and deemed it appropriate to try and beat the shit out of him and interfere with his plans every time.

And yet maybe -just maybe- there were more reasons than that.

He didn’t care that much about Shizu-chans reasoning off course. It was just his curious nature that wanted to know.

He only cared about things becoming comfortable again, because despite Shizu-chan’s absence, Izaya couldn’t help but keep feeling -weird!

But he wasn’t going to have a heart to heart with the beast who broke him!

He wouldn’t entertain the idea of taking the risk of being around Shizu-chan.

“Ruskin again?” he asked just to stop the direction his thoughts were heading.

“Walter Cronkite.”

“You are such a nerd Boss-san~!”

Seriously, how many quotes for every situation Kato-san had memorized?

“Have you seen yourself Izaya-kun?”

It was a good opportunity to let the conversation stray for good and start bicker with Boss-san again; let this discussion be forgotten.

The other man was obviously giving him an opening to do so.

And of course he didn’t because as the other man always said, he never listened.

“Ne Kato-san. For the truth to be investigated you need concrete evidence and accurate observations, ne? What do you do if you don’t have those and you can’t be objective? You cannot get the other side of the story either.”

“Isn’t that obvious Izaya-kun? You question everything!”
“Everything..” he mattered somewhat lost and “Everything!” Kato-san repeated.

Everything was a lot!

Everything was 13 years of interactions, half of which he couldn’t even remember.

He couldn’t start questioning all of the foundations of his relationship with Shizu-chan by himself!

Where that would take him?

“I don’t know how I feel about that radical a solution..”

“You asked for a solution. Not for a solution you would like.”

Boss-san had a point.

“True. What about a solution I would like then?”

“Stop spending so much energy on that delinquent and find better things to occupy your time. I can always give you extra work if you have so much free time ” Kato-san winked at him.

His discussion with Boss-san hadn’t help to solve any of the questions he was troubling his mind over, so it didn’t really make sense for him to feel like he could breathe easier, but he sorts of did.

“I’d like that more I think.”

So, he followed Boss-san’s advice that suited him best and decided it would be best to stop obsessing over that night at Shimizudani park.

Well technically he kept thinking about it but stopped twisting his already twisted brain for explanations.

Knowing the protozoan he didn't give a fuck anyways, so why should Izaya hurt his precious brain with such uncomfortable questions while that protozoan kept going like nothing happened.

Things would get comfortable soon again.

They had to.

So he kept trying to busy himself with other things; focus on the humans who were around him rather than those who weren't.

It was the third week of March when Kato-san had announced him that he and Mayumi-san would go for a day trip to Osaka for the Equinox Day since it the Paper would be closed for the holiday and urged him to join them.

How badly he wanted to go.

Osaka was safe and easy. Far away from everything that had happened in Tokyo.

While he was there everything felt unreal; his past as an informant, the lonely years in Tokyo, Shizu-chan.

It would have been good to change the scenery, at least for one day.

But he had declined.
Equinox day was associated with celebrating the love of nature and living things.

However, it still maintained some of its older traditions regarding paying respect the dead and visiting family graves.

That was the main reason Boss-san and Mayumi-san would be going so suddenly back, even if they hadn't stated it outright.

Izaya didn’t want to feel like an intruder, while they wanted to dote to their son.

Moreover he couldn't pretend that he held positive feelings regarding Hideki-kun because he really didn't.

He didn't care at all about him as a human.

He wasn't a human anymore anyways.

To him Kato Hideki was a name and a picture.

One of the thousand humans who meet their end everyday.

It wouldn't have been honorable to pretend to care and while he wasn't a particularly honorable man, the idea of putting such a parade in front of the elderly couple didn’t sit well with him.

It bothered him almost as much as the fact that he would then have to deal with watching his boss upset and yet pretending everything was okay to humor him.

He had promised to think about it but in reality, he had been thinking about a good enough excuse to decline that Kato-san wouldn't be able to rebuffed him.

His excuse came with the name Jo-san at the same week.

He had been working overtime again to organize that week’s contents.

It was around eight o’clock when he had finally exited his office.

Everything was dim lighted but it wasn't difficult to notice the disheveled human bundle on the chair that was his secretary who was supposed to have left hours ago.

“Ne, Jo-san?” he asked and received no reply.

“Jo-san? Wake up” repeated again a little louder with little success.

He wouldn’t touch her as physical contact would have been highly inappropriate, so he chose to grab one of the glittery pen’s from her office and poke her arm with it a little bit.

That seemed to be working as after a few seconds he was regarded by two half-opened puffy eyes.

“Editor Orihara-san?!” she mumbled sleepily before her eyes widening and her jumping in alarm.

“I-I just rested my eyes for a second, I swear!” Jo-san squealed, a pink post-it note stuck on her cheek and her hair from the side she was resting her head on the desk being all tangled and stuck to weird directions.

A second?
More like a couple of hours from the looks of it.

“Ne, Jo-san why are you still here?”

“Still..?”

Obviously Jo-san wasn’t a functional human right after she woke up.

When she was awake most of the time too.

“It is eight o’clock.” He pointed towards the clock on the wall opposite of them with the glittery pen he still had in his hand.

“Oh..” her eyes traveled to the clock and she started nodding absentmindedly.

Silence feel in between them until it was interrupted by a very loud growling coming from Jo-san’s stomach which could most likely be heard two blocks away.

“G-Gommenasai Ediror Orihara-san!”

The horrified expression on Jo-san’ face for doing something so un-cutesy before hugging her stomach and bending in half as if to hide herself was hilarious!

“Eh? Did something happen Jo-san?”

Izaya did his best to swallow his chuckles although it was a good thing his secretary refused to look at him in embarrassment.

“Come on Jo-san take your coat and let’s get going. We can walk to Kojimachi and take the train from there today.”

There were good chances they would find some place for her to eat there too.

They ended up grabbing some ramen from a tiny run-down shop nearby the Kojimachi station.

Half portion for him, large portion for Jo-san.

“Have you woken up now?”

“Hai!. Sorry for keeping you waiting Editor Orihara-san. I’ll eat faster.”

“Calm down, we don’t want you to choke yourself. I can wait.”

All in honest, the slowest Jo-san ate the better for him since he didn’t look forward going home anytime soon.

The moment he would be alone, he knew he would start analyzing his meeting with that protozoan once again.

Just because he had decided to ignore the incident didn’t mean that his brain was agreeing with him.

He should focus on something else.

He watched Jo-san eating for a bit, looking still gorgy and disheveled.

This whole week she seemed a bit out of it in the subtlest of ways.
She wasn’t acting like she had a sugar rush every minute and was clumsier than usual.

“Ne, Jo-san? You seem a bit weird lately. Today you slept in the office too. Is everything okay?”

He wasn’t sure if his question was out of curiosity or another attempt to take his mind away from the protozoan, or maybe out of genuine concern for his secretary’s well-being.

Sure, Jo-san was kind to him and all so he tried to keep an eye out for her as a thanks but he didn’t know her that well to be invested in her troubles.

The fact that they were opposite genders and he had personally hired her was more reason for him not to act too friendly.

“I am good Editor Orihara-san, thank you for your concern!”

Jo-san seemed to mill something in her brain for a few moments and Izaya was sure she was contemplating how much she should say to him.

Eventually she took out her phone, opened a tab in the internet and shoved it in his face.

The page read [Secretarial Diploma|Be a Secretary in 12 weeks].

Oh?

“Ne Jo-san why would you need that? You are a secretary already. We work together more than 12 weeks.

“Hai! But I want help you better Edittor Orihara-san so I have to learn more!”

“In which week are you now?”

“Week 4!” Jo-san said proudly and Izaya couldn’t help but think that if she looked like a mess on the fourth week by the time she reached the final week he would have to do her work himself!

“Can I take a look on your programme please, Jo-san?”

It would be better to know what he’d have to face in the future to be prepared.

He took her self-phone and scrolled down to read more about that Diploma.

‘Oh boy!’

[..Learn the importance of awareness to properly understand common sense and practice…]

“It seems very interesting! But a bit challenging.” he said carefully because he didn’t want to discourage her.

Her only qualification so far was her high school degree and that wouldn’t get her far in a corporate environment.

“Because of the practice customization, right?”

‘Of course~!’

But still knowing that his disaster of a secretary was spending her already small salary to try and be of better help to him made him swallow his sarcastic comment.
He had stolen a look at the fees while he was checking the details and that course of hers costed quite a few yen for someone at the literal bottom of the Paper’s pay scale.

Maybe after she got her Diploma her salary could be raised a bit more?

“You know Jo-san, I just want you to pick up the phone and keep track on my emails and deadlines. But, as long as you don’t turn Hora-san on me you have my full support. Gambate Jo-san!”

“Hai! I will do my best Editor Orihara-san!”

Apparently, his secretary’s positive attitude lasted for less than 24 hours as the next day he was met with a very desperate tiny mess again.

“I can’t do it Editor Orihara -san!” his tiny secretary was grumbling when she came to his office to bring him some documents and he did the mistake to ask her if she felt better.

Big mistake.

“Ne, calm down Jo-san, it hasn’t even been a day since yesterday.

And then Jo-san went on a rumble similar to Kato-san’s fashion going on and on about some sort of online exam she had to take by the end of the week but didn’t think she could pass because it involved graphs or statistics and she was pretty much terrible with numbers and figures and basically everything.

“I will fail Editor Orihara-san! I know I will!”

And just like that he was presented with the perfect excuse to not follow Kato-san in Osaka for the Equinox Day while he could also keep himself occupied and away from unwanted thoughts!

It was perfect really!

“Gomme Boss-san. I will be staying in Tokyo for the Equinox Day” he was saying to his boss on that same day.

“Are you sure you don’t want to come? What will you do here?”

Here it came; the perfect excuse.

“I made plans with Jo-san” he said as casually as possible but he knew Boss-san’s metaphorical antennas had already been raised in curiosity.

“You made plans?” Boss-san asked suddenly all too doubtful.

“Hai!” Izaya said mock-enthusiastically.

He was in for a good laugh, he knew.

“With Secretary Jo?” Kato-san clarified as if he had misheard the first time.

“Hai-Hai~!”

Here it comes, here it comes!
In three… two...

“IZAYA-kun. Please be highly aware that Secretary Jo is younger than you! And she is from the countryside! As you are the more experienced one and also a man, I expect you to be in your best behavior at all times and to not pressure her.”

‘So funny!!’

“Also! As Secretary Jo is working directly under you it is your responsibility to make absolutely sure to be discreet as her reputation will be at stake here. Men might be easier to be left of the hook in such situations but women are dragged through mad for such behavior in the workplace; ostracized from society!”

‘That’s getting a bit too dramatic now.’

“In fact, I would suggest you to not make any advances unless you are thinking of marriage and children! Of course, someone like Jo-san would like at least a couple of babies!”

‘Things were seriously getting out of hand!’

“Wow! Kato-san calm down here, ne?! You’re delirious!”

“Oh~, you didn’t like that? Well, that’s what you get for trying to get a kick out of freaking me out!” Boss-san winked all too proud of himself for getting back at him.

“I would never!” Izaya said ‘offended’ in a voice that most likely suggested the opposite.

“You are getting rusty there Izaya-kun! Better step up your game!” Kato-san told him smugly. “So how come you and Jo-san are going out?”

“Study-date.”

“Study?”

“Yes. Jo-san is having an exam this weekend for a course she does. It’s about things I know about so I’ll be tutoring her on Thursday since it’s a day off.”

“I’ll never get tired of saying that: You have such a big heart, my boy!”

He really hadn’t.

He was using his secretary who had been so thoughtful of him as a shield from his own problems.

He was despicable really.

“You exaggerate Kato-san…..Ne, what time are you traveling to Osaka on Thursday?” he deliberately changed the subject from his kindness his.

~~~~~

On the morning of the Equinox day he met with Jo-san outside of the Akihabara Station.

_Since Izaya was doing Jo-san a favor, something she had acknowledged herself, she had let him chose their meeting spot._

It would have been convenient for him to meet in Edogawa since he wouldn’t waste as much of his
precious time on transportation. Somewhere around Chuo would have been suitable too since Jo-san lived there.

It was on a whim that he had suggested Chiyoda; it just popped into his mind the second Jo-san had given him a choice.

It was out of habit, he had reasoned; he did that route almost every day as it was.

Once the initial greetings and bows had been exchanged after he had met his secretary, he had taken a few seconds to access her.

It was interesting; meeting another acquaintance -was that the right word?- other than Kato-san outside of work.

Humans acted really differently with coworkers when at work and when in more relaxed environments when the stress alleviated and the expectations weren’t involved as much.

They would forget themselves; shade their proper façades they wore at work and reveal their true colors while enveloped in a bubble of comradeship.

By the end of that day he had been positive that he would have found out what sort of human Jo-san was too.

Unbeknownst to him at the time he would arrive to the conclusion that Jo-san’s true colors most likely were a perfect match to her overall appearance; glittery pink.

However, the moment they had met the first thing that he could tell was that she had toned down a bit the fluffy pinkness that characterized her -which was a good thing for his eyes.

“I hope you are not sleepy today Jo-san because we have a long day ahead of us!” he warned her playfully.

Sure, he was using her as a distraction from his own protozoan-related problem but that didn’t mean that he would let her slack and slumber when he would be tutoring her.

Though he had a feeling that it would be a challenge to tutor such an airhead.

“I’m ready! Please take care of me Editor Orihara-san!” Jo-san’s squealed was accompanied by another bow in gratitude.

It wasn’t as if he had anything better to do that day with his humans being out of the city anyways.

Other than beating himself up over the fact that he still bothered thinking of the protozoan that wasn’t worth his time and the mood swings that were accompanied his thoughts.

“Leave it to me, Jo-san! Your academic life is in my hands now! Shall we?” he motioned her to start walking

“Hai!”

She really reminded him a bit some sort of buzzing oversized baby bug that was about to burst its cocoon with her constant squealing in excitement and the fluffy white coat that could very well be some sort of woolen cocoon, not to mention those huge reading glasses that covered half her face -which by the way he was sure it was more an accessory to fit the occasion rather than anything else.

“Where are we going?”
‘Where are we going?’

‘Shimizudani Park.’

“Shoheimachikado Library. Let’s check if we can find a spot there. It’s not far from here.”

“It’s so early though” Jo-san tried to hide a yawn.

Honestly, he had been skeptical initially about dragging her for a study session at 9:30 in the morning on a day off but on the other hand the only public -thus free of charge- and the only suitable study spaces around Akihabara were mainly the Chiyoda City Shoheimachikado Library and the Chiyoda City Kanda Machikado -though the later was a few extra minutes away.

“Let’s not risk it Jo-san. University Students are a scary species.”

He really didn’t fancy failing to get a study space to either as it would become troublesome, let alone counterproductive, to roam Chiyoda in search of a suitable place and he doubted that they would be allowed to use a laptop in most cafés without getting some sort of stern warning from the staff.

He didn’t fancy finding out for sure either.

They wouldn’t be able to stay at a café more than a couple of hours anyways until someone politely asked them to go in order to be able to service other customers unless they kept the orders going and there was a limit on how much one human can eat or pay for food they won’t eat.

They had been lucky to find quite a few empty seats in the Shoheimachikado Library.

The look of amazement on Jo-san’s face made it clear that she wasn’t expected that many people, that early in the morning and on a holiday to bother going to the library.

He had barely caught himself in time before he would be giving her his ‘I told you so’ lecture in a Boss-san style.

They settled easily to a quiet corner with a lot of space so he would be able to wheel around without much trouble, took out Jo-san’s laptop and billions of notes and settled to work for the next couple of hours.

Jo-san had offered him a bottle of iced black coffee she had brought for him on her way to their meeting point as a thanks which was very appreciated and definitely better than nothing, even though he preferred expensive warm beverages rather than convenience-stored cold canned ones.

Only someone piss poor and with no finesse like Shizu-chan would prefer the second.

During their study session Izaya had been pleasantly surprised to realize that Jo-san wasn’t beyond salvation and she could pick up the logic of rules and formulas if they had been broken down and simplified enough.

Well, technically every human could figure out even the most difficult problem if you explained it to them with terms fit for primary schoolers so it wasn’t much but was better than what he had expected.

But while his secretary could grasp the theoretical part whenever there was need for practical application a mess was bound to ensue.

She wasn’t paying enough attention to the symbols so obviously she couldn’t end up to a correct
result and she wasn’t thinking carefully which data she had to choose from the tables in order for a proper chart to be created and the correct statistics to be drawn.

It had taken at least one full hour for her to properly grasp the idea and she was still getting most of the questions wrong- and in standardized problems on top of that- but Izaya could tell there was a tiny bit of improvement after he had explained the same things ten different times -and in ten different ways at that.

When she used to have zero out of twenty, after that first hour had passed, she had scored a nice perfect four without help!

Watching that tiny bit of progress, he was starting to feel that it wasn’t completely hopeless -which was good because he had been investing his time!

Six more to get a pass.

Good things take time though…

When the clock showed three, Izaya had been relieved to say they had finally left the library and were seated in a café in the busiest street of Akahibara which bloomed with humans for lunch.

Jo-san had been scoring between nine and thirteen for the last hour, so he was at ease that she would most likely succeed -although he was planning to go through the last seven ‘difficult questions’ once more since he had made her proper written notes -nothing like the mess he had been presented with.

“You are a really good tutor Editor Orihara-san!” his secretary praised him for the nth time that day looking way more relaxed than the mess who was sleeping on the desk he had encountered two nights ago.

“I’m not sure about that Jo-san; these just happened to be things I’ve seen before” he faked modesty.

Truth be told he was a good tutor.

He had spent years tutoring his sisters in basically every module of every grade one way or another.

That was until he had left his family house and the twins had stopped be so depended on him so much.

A time or two they had still dropped by his apartment in Shinjuku with a question or two but he could never bother much and always ended up kicking them out.

They would huff and leave then, but not before reminded him that they hated him and he should go rot.

Of course, they did; he rarely treated them as family.

“They need their brother, Izaya!”

It was funny, really.

He had spent hours tutoring Jo-san and yet he rarely bothered with his own sisters for ten minutes -because he was sure that’s how long they would need to grasp a concept or solve a problem.

If there was one thing in common that the three Orihara siblings had, that was intelligence.

That and the fact that they were extremely problematic too.
He tried to ignore the thoughts of his sisters and Shizu-chan that kept invading his mind and focus on acting like a normal human in front of his secretary.

~~~

"I will be forever in your debt Editor Orihara-san! I am really lucky to work for you! Out of everyone in Tokyo you are the kindest!"

Jo-san continued building him a metaphorical pedestal even after their food had arrived.

She -and basically everyone else who have met after he had left Tokyo- had a completely twisted idea of himself in her mind because kindness was never really one of his strong points.

“You are exaggerating Jo-san. Eat now or your food will get cold.”

Jo-san kept going on ignoring momentarily her shirasu wafu pasta which had kept her fascinated for quite a while since she had confessed that she had never tried pasta before.

"It's the truth Editor Orihara-san!"

Izaya wasn’t sure how she could fit such a heavy dish in what he had originally perceived to be a tiny stomach, but he was growing to understand though during those two times they had eaten together outside of work, where Jo-san always chose light feminine dishes and salads and ate with bird bites from what he had observed the few times she had joined him and Boss-san in the Paper’s cafeteria- that the woman could eat a horse if you just place it in front of her in a platter!

As for himself he was struggling to down his curry and ignore the dozens of fish eyes staring at him from Jo-san’s plate that were seriously messing with his appetite.

Why on earth Jo-san seemed to enjoy boiled baby sardines so much was beyond him!

Of course, he wouldn’t tell her that he strongly disliked fish eyes- almost as much as he disliked Shizu-chan actually.

For a man to be grossed out by something like that was embarrassing; he had a persona to uphold.

"Everyone who gets to know you like you!" She squealed happily before stuffing herself with more baby sardines with giant eyes that were tangled in the pasta.

'Everyone that truly knows you hate you.'

Jo-san's innocent compliment stung the most annoying way because it couldn't help but remind him the way the protozoan had rubbed in his face how despised he was by those who actually knew the real him.

From all the humans who actually knew him only Shinra liked him to a degree and that wasn't by much.

In reality, he wasn't sure how much others truly knew him -both those who hated him and those who didn't.

He had come to realize early enough that whatever version of himself he chose to show there would always be some humans who would despise him as and some who would be okay with him -maybe even like him a little.

No matter how many versions of himself he created it was never enough because every human had
so vastly different expectations than the rest; he couldn't shape himself to fit to all of them no matter how much he desired to be loved by humanity.

If he did break down his personality in more pieces he would disappear.

It had taken him a lot to create the informant identity after he had decided to love all humans equally.

It had taken him even more to create this new semi-normal persona and adapt his previous personality to it, because all in honest, one clashed heavily with the other which led him to constantly have inconsistent thoughts and perform contradictory actions to his beliefs.

His bond with Boss-san and Mayumi-san was an example of just that.

The fact that he was practically using Jo-san for his own means right at that moment, and all the while he appreciated that what motivated her was himself, so he sorts of cared about her success, was another example.

His unusual behavior with Shizu-chan the other day thought took the cake!

'I just don't understand you'

"Ne, Jo-san do you think I am misunderstood?" He teased her to take the edge of his mind.

"Hai!" Jo-san said easily with conviction and a mouthful of food.

"Some say you're scary but I think it's because you are close with Managing Director Kato-sama so people get confused! I say to them that you are really nice but you don't like to talk much. I think they believe me in the end, but it's good you started joining everyone so they can see for themselves!" she finished while hiding her mouth with her palm as she kept chewing.

He couldn't help but feel proud of himself that there were humans who were afraid of him despite the fact that he was crippled and considerably weakened.

He used to be someone people got warned to stay away from and even if he didn't always like it had made him smug to know that he was at the top of the food chain in Tokyo.

"You don't have to take care of my image you know. I don't mind what humans -people- say."

"I know! But I don't want people to think badly of you because you by mistake."

More like humans would think nicely of him by mistake.

If Jo-san thought that humans saying he was scary behind his back was badmouthing or thinking badly of him he should introduce her to Shizu-chan one day...

Five minutes with the protozoan and she would realize what it really meant to think badly of someone.

Anyone would do actually; Celty, his sisters, Sonohara Anri, Masomi Kida, Karisawa-san.. The list was long.

Not that he really minded most of those humans -and creature- to consider him a scam...

At least half of those he had messed up real' good and he had gotten sick satisfaction of doing so.
And the rest were the later one’s acquaintances.

But when it came to Shizu-chan he couldn't help but feel it was a tiny bit unfair considering everything.

"Ne Jo-san, how old are you?" He asked out of the blue.

He wanted to let his mind relax, not get himself even more agitated even if the recent events with the protozoan that still annoyed him.

"25!" she said as if living up to 25 years of age was some sort of accomplishment.

But maybe it was for some humans.

He himself was supposed to have perished at the hands of his enemy at 25 years of age and yet here he was three years later eating curry and having dozens fish eyes staring at him from across the table.

Anyways, for Jo-san to be only 3 years younger than him was a bit unexpected!

"Really?! Wow! You look like a high schooler!"

It could be the soft dreamy voice and her small structure or most likely her adoration for anything pink and fuzzy but he had assumed she was only a year or two older than Mairu and Kururi.

He never really payed attention to her near blank CV to be able to tell from the date she graduated. Her resume looked the worst so of course he had to hire her!

"That is not nice Editor Orihara-san~!" Jo san jumped in her seat hugging herself and turning red head to toe.

'Really now?'

So much with him trying for his actions and words to not be misread by her!

"I meant your face looks very young Jo-san~!" he tried to swallow his chuckles.

The situations he always found himself in with these new humans of his!

As if he would ever comment on a human’s appearance straight in their face -not that he bothered ogling humans here and there.

If he did, he would beg her to have a complete change of wardrobe.

“Editor Orihara-san gomme!”

Izaya was way more interested in human minds, psychosynthesis and emotional world rather than human bodies.

Genetics were pure luck so they could never be a fully accurate representation of a human’s most important traits.

Take the Heiwajima brothers for example.

Both of them were decent looking by society’s standards; tall, slim with facial features that were in harmony with each other -although he couldn’t help but find Heiwajima Kasuka a bit overrated.
If the protozoan’s younger brother wasn’t a well-known actor, he wouldn’t get half of the attention he was enjoying.

But the Heiwajima brother’s appearance wasn’t an accurate representation of what kind of humans they truly were in their cores!

They were both freaks - one beastly and one robotic!

The only difference was that Shizu-chan couldn’t conceal his true nature as good as his little brother....

"G-ommenasai! I-I didn’t mean to call you a hentai editor Orihara san I swear!" Jo-san freaking out and bowing like crazy over the table drawing attention from nearly everyone in the café interrupted his thoughts suddenly.

‘Hentai?

He was pretty sure she hadn’t.

Jo-san was such an airhead!

“You didn’t~!” he teased.

The look of horror on Jo-san’s face when she realized that she had actually said at loud that in a moment there it had crossed her mind that he was a pervert was so worth it!

“Ne-ne It’s okay Jo-san! I won’t be mad because you called me a pervert and though I was talking about your figure~!”

“You are making it worse Orihara-san~!” Jo-san complained.

Of course, he did, but he couldn’t help himself!

That’s the fun he needed to take his mind of unwanted thoughts!

“Ehh? I do?”

“Yes. Very much so!” Jo-san kept squealing on her seat in discomfort.

“Ups! Sorry Jo-san, I didn’t notice!”

“You most certainly did!” she said with her palms still hiding her face from his view.

“Gomme-gomme! I can’t help myself when your reactions are amusing! I’ll stop now, I promise!”

“Thank you, Editor Orihara-san” his tiny secretary exhaled a sigh of relief and after calming herself down from her embarrassment she went back to hunting the baby sardines in the plate and having an easy conversation.

He got to learn more about his secretary and Jo-san’s story wasn’t particularly interesting really.

She was from Noda, a village in Iwate and belonged to a family of commercial fishermen with many siblings and little money. She didn’t have any big dreams mostly because she wasn’t raised to dream big. She never took the entrance exams to go to University because her main goal was to support her family - same with the rest of her older siblings.
Then after 6 years of many bad paid jobs she had managed to save some money to rent a cheap room in Ueno while she job-hunted in Tokyo and two months after she had arrived, she applied in Times and he had hired her and here they were now.

“Editor Orihara-san, how old are you?” she randomly returned his previous question after she has finished telling him about her life.

If he had met her a few years earlier he would have replied that he would be forever 23 most likely.

And yet it was his turn to reply “28!” as if it was a great achievement.

“Wow! And you are already a Front-Page Editor?! So accomplished!”

“You are overreacting Jo-san, I’m a mere human~!”

He wasn’t of course.

“No you are not!” Jo-san agreed with his inner thought.

“No wonder you and Managing Director Kato-sama are best friends!!

Kato-san and him best friends?

He wasn’t sure about that.

He had trouble to label their relationship -just like with Mayumi-san- as its foundations seemed to change with the years and take new directions.

Moreover, it would be troublesome if people at the Paper labeled them as friends; especially considering they were co-workers before to Asahi; something which was a well-known fact at Times.

“Kato-san and I are not friends Jo-san; that’s unprofessional. He is my boss”.

Such ideas could lead to assumptions regarding how he acquired his current position and even worse, humans would start doubting his Boss-san’s integrity if people considered them to be friends - best friends at that!

“It’s okay to be friends Orihara-san. You work really hard and don’t ask to be treated differently so I won’t think any less of you. Besides you and Managing Director Kato-sama are happy when you are together” his secretary said in her faraway voice and he would kid himself if he denied that her words weren’t getting to him because what she was saying was true.

When he was with Boss-san he wasn’t unhappy and he thought that Kato-san wasn’t unhappy either.

“I don’t know Jo-san…”

“It really is okay Orihara-san! I won’t tell to anyone! Besides, we’re friends too!”

‘I thought you and I could have been friends.. You are right, I am a protozoan.’

“You think I am your friend?”

That had come out of the blue.

Sure, he didn’t hate Jo-san, in fact, she was one of the human’s he liked the best since she was
always trying to be helpful and was genuine about her intentions, but most importantly she didn’t seem to have an agenda or expect anything in return.

But he wasn’t sure about friendship.

His relationship with Jo-san didn’t include any big event like when Shinra shield him from Nakura’s attack or like the ‘Umbrella Incident’ with Kato-san or like when Mayumi-san invited him in their house for dinner for the first time or when he was gifted with his room in the house in Bunkyo.

Yes, she did lots of small things from him and while he appreciated her as a human there wasn’t a particular grant moment for him to feel that now was the time when they could be more than acquaintances.

“Hai! You always fix my laptop, you gave me giri-choco on White day, you walk with me to the train station and we eat together. And you tutored me on your day off and now we learn more about each other! That’s what friends do!”

It was so simple it made sense somehow!

“I see your point, Jo-san..Ne, Let’s be friends outside of work!”

Rather than the grand moment being initiated by Jo-san towards himself it was her who seem to feel the little things she mentioned were big enough for them to become friends.

“You can count on me Edittor Orihara-san!”

“You are my reliable secretary-friend after all, ne~?”

“Hai!” Jo-san raised to small fists in front of her chest looking what he could guess to be determined to be a good friend

But if they were going to become proper friends that meant that he also had to be reliable..

“Ne Jo-san..”

“Mm?”

“Since now we have an official friendship and can rely more on each other, will you count on me to explain you these simple things here?” he said pulling out the notes with the seven difficult questions.

Jo-san’s expression said it all really!

“It’s difficult Edittor Orihara-san! My head will explode!” she dramatically grasped her head in desperation.

“Come on Jo-san it’s not that hard; these things are mainly theory; Gambate!”

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“Edittor Orihara-san? You talk different today” Jo-san had randomly observed while they were strolling to Akahibara to get to the train station.

“I do? How so?” he stopped wheeling on the sidewalk to be able to observe her reactions better.

“I don’t know. The way you use your words?” she asked herself out loud.
“We are not at work now. It’s tiring talking formally all the time~.”

“Your voice…No..Your tone!”

“My tone?” he questioned although he felt that he knew what she was trying to say.

“It’s - I don’t know - different?”

“It’s because Jo-san is my friend now~!”

He was about to motion to her to start moving when his eye caught a shade of blond from the other side of the road and his stomach tightened in alarm!

To say his head snapped to that direction in light speed would have been an understatement!

“Shizu-cha-!” he caught himself saying aloud and realized he had almost tried to raise himself of the wheelchair in panic; hands grasping the handles and pushing his body to get up as if he wasn’t invalid.

That had been the protozoan right?

It had to be, he was sure he had seen a blond head right at that moment.

He tried to scan the other side of the street but it was too busy but then after a few seconds he saw it.

Blond.

Incorrect blond.

For starters the color looked natural and even with the distance he could tell that this person wasn’t even Japanese.

He had confused the protozoan with a random tourist for crying out loud!

His body seemed to relax back in the wheelchair but his heart kept pounding like crazy.

That freaky human must have traumatized him irreparably for him to be getting so agitated at the thought of seeing him!

“Shizuka?” she heard Jo-san’s voice.

‘Shzuka?’

A quick look back at her saw him that she was trying to follow his gaze on the other side of the street.

Jo-san must have misheard when he had stupidly spoken aloud his thoughts exactly like she had done earlier but caught himself before finishing the honorific.

Shizuka.

Imagine if he went up to Heiwajima Shizuo - Ikebukuro’s strongest beast and called him Shizuka in his face!

That would make a story of a funny and rather creative death they could write on his tombstone, he was sure!
“It’s nothing. I just thought I saw someone I know. Let’s go Jo-san~!”

“We don’t have someone with that name at the office. . .”

“You know I am from Tokyo originally right?”

He must have been really upset to suddenly be offering information about himself freely like that!

“Really? I thought you just had a really good Kanto accent!” Jo-san said in awe, as if being from Tokyo was some sort of qualification.

“I left a few years ago and went to Osaka, that’s why -people- at work think I’m from there.”

“Because of your car accident?..Sorry! I didn’t mean to intrude! I’ve just heard people at work mentioning it before. I didn’t know it happened here. Gommenasai Editor Orhara-san, I didn’t mean to bring up bad memories!”

It wasn’t a surprise Jo-san knew about this lie of his.

Human’s talked and being the only disabled employee somewhere gives rise to the human curiosity.

“It’s okay Jo-san! I know people think it was a car but it was a truck actually!” ‘because being punched by Shizu-chan surely felt like being hit by a truck’

Maybe he shouldn’t have said the bit about the truck.

Jo-san’s eyes had grown red and watery in a millisecond staring at him as if he would drop dead at any second!

“It’s fine, Jo-san; It’s not like I died! So, don’t look at me with this face, ne~!” he smiled at her a little because he really didn’t want to have to deal with a crying woman in the middle of a street with hundreds of humans making assumptions.

“Sorry...” Jo-san sniffed one but seemed to collect herself a bit.

“You know, they say that when you think you see someone in the street, it’s because you miss them” she told him brightly in an attempt to change the topic which really wasn’t successful considering the one she had chosen!

As if he would miss his most hated enemy!

He was terrified of that amoeba deciding to use him as a punching bag or going back to their deal; that was the only reason he was alert at the idea of seeing him!

Seriously Kato-san and Jo-san made assumptions regarding his life way to easily!

They should form a club and discuss their theories about his love-life!

But to say to someone with Jo-san’s upbringing that the person he almost tried to get out of his wheelchair to chase after was another man would earn him the label of homosexual before he could blink!

“Shizu-chan is not what you have in mind Jo-san I azure you. That person surpasses your expectations in a way no human can!”

The usual problem he seemed to have whenever he was getting close with another human, seemed to
make an appearance already.

The fact that he could never be fully honest; his past always seemed to bite him in the ass and make everything difficult for him.

“Sounds like someone very special” Jo-san said dreamily as if they were discussing some romance.

Special.

Special as a human’s worst enemy could be!

Hatred was a special sentiment after all; much like love.

Both feelings were reserved for only a few selected humans.

No human could love everyone just like no human could hate everyone.

” In a sense you could say that.”

“Oh! Shizuka-san must be really pretty!” she grasped her hands together in front of her chest with excitement and Izaya could tell that she was already imagining Shizu-chan as some sort of delicate and ethereal beauty out of a movie and not like a huge unsophisticated man with a terrible temper.

“You are really misunderstanding, Jo-san~..” he said all though he was sure his comment had fallen on deaf ears as Jo-san seemed to be lost in her pink fuzzy lala-land.

At the end of their day together and while at the train moments before Jo-san stepped out of the compartment she couldn’t resist balling her fists in front of her chest and buttered what he could tell was a very honest and wistful: “I hope you’ll get to see her soon Editor Orihara-san!” before bowing in goodbye and jumping out of the compartment -thankfully without causing an accident.

“Thanks Jo-san..” he replied because really was there a point in denying it? She had already reached her conclusion and it was safer than most of the other alternatives if he attempted to clarify that Shizu-chan wasn’t a woman.

Izaya couldn’t help to think that he was getting so invested to the whole incident with the protozoan that it was becoming apparent to other humans around him which would lead to a hell lot of trouble if he wasn’t careful and really, he wasn’t handling this particular problem really good so far.

That night found Izaya reflecting back on the unusual day he had with his secretary.

He couldn’t help but find humans like Jo-san disgusting.

They weren’t perceptive in the least!

Jo-san couldn’t sense any danger -she hadn’t seen the shadow of the beast lurking behind her back in the dark, she didn’t realize gangs and thugs were scattered in every dim light alley; she didn’t comprehend danger was right there, staring her right back in the eyes, tutoring her, eating with her, being friends with her!

It was the innocence of someone who has never faced danger; has never leaved in a big city.

Those kinds of humans twisted more beautifully than the rest when reality of how wicked the word is hit them in the face.

He would have been tempted to be the one to introduce her to that ugly truth, just to have the
pleasure of witnessing her reaction when her pink world shattered before her eyes.

It would have been such an interesting spectacle for sure.

And yet some part of him thought what suited Jo-san the best was to keep being an innocent, trusting and naïve airhead.

Because he needed her.

And more humans like her who couldn’t detect evil even when the worst scum of earth was right in front of them.

The world needed humans like that; to be fooled and deceived!

Because if everyone was as cautious and insightful as that stupid protozoan then, humans like himself would be condemned to be solitary entities, cursed to be forever cut off the rest of humanity.

But on the other hand, such dystopia would never exist.

Because there was no other human like Shizu-chan.

Chapter End Notes

So… there is no other human like Shizu-chan.
Izaya learned that grand gestures are not always needed to get close with someone
*cough cough* and he totally doesn't handle the situation as some sort of a break up xD
Next chapter we’ll see Shizuo and where he disappeared to. 😊
Chapter 18

Chapter Notes

Hi everyone! :) It's been a while!!
I'm back with a new chapter to shed some light with what is going on with Shizuo and heading to bed because I had to wake up in 6 hours (T^T)
I hope you will enjoy this chapter! :)
Next time we'll see Izaya's POV and we'll move a bit more forward-but with small steps as usual xD
A short time skip will come to a couple of chapters so things might start speeding up a bit more -though I can’t tell for sure how much.
Thank you everyone for your support, it is really appreciated!! <33
I will reply to any unanswered comment I have by tomorrow.
Goodnight <3

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

It had been a while since he had felt so calm.

Since he had no worries, no fear, no surprises.

Since he was free.

The fucking flea-chain around his neck, holding him down and choking him slowly yet surely had been broken at last.

He was fucking free.

Free of everything.

He could move on.

Finally.

After a horrible decade, kami-sama had decided to spare him at last and release him from his tormentor in a way that didn't include blood, gore or death.

That wouldn’t have any more negative consequences for anyone involved.

Things would turn around from that point; life would get better -even by a little.

He could chase after the happiness he had been longing for so long rather than forcing himself to be satisfied with some lukewarm contentment.

That was it.

No more mistakes.

No more regrets.
No more guilt.
No more Izaya.

He would be happy.

Soon..

And that's exactly how things had to have gone from the moment he and Izaya had put an end to their fucked-up rivalry.

That's what he should feel and think.

But the reality had proven to be slightly different.

He had left Izaya behind that night.

Had turned his back on the bane of his existence and walked casually to the opposite direction.

It was a quiet statement and yet it spoke volumes.

It was symbolic; a ritual.

Turning his back on Izaya and walking to the other direction had not been easy to do in the least.

He had never turned his back on Izaya before.

Mostly because the other was a backstabbing flea so he should always be alert.

But also, because that’s how things were.

Izaya always being ahead, himself always a few steps behind but never quite ‘there’.

It was so stupid when he thought about it from an outsider’s perspective; chasing after the one you hate the most rather than avoiding them.

But on the other hand, leaving Izaya behind was weird.

Izaya used to stand in front of him for almost half of his life.

He was a constant to him.

He was all he knew to focus on.

The only thing he could see or think at times.

Only after he had finally put an end to everything, he had realized how much time, energy and space in his brain Izaya had occupied.

Suddenly he didn’t know what else to do with these things!

That little prick had engraved himself so deeply into him that leaving him behind gave him little relief.

It was shocking; how much someone can define their existence with something they hate so very much.
How badly they hold on to that particular something that causes them so much anguish and pain because it somehow defines their identity.

Being away from Izaya for so long he had eventually realized at some point that this was exactly what Izaya was to him.

That’s why, despite the pest being away for years Shizuo couldn’t let go of him.

It was guilt too; of course it was -but it was much more.

If he could describe Izaya in one word he would call him a tumor.

Starts small, and keeps growing and growing and it's killing you slowly in the inside.

You don’t see it but it is there; beneath the surface.

You hate it and you fear it but it's still a part of yours.

You created it.

And when you cut it and throw it away then it can still jump right back even more aggressive than before until it finally kills you or it decides to fuck off for good and not bother you again with its bullshit.

Yes. Izaya was his tumor.

At least as of now, it seemed that the pest wouldn’t mix with his life again.

He should have felt at peace.

Izaya was alive, powerless and out of his life.

Problem fucking solved!

Moreover, the fucking voice in his head had disappeared the moment he had realized that the stranger who kept catching his attention that morning was his fucking nemesis.

And yet he was so fucking restless all the time.

So why couldn’t he finally catch a break, someone would ask.

Well, how about because fucking Izaya was suddenly everywhere?!!

Every mother fucking time he went to Chiyoda, which was literally every other day -seriously how many money-owing bastards resided to the fucking place? -Izaya would be right there!

His presence.

He was sure that the unsettling feeling he got sometimes in Chiyoda, even before he had met Izaya again, was his gut telling him that something bad was going on with the city.

His scent.

How come he hadn’t figured out sooner?

It was all over the district!
He could pinpoint exactly were the flea bastard was at any moment. All he had to do was close his eyes, inhale and concentrate.

He had started noticing that most nights Izaya’s scent disappeared suddenly; he felt like a veil of shit was finally lifted from the district and the uneasiness in his gut lessened.

After several times this had happened, he was coming to the conclusion that maybe Izaya didn’t live in the district.

‘Where do you live then?’

He didn’t give a fuck really as long as it wasn’t Ikebukuro.

Anyways, do you care to know what was worse than Izaya’s annoying presence and disgusting stunk?

It was fucking fleabag himself!

Every time he saw him, Shizuo hated himself a tad more.

He felt so-so terrible, so-so guilty he couldn't help but open the pill bottle Shinra had given him recently and steal an additional pill or two hoping to rid of these choking feelings.

It was stupid and reckless really.

Shizuo knew very well that he shouldn’t be increasing his dosage like that whenever he felt like it; whenever he caught a glimpse of Izaya on the street.

But he had this irrational idea that if he did take one extra pill every time saw Izaya, he could walk away from him easier.

It didn’t have to be true; it was enough for him to believe that it was.

Placebo effect -but with real medicine.

Whatever.

He was too monstrous to die from poisoning anyways.

Besides he wanted to live.

And he could now that that little prick was alive.

All he had to do was to avoid him; ignore him; ignore his wheelchair; ignore everything about him. Izaya wasn't his problem anymore and sure as hell he wouldn't become his concern either.

He had been asking for it.

Ignore ignore ignore ignore...

But how the fuck could Shizuo ignore him?

It was fucking impossible to try and avoid him in the first place!

The pest apparently had decided to stop laying low and had instead crawled out of whatever hole he
had been hiding all those months.

And boy, he was suddenly everywhere!


There wasn't any Izaya-free space anywhere in the whole district!

Even when Shizuo made sure to go to Chiyoda strictly between nine thirty in the morning and five thirty in the afternoon to make sure that Izaya would be at his job at the time since he had figured out that the flea had “office hours” now, or left his debt-collecting there for the late evening after the other should have left Chiyoda -because yes he preferred to ambush scams at random hours like some sort of avenger than risk to run into Izaya- that parasite was still -well- there!

Avoiding him like plague was proving futile despite how much he was trying!

If he didn't know any better, he'd think that the flea was trying to purposely annoy the fuck out of him! That he was challenging him to see how far he could push him before he snapped and beat the shit out of him again; that little shit!

Kill, kill, kill, kill…

No!

He should calm the fuck down!

He was overreacting.

He couldn't demand from Izaya not to be there.

That wasn’t part of their arrangement.

He shouldn’t be making such a big deal about Chiyoda anyways.

Chiyoda wasn’t his city.

Ikebukuro was.

And he had allowed him to go to Ikebukuro -fucking Ikebukuro that the flea bastard should have been forever banned from!

Maybe it wasn’t really Izaya who was asking for it then, but Shizuo himself?!

Besides the flea wasn't doing anything suspicious from what he could tell; just going on with his life and interacting with his surroundings like everyone else.

Shizuo had seen him around the city once or twice…

Or trice…

Or a dozen fucking times already!!

Most of the times that he had seen him, it was the flea and that man chit-chatting and bickering. He was staring to believe they were attached to the hip or some shit.

Izaya was acting very abnormal with that person.
Shizuo didn’t know Izaya to look anything else other that arrogant, disinterested, mocking, disgusted, batshit crazy and more recently pained, angry, pathetic and terrified.

But with this old butt, he was frowning and grimacing and pouting and laughing and smiling - sometimes little smiles and other full grins. His movements were animated and his reactions a bit exaggerated too.

He was particularly obnoxious when he was around that man, Shizuo had decided, but not in the same way he would be obnoxious in general.

A few other times he had seen him with his girl.

He was acting the gentleman part really well, he had to give him that.

Taking her to dates; walking her home; eating together.

Once Shizuo saw them even studying together!

Both casually dressed with their reading glasses and surrounded by notes on a table at a café, passing easily for college students; sitting next to each other, Izaya explaining apparently something too complicated for his woman who was complaining -him playfully poking her on the cheek with a pen and saying things that made her squirm.

It was like a picture out of some fucking drama but instead of his little brother being the main lead, fleabag had stolen the fucking show!

He looked good, playing the lover; smooth and confident in a way Shizuo wouldn't have expected from a man on a wheelchair to be.

Once Shizuo had the fleeting thought of how things worked between them with Izaya’s lower body being limp.

But maybe that part of flea could still… -he had chased that disgusting thought away as soon as it had crossed his mind.

Izaya’s dick wasn’t any of his business.

He didn’t want to think of him in such a context -any context preferably!

Anyhow, some other times Izaya was surrounded by many people -colleagues?

When he was with them, he was different again.

He kept a straight face, the way he was moving around was a bit awkward and his posture looked somewhat stiff. He didn't seem to talk much, mostly observing everything that was going on around him; quietly eating or sipping from his drink, trying to appear engaged but failing because his somewhat uncomfortable expression wasn't helping his case.

If he hasn't been watching so much of Izaya lately it wouldn't have registered with him that apparently the flea seemed to be a bit withdrawn when in large crowds.

Shizuo had started to question at some point if Izaya actually liked humans as much as he claimed in the first place.

Observing him from a distance in a somewhat flea-fashion every time he would run into him, confused the hell out of Shizuo.
This person was Izaya and yet he wasn't.

People couldn’t change; Shizuo believed that with absolute surety.

So, all of these versions he had gotten glimpses of; the deranged informant, the obnoxious colleague, Prince Charming, the awkward introvert -were they all Izaya?

But on the other hand, Izaya was so-so very good at pretending...

And did any of these mattered really?

It was fucking finally over.

Their whole toxic rivalry had lasted for so long -way too long.

One day they were fifteen and the next almost thirty.

He didn’t know how much longer until he really closed that chapter..

However, for the first time ever whenever he thought about Izaya his mind wasn’t replaying the events their distant horrible past.

In fact, there was only one Izaya-relared thing that was still in his mind.

Their most recent encounter at Shimizudani park.

He just couldn’t help but replay the events on the Valentine’s Day; the things he had said to the flea, the things flea had said to him, their actions...

He did regret some of the things he had thought, said and did that night.

Lots…

He had let the parasite get under his skin in a way he never had before.

Just thinking back to it made him feel stupid, angry, hurt and more than a little embarrassed.

That whole fucking “drama” between them in the park was so over the top ridiculous and uncomfortably complex.

But worst of all it was vague as fuck in a way that no other interaction of his with Izaya had ever been.

Shizuo wasn’t one to overanalyze things and read between the lines for hidden meanings or search for subtle hints.

He didn’t second guess his actions or words.

He said and did what he felt.

He didn’t second guess other people’s actions or words either.

If they said or did something it was because they meant it.

And yet this simplistic logic wasn’t enough when it came to a certain fleabag.

He had though in the past that his enemy was a complicated bastard who liked to play mind games
with those he wanted to fuck over, but he was coming to the realization that when it came to Izaya nothing -fucking nothing- was simple!

Izaya was such an overly complicated mess with so many edges and thorns and walls that it was practically impossible to understand, get through to or sympathize with!

Shizuo had come to the shocking realization that Izaya didn’t only act ambiguous during his shitty schemes for the “fun” of it -whatever sick fun he could get anyways.

He was ambiguous -as a person!

Right down to his core!

Shizuo couldn’t understand how he had never picked up on it before.

Truth be told if things hadn’t turned out the way they had then he would have most likely never had.

He used to take pride to how easily he could read Izaya’s malicious intentions and lies because of his sharp instinct and sensitivity to bullshit but now he knew that his understanding of Izaya only went that far.

He was at loss!

He had taken a glimpse on Izaya’s feelings for the first time in a decade -and not the crazy “I hate you cause it’s fun” feelings!

Normal “I am angry and upset with you so I hate you” feelings!

And yet they seemed like a foggy tangled mess!

It was understandable that Izaya hated him so much considering how he ended up because of him; but that was as far as his understanding went.

All the rest were….weird.

However, the weirdest of all had been after they snapped out of their frenzies when they had been ready to tear each other apart.

Shizuo couldn’t help but think back to the way that disgusting little bug had clung on him -only mere moments after he had made such a fuss for Shizuo to stop touching him; his closed fist slipping from his shoulder and falling further down; thin fingers opening momentarily to grab a piece of his shirt and yet never quite leaving the blade.

Izaya had refused to face him during that time thankfully because Shizuo wasn’t sure what expression he himself was making at the time -he just knew it couldn’t have been anything good though.

He had stolen a glimpse on his face then; brown eyes huge and unblinking that seemed focused on his chest with such an intensity that Shizuo had the fleeting thought of dropping him on the ground for fear Izaya would snap out of it and stab him through the heart when he’d least expect it.

A couple of times flea’s thumb had brushed over his chest caressing him unintentionally; these light strokes had made Shizuo shudder internally.

To him, finding themselves suddenly tangled like that had felt disturbingly intimate; his body heating up instantly in mortification.
He had never had any sort of intimate contact with someone that wasn’t his family or friend so, to think that the first person he had experienced such intense physical closeness had been Izaya of all people felt wrong.

The fact that Izaya was a man hadn’t bothered him as much as that it was -well- Izaya.

But in the end nothing was enough to mess with his better judgement and cloud his decision-making process.

Shizuo didn’t do complicated and he wouldn’t start with Izaya of all people.

He didn’t know what the fuck he had been thinking almost believing he had seen anything relatively uncontaminated within such vermin; in the end Izaya’s horrible personality had resurfaced full force anyways.

And yet that thing Izaya said after that moment was gone was something that stayed with him more than the insults they had exchanged.

But he couldn’t talk about it with anyone apart from Celty or Shinra for no one else should find out -from him- that Izaya was back; not even Mairu and Kururi, even though it didn’t sit well inside Shizuo to keep flea’s whereabouts a secret from his own family.

As for talking to Celty about it…well…he didn’t want to.

They were back to being friends but the resent revelation of her hiding things from him had seriously shaken him.

Most importantly though, Celty was incredibly biased against Izaya -not unlike himself.

He didn’t want their conversation to turn out to another “Izaya is trying to manipulate you, don’t believe him” kind of thing.

While he wanted to wholeheartedly agree with that notion, he needed to be as neutral as possible; to be able to see things from an outsider’s perspective because he was too invested in the situation to be objective.

The fact that Izaya had called him out on his prejudice more than once and him not wanting to prove that parasite right yet at another thing didn’t have as much to do with it as for the fact that he had for once sensed Izaya being somewhat genuine about the things he was saying -and the ones that he wasn’t.

Shizuo knew he himself had great trouble to stay unprejudiced when Izaya was concerned so if he voiced these feelings of his to another non-objective conservationist, the thing that his gut was trying to tell him -the things that Izaya was saying to him beneath all that ambiguity- would be clouded and lost.

Moreover, he was starting to doubt Celty’s good judgement on someone’s character in general.

He couldn’t ignore the fact that his friend’s personal feelings on someone greatly affected her sense of right and wrong.

She favored him and Shinra to such an extent that she tended to turn a blind eye to their mistakes or brushed off lots of their wrongdoings -even the more serious ones.

It made sense that she would not caught Izaya any slack at all -had she ever?- considering how much
she disliked him -not without reason of course but still…

Not to mention she had actually believed Shizuo would chase after Izaya to finish him off if he knew he was alive -even after he had cooled off for fuck’s sake!

Moreover, he didn’t want to put in her head -no pun intended- that she had to protect him ever again.

But for all reasons above the moment Celty had asked him what happened between him and the flea a week after Valentines he felt like keeping everything to himself.

The ‘incident’s’ authenticity should remain intact.

[What happened when you saw him?] she had shown him her PDA.

He was sure Shinra had told her exactly what Shizuo had revealed to him once he had returned home that night after their drunken heart-to-heart a day after Valentine’s.

“Didn’t Shinra tell you? It’s over.”

Because it was wasn't it? Izaya had told him to fuck off quite literally -fucking izaya had said to him to fuck off moments after accusing him of being obsessed over his flea ass! What a laugh!

[He did but he didn’t know much…What do you mean over?]

“He is fine Celty. We are just done. Won't see each other again.”

[But what exactly happened??] Celty kept pressing because unlike Shinra she wasn’t satisfied unless she had a clear picture of everything concerning those she was close to.

“Made a deal. Act like strangers and all” he told her the exact same thing he had told Shinra.

[That's all?]

She kept pressing and pressing but he couldn’t give her what he wanted. He didn’t want his gut feeling to get misguided over negative feelings.

And of course he wouldn’t say to anyone that he wanted to sort of understand what was going on in flea’s head because that would generate even more questions.

“That’s all Celty.”

[Are you sure there is no catch?]

That!

There!

That’s what he didn’t want to hear!

He knew the flea had been somewhat honest.

He knew it because for once he had managed to get a reaction out of Shizuo other than anger, hate and disgust.

Shizuo always reacted accordingly to whatever vibe Izaya gave off; he couldn’t really explain how it worked.
It was like he picked up hints from Izaya and reacted to them in a way to match them perfectly in a clear straightforward manner.

It only made sense that he was confused now because Izaya, despite his bravado and declarations, for once had been unsure himself and was subconsciously giving off so many mixed signals at once that Shizuo’s brain while obviously had picked upon, couldn’t keep up with resulting to him being lost in the context.

“I am. It’s fine Celty” he said already feeling a slight irritation rising at that crazy bastard who tormented him without even trying anymore.

[You can't trust anything Izaya says! You have to be careful!!]

“I know who Izaya is Celty! I haven't fucking forgotten!” he snapped instantly regretted it seeing her flinching.

“Sorry...I’m sorry. I am not angry with you anymore, I promise.”

[Are you sure???]

“Don’t take me seriously; you know how I am. Don’t worry too much. He meant it. We’re done” he tried somewhat gentler.

[Shizuo..Did something else happen?]

“Like what?” he had straightened up on his couch in alarm instant.

[I don't know..Something.. Just, shouldn't you be happy?]

He was happy!

Just because he wasn’t screaming it from the roof from the top of his lungs it didn’t mean he wasn’t happy!

“I am happy Celty. Fucking izaya finally fucked off on his own!” he half laughed to the incredulity of it all, trying to highlight his happiness a bit more to satisfy her.

[You don't seem happy. You seem on edge.]

Had Celty known about what happened in the park?

What if she had seen them?

Was she pressing so much because she knew?

“We just talked Celty; we didn’t do anything!” he had risen from the couch as if ready to bolt, his paranoia getting the better of him and his body heating up increasingly fast.

Celty had risen after him shoving her PDA in his face and holding him still with her other hand.

[What are you talking about? Shizuo why won’t you trust me? I’m here!!]

He had closed his eyes and inhaled a couple of time to release some tension.

With the way he was going about it he was only making things worse; he should change his approach; him getting worked up got Celty worked up.
“Celty calm down. Everything is fine...Man, and you say I’m on edge!”

Jokingly knocked on his friend’s yellow helmet as if he would at a door.

“Hey, we’re good, you and I, okay? Izaya doesn't matter, he fucked off and he won’t bother me anymore. It won't happen again, ‘kay?”

She had nodded a bit unsure clenching her PDA tightly as if she wanted to write more but let him drag her to the worn-out couch to sit next to him regardless.

“Let’s talk about only happy things from now on.”

~~~~~

It was a good thing; getting Celty of his back about the ‘Incident’ at an early point.

He wanted to talk about it; he really did.

He just wanted the opinion of someone more neutral about everything.

But who could he ask?

Shizuo had needed someone unbiased to help him make sense of where himself and Izaya stood now and be able to offer an objective opinion on their uncharacteristic behavior.

Someone who could call out both him and Izaya both on their bullshit without having predetermined beforehand who was at fault and who wasn’t.

Was there even a single person who could do that?

No.

Everyone Shizuo knew was acquainted to him so obviously they’d side with him.

Those who were acquainted to both of them once again they let their personal feelings get in the way.

The only other option he had was to grab Izaya again slam him on a wall and force him explain what the fuck he meant with that.

But he couldn’t do that either.

Because he shouldn’t care and because slamming the pest on a wall meant that he’d have to touch him and well.. he shouldn’t really slam him anywhere or force him into anything because he would be hurting him and taking advantage of his disability; he should be careful with how to handle him which was really difficult considering Izaya was annoying as fuck.

That, and he couldn’t risk the flea looking at him weirdly again. It had creeped him out.

“Tom-san, can I ask you something?” he asked when he couldn’t take it anymore one day while he was strolling Ikebukuro with his sempai.

It shouldn’t hurt to ask Tom-san about it, if he didn’t reveal it was related to Izaya right?

Tom-san wasn’t one to prod.
“Sure.”

He took an inhale of his cigarette and tried to bring back Izaya’s words right after the incident as accurately as possible.

“You keep taking things from me. I always have to share or you just take what’s mine” he murmured watching the smoke from his cigarette dissolving.

“Pardon?” Tom-san had asked him stunned.

“Why would someone say that?”

It was finally out in the open.

The thing that had been bothering him so bad.

“Did someone say that to you?” his sempai asked looking shocked.

“No. Two people were fighting yesterday. One was saying things like that...I don’t know -it got me curious as to what this person could be thinking, I guess…”

“It’s not like you to be invested in strangers.”

It wasn’t.

What he had been thinking asking Tom-san something like that so suddenly!

“Sorry. It’s stupid, I shouldn’t trouble you with such things.”

“It’s not stupid. It’s just, relationships can be hard you know?”

He didn’t.

Shizuo didn’t have lots of people he was close with but he was lucky to say everything had been fairly simple with the very few people he was acquainted with.

“It didn’t look like they were anything to each other.”

“Someone doesn’t say things like that to a person they are indifferent.”

Shizuo thought Izaya was pretty indifferent about him -unless the pest was bored that was.

“I can’t imagine people that different be anything to each other.”

“You know that’s not true. We are different but we’re friends. All I’m saying is, it is not impossible!”

Tom-san was only a year older than him and yet he was so much wiser. He made Shizuo feel like a stupid infant sometimes.

“I know it’s not. But those guys – “

“Yeah?”

“Those guys belonged to different leagues.”

Because they did, didn’t they?
Just put them one next to each other and the comparison would be inevitable!

“Leagues? Like socially or financially?”

Tom-san had been already catching on.

“Not just that. The only way to explain it is…It’s like- you put the best you can find next to the worst you can find. Not that the other seemed bad just…”

Because Izaya was really talented; he was intelligent -Shizuo had heard rumors in high school that Izaya had been offered a place to at least a couple of the top universities in Tokyo though he didn’t know if the flea ever attended any; he was successful in everything he did, he had managed to build a life for himself from nothing twice and for crying out loud and he was even the better looking!

Shizuo couldn’t even begin to compare!

Next to Izaya he looked like a joke; rough; ill-mannered; poor; untouched; with no particular talents or achievements; failing time after time in everything he did.

“Well there you have a possible answer!”

No.

“I don’t. The one who was saying these things was the better one. It didn’t make sense.”

“We can’t make assumptions like that based on appearances now.” Tom-san said so kindly that Shizuo almost thought his sempai knew he wasn’t discussing strangers with Shizuo.

“I know. But, that person could be flawless…that’s what I though.”

Shizuo had seen lots of people in his 28 years of life.

And out of everyone there had only been two people that were the closest to what he had in mind when he thought of ‘perfect’.

One was Kasuka.

The other was Izaya.

“That person must have made an impression. The way you talk about him.”

“He did. It didn’t make sense for someone like that to say such things.. So it bothers me..”

“Well, he sounds troubled to be honest.”

“Troubled?”

Izaya?

Izaya didn’t have troubles.

Maybe now because of his disability but in general Izaya had never been ‘troubled’.

“I mean, from your perspective he was great and all but someone who actually felt accomplished wouldn’t be bothered with someone of a..em..lower status then in the first place..You know what I mean?”
“A -a bit?”

“Wouldn’t you be angry if you thought someone took something of yours without permission?”

Yes. He had gotten so angry at Kasuka just for taking his pudding when they were kids and he had lifted the fridge in one of his fits -and it was just a fucking pudding!

“I guess..?” he replied unsurely but inside he wasn’t feeling unsure at all.

He would have been furious.

“There you have it. Maybe that persons was just jealous.”

Izaya jealous of him??

That was incredulous!

He didn’t think he had anything that Izaya would want.

He was sure that everything he had Izaya possessed as well in better versions and larger quantities.

‘Maybe that’s not what he wants.’

Weirdly enough this though had never occurred to Shizuo until that point.

Shizuo had always defined Izaya’s wants and needs based on his own.

He didn’t know why it hadn’t occurred to him before -maybe because he was so simpleminded..

It was oddly obvious.

Izaya liked bitter things and Shizuo sweet.

Shizuo hated mending in others business and the flea got off on that.

Izaya and him were different people.

It only made sense that they would have different needs and wants just like likes and dislikes.

“You think he was jealous?” he asked still somewhat disbelieving at the possibility.

“I can’t tell for sure! I mean I wasn’t there to witness what happened from the beginning and we don’t know these people so it’s all an assumption. I am just trying to put myself to such context. For all we know the other guy slept with his wife or something.. But Shizuo, why get so worked up over strangers?”

“I’ve never heard someone..” ‘Izaya’ “..being so honest.”

Because he was coming to realize more and more that Izaya during that moment had been painstakingly honest.

“You can’t understand someone you haven’t even met Shizuo...” Tom-san supplied and he had a point.

For the most part, he didn’t even know Izaya really.

“You’re right..”
“Is this thing really important to you?”

“I don’t know...Not really.”

But if he had figured out things sooner then maybe his life would have been a bit easier in the past, things wouldn’t have gotten out of hand and neither him nor Izaya would have to live with such big consequences because of their actions.

“...”

Tom-san hadn’t said anything but his questioning look had been too obvious to ignore.

“It’s just, that person reminded me a bit of -of Izaya.”

With the way Tom-san’s eyes widened impossibly behind his glasses he could tell that he wasn’t expecting the conversation to go down that road.

Shizuo hadn’t mentioned Izaya again to Tom-san for the longest time.

“Shizuo…” Tom-san said somewhat nervously.

“It’s fine Tom-san. I know this wasn’t Izaya. I just thought...”

“Shizuo..” Tom-san repeated this time more sternly as if he was about to give him a warning.

“Orihara-san left years ago. I am sure he is living a good life and is healthy and happy with whatever he does.”

He doubted Tom-san actually believed that Izaya was happy or healthy -let alone alive- but Shizuo had to give him credit for his words coming out sure and stable.

“You should do the same you know? Don’t let him win.”

He knew Tom-san was right again but he couldn’t help but wonder why when it came to him and Izaya it always had to be about winning or losing even when they didn’t interact with each other.

It was fucking exhausting.

“I know.”

But while he had wholeheartedly agreed with Tom-san’s advice that didn’t meant it was easy to follow though.

Not because he didn’t want, but because he couldn’t.

No, that wasn’t Shizuo just being difficult and a pushover.

He really, truly, couldn’t.

It was impossible -physically!

He didn't understand it but his legs always seemed to take him to the other man.

Whenever he left his mind wonder or shut his brain down and just wandered around, he would always end up running into Izaya.

In fact most of the time he had to stay alert and try to be overly aware of Izaya’s presence in the
district to be able to avoid him because the moment he relaxed his legs would take him to the flea without him even realizing.

It was almost like a need, instinctual and primitive and so fucking impossible to suppress!!

He was lucky though because Izaya never seemed to be able to tell when he was nearby.

He was blissfully unaware of Shizuo's eyes trailing after him unwillingly; taking in everything about him; his surroundings; his wheelchair; the people he was with; his body; his face.

He hadn't planned chasing after Izaya, he swore to Kami-sama he really hadn't!

It was just, his body worked on its own sometimes; exactly like when he was angry and wanted to smash something.

He wasn't some fucking stalker and he had no intention to creep after the fleabag so the fact that he always managed to track him down without intending to was infuriating!

Moreover, if Izaya picked up to him being always around Shizuo would look like an idiot!

Not to mention that the flea would get impossible to deal with!

He would rightly believe that Shizuo was breaking the deal and was butting in his business and then he would lash out and that could result to a new bloodbath!

And of course, he couldn't tell to izaya that he couldn’t control his own fucking body!

He would make even more of an ass of himself!

But even worse Izaya would think he had been right time he had accused Shizuo of having an obsession with him!

None the less, with the way he was acting he was proving him right and even if they pest didn't know, Shizuo did which pissed the shit out of him.

He had tried to fight this urge for weeks but the more he did the more he realized that it wasn't working and he would end up around him anyways.

He didn't want izaya to be right.

He didn't want to be the one with the obsession.

Izaya was the one always seeking him out to annoy him or mess with his life; he was the fucking obsessed one not Shizuo!

And yet Izaya was acting perfectly normal -too normal even.

Izaya…Normal!

While Shizuo was playing hide and seek with an unsuspecting flea all over Chiyoda!

For fucks sake this was his chance to let go and yet he wasn’t doing a really good job at it.

He was scared. He knew he couldn't brutally break a ten-year-old habit like he couldn't stop smoking entirely even though he had reduced it but he was starting to get a bit concerned with his own behavior.
So naturally, after this whole thing became too annoying to resolve, he did what he always did.

He stopped trying to control himself and gave in.

Izaya was too busy having the time of his life -something that Shizuo should also be doing- to notice anyways.

At one-point at a later point Shizuo hypothesized that this whole stalkerish behavior must be coming from him still having trouble accepting Izaya being alive.

He had been dead to him for so long that even after meeting him twice, fighting with him, touching him, Izaya still didn't feel real at times.

Seeing him for a moment or two had been helping him cope somehow.

It was some sort of reassurance that he wasn’t a murderer.

But it was also punishment for succumbing himself to his monstrous urges.

Shizuo deserved to be seeing the consequences of his actions; having a constant reminder of what he was capable of.

Even if himself and Izaya were over Shizuo didn’t have the right to forget…

~~~~~

The more time passed with him staying out of Izaya’s radar he was starting to notice that the flea seemed to be gradually becoming more and more cautious of his surroundings and agitated.

It was almost like the other could suddenly sense him as well.

Like he knew he was close and was trying to blow his cover.

He would turn his stupid face at random moments to random and thank god Shizuo would be alert enough to duck and hide behind walls, in corners or shops and wait for the flea to get lost.

Once Izaya almost had seen him!

He was walking on a well populated road close to Akihabara station being already in a terrible mood for almost walking into the same café Mr. and Mrs. Flea were having their study-date when once again he became increasingly alert of the smell invading his system that had made him stop dead in his tracks.

It wasn’t really easy to locate him at first with the other man being seated in his wheelchair and a crazy amount of people around him; his head turning frantically to all directions panicking at the thought that Izaya had seen him already.

He needed to make sure he would be the first to locate him so he would know which direction to escape!

The second his eyes had spotted flea’s well combed head a few meters behind him talking to his woman at the opposite site of the road he swore Izaya had turned his head all of a sudden and fucking saw him!

He had jumped inside the first shop that was the closest to him which had turned out to be some random maid café with a massive entrance fee, extremely pricey and basic deserts and clients who
looked at least like your average middle-aged hentai.

Him escaping the pest that day seemed to be rewarded with a hole in his wallet, a very uncomfortable experience to say the least and he had once again run off of his pills way earlier than he should!

To say he was annoyed at Izaya by the time he reached his home that night would be an understatement.

That same night it had hit him how this whole thing was ludicrous and he would have laughed if he wasn’t the protagonist of the shitshow!

He was running away from Izaya!

He was running away and hiding from that pest for weeks like some fucking coward!

Him!

Fucking Heiwajima Shizuo acting like he pissed his pants every time he caught a glimpse of Orihara Izaya on the street!

Like he was fucking afraid of that weak spineless poisonous little bug!

Unbelievable!

…

But.. he couldn’t stand seeing him, even if he needed to in order to remind himself that he was alive.

Because he still couldn't believe how the fuck he had hurt him that badly.

He was disgusted with himself every time he caught a glimpse of the other -being around Izaya suffocated him.

However he shouldn’t at least act like a wimp.

Why he should be the one running away from the flea, Izaya was on the wrong for the biggest part; he didn't have the right to come back and bully him out of his city with his annoying presence and nice job and decent looks and cute girlfriend!

He had run away first!!

He should fuck off and run back to Osaka where he belonged and why not leave Japan entirely.

That would have been perfect!

Shizuo knew there was no chance of that happening but one could dream..

When the next day he went to Shinra and Celty’s place to get more pills he knew he wouldn’t hear the end of Shinra’s obnoxious rumblings about the fleabag’s whereabouts and him finishing another prescription way too early.

To be fair Shinra wasn't as much interested in what happened with him and Izaya since he "didn't care what they did with each other as long as they didn't disrupt his perfect life with his beloved Celty with their selfishness" as he had not-so-politely put it.
Seriously this guy was impossible sometimes!!

Anyways, Shinra's main concern was when exactly the flea would visit him so they could mend their friendship and become "normal friends" like himself and the megane doctor had apparently become..? -All thanks to Shinra's initiations of course according to the doctor himself.

While Shizuo had to reluctantly agree that they had grown closer he wasn't sure what was so "abnormal" about their friendship before that needed to be "fixed" but he wouldn't bother to delve in Shinra's uncanny brain.

No thanks.

So yeah, basically every time Shizuo saw Shinra, and boy he saw him lots these days, the other man would start bombarding him with flea-related questions until Shizuo eventually would snap at him to shut the fuck up for Shinra to begrudgingly do so until the next time they would see each other.

Seriously why Izaya had to be such an asshole?

From the looks of it, it didn’t seem that the flea had any intention of doing both himself and Shinra a favor by showing up to see their mutual friend any time soon and Shizuo wasn't sure how the fuck he could get the megane of his back if that was actually the case.

With Izaya continuing to ignore his existence and him not sticking to his therapy Shinra was about to blow his lid when Shizuo had dropped by his place and sheepishly explained that he was out of medicine and needed a new prescription.

He was walking up and down the living room waving his hands in all direction and lecturing him non-stop.

"Shizuo-kun. That's the second time in a month! I am not helping you kill yourself! I told you, didn’t I? You have to stay alive for my sake Shizuo-kun! Why don’t you ever listening to what I am saying?! You can’t keep overdoing it with these things; we don’t know how your body will react! What if you get addicted to them and you end up a junky, huh?! What if you overdose and die?!" Shinra was talking his ears off with his high-pitched yelling that altered to whining only to become yelling again.

"Chill out Shinra!" He snapped rather alarmed at Shinra’s fantasies only to murmur half assed a second later "I'm not trying to kill myself and I'm not turning into a junky ‘kay?"

Shinra had actually snorted at him at that but Shizuo could only managed to throw a glare back at him halfheartedly because he knew he was the one on the wrong.

“I just got confused with the doses again..” he finished with his lame excuse,

He wasn’t planning to kill himself obviously. Since he hadn’t done so during that horrible first year after the flea had disappeared, he wouldn’t do so now that things were getting better!

He just couldn’t deal with seeing Izaya all the time, that’s all!

"Three tablets per day Shizuo-kun! Three! One every eight hours! What's there to confuse? This was prescribed medication for four weeks Shizuo kun! How many are you taking per day? That's not candy!"

"Fine, I'll start paying you for them Shinra! Calm down okay? I’ll remember next time.."
This actually made the doctor snicker happily.

"It's actually funny when you are the one to tell me to calm down!"

"Shut up.." he had whispered in embarrassment.

"Either way, you can't pay me Shizuo-kun. These are too expensive for you."

Wow! Shinra was doing an excellent job rubbing in his face what a loser Shizuo was these days.

"But that's not about money it's about you not sticking to your therapy!... Did Orihara-kun do something to annoy you again?"

And of course, Shinra would bring flea into this somehow!

He had stopped after what had happened on their final fight but now that they both knew Izaya was alive Shinra was back to it full force!

Did Izaya do something..?!

The answer was obvious: "No."

"Hm..So he did something again!" the doctor stated exasperated rather than asked.

"He didn't!"

Because he hadn't!

He hadn't seen Izaya since -well probably two days ago when he last went to Chiyoda?

"You replied too fast!"

"How the fuck should I reply then? No means no Shinra!"

"Did you fight?"

"We didn't!"

They hadn't interacted at all.

Izaya was too engaged in his conversation to notice Shizuo resting at the corner of an alley having a cigarette -which he almost choked on to when Izaya suddenly passed right next to him out of fucking nowhere!!

Ts! He had gotten distrected again so of course would have ended up somewhere close to where Izaya was!

"Okay let's say I believe you." From Shinra’s tone obviously he could tell the other didn't believe him at all.

"Are you calling me a liar?" He had growled.

He didn't want to bully Shinra but well... A man had to do what a man had to do.

"Whaa- n-no! Of course not Shizuo kun!"

"Good."
"So... When is he coming to see me?" And just like that he went back to his questioning instantly all bright and excited again!

"How the fuck should I know?"

Really now, why Shinra was asking him about what Izaya had in that ugly head of his?

"You said he told you he'd come!" Shinra was back to whining again.

Where the fuck was Celty?

Shinra’s tantrums were too much for him to deal with alone!

"It’s been 36 days! When is he coming?"

He had said that Izaya would come to not upset Shinra further that night at his place but maybe he shouldn’t have said anything and get the doctor’s hopes up.

"I don't know! Shinra, don't you know Izaya? He is a busy bastard!"

"I can't wait any longer Shizuo-kun!"

"And what do you want me to do about it? Go grab him and drag him over?"

"You will do this for me?!" Shinra suddenly perked up in a way that Shizuo could only describe as fucking creepy at the idea. "Ohh Shizuo-kun~!"

"No!"

What the fuck, was Shinra stupid or something?!

As if Shizuo would ever be the one to initiate contact with the flea first for any reason!

"Can you give me his number then?"

"I don't have his fucking number Shinra! Izaya and I aren't friends!"

"Fine! Then tell him to hurry and come to see me! It's been over a month! He had his time!"

"I'm running fucking circles to avoid the bastard every day and you want me to go up and talk to him? Are you fucking kidding me?"

Seriously what was Shinra on tonight?!

Didn’t he understood how fragile this trace between him and Izaya was and the they couldn’t start invading each other’s lives like that just because?

Well.. knowing the doctor, he probably didn’t -or he did but didn’t really care.

"Ehhhh?? You're hiding from Orihara-kun?! You!?" Shinra’s facial expression went from stunned to disbelief to fucking amused and the next moment he started laughing like a madman!

“Did you -Did you swap souls or something!? Oh Shizuo-kun, this - is - hilarious!!”

“Shut up Shinra! I'm not hiding, I'm just putting some distance!”
He felt so ridiculous; his cheeks were flaring watching Shinra laughing and knowing that the other was right.

“You've already done that with your "deal" that doesn't even let you to tell him to come see his only friend!...You don't have to hide~!”

“I said I'm not fucking hiding! Give me the meds and I'll go, I have work to do.”

“Hah? Since when do you work on a Friday night?”

“Since now” Shizuo told him pointedly still annoyed.

“Can’t~! Sorry!” the doctor said cheekily. “I mean that I run out because you don’t stick to your therapy.”

“Sorry~”

“It’s fine Shizuo-kun, drop by during the end of next week and I’ll have some. Just make sure to keep track with any withdrawal symptoms.”

“Thanks, Shinra.I will.” He stood and headed to the door.

“And if you stop hiding from Orihara-kun and he talks to you first you can tell him then that he has to come okay?”

“Later.”

“Bye bye Shizuo-kun!”

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Shizuo didn’t drop by at Shinra’s until the next weekend.

They had received not too long ago an anonymous lead that Matsuyuta Gin had been hiding in Nagoya which resulted to lots of back and forth between there and Tokyo for a couple of debt collectors -himself among them.

In the end it had been another debt collector who had found the sly bastard but Shizuo didn’t really care since it meant less trouble for himself.

Besides he had been payed extra for these trips and he was even given a couple of days off which he had decided to spend visiting his family so he could get away from Tokyo for a bit.

He had felt a bit dizzy once or twice on the train but he wasn’t really sure if that was a withdraw symptom from cutting his medication suddenly or just from tiredness.

It didn’t bother him much so he didn’t really care.

When he had finally dropped by at Shinra’s to get his prescription he had been greeted by a flinching Celty.

“Yo.”

Seriously, why was Celty flinching all the time lately?

“You're baking anything?” he asked after she had let him in to which she had shaken her head
negatively.

“Is Shinra home?” another nob which was accompanied with wrapping her arms around his body to envelop him in a hug that didn’t seem to lessen any time soon; instead squeezing him for dear life while he started to make his way inside.

Once he had finally walked into the living room he suddenly understood by self was trying to bruise his ribs hugging him in an iron grip.

His eyes were locked with vibrant red.

Or was it soft brown?

He couldn't really tell under this light; that color could be either and his brain was getting foggy increasingly fast. It was like he was looking but not really seeing.

And he wanted to see.

He was in autopilot -struggling to appear unaffected; struggling to speak, to function and to look indifferent when on the inside his heart was drumming and his stomach felt hollow.

The only thing his mind could really register was that possibility that had seemed crazy before.

That really tini-tiny possibility that at that moment didn’t look entirely unreal.

Had he actually done it?

Had he actually for once in a whole fucking decade...had he managed to get through to Izaya?

Chapter End Notes

Hehe so Izaya thinks Shizuo is "godly" and Shizuo thinks Izaya is "(close to) perfect"? Oookay...XD

Did anyone guess that Shizuo hadn't actually gone anywhere?

PS. For some reason I love the idea of Shizuo playing hide and seek around Chiyoda with an unsuspecting Izaya with their roles in reverse of sorts. XD I can't see him doing it to that extent in canon but even there I can definitely see him avoiding Izaya if he ever got seriously fed up with him.

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