A gladiator (Latin: gladiator, "swordman", from gladius, "sword") was an armed combatant who entertained audiences in the Roman Republic and Roman Empire in violent confrontations with other gladiators, wild animals, and condemned criminals. Irrespective of their origin, gladiators offered spectators an example of Rome’s martial ethics and, in fighting or dying well, they could inspire admiration and popular acclaim.

This is where Nakahara Chuuya lives. This is where he fights. And this is where Dazai Osamu will found him. A noble with a promise to fulfill and a future prescribed but unwanted. This is where he will feel alive.

Between life and death, a kill or be killed world, two people will fell in love against odds and rights. Two people will try to live while The Fates start their countdown for their lives.

Will they make it before the last string get cut?
See the end of the work for notes.
"Long time no see"

The arena was on fire.

Red, scary red fire; that shallows everything as it runs up and down; left and right.

Everywhere.

As he runs; the fire runs too.

Because he is the fire.

A beautiful fire that won’t be put down unless he shallow them all. Kill them all.

Be the victor of them all.

That’s the purpose of the game anyway.

Here, in this very arena that he glows like the angry heat of the sun, is the Arena. Here, slaves from various lost wars, criminals, socially marginalized people, maybe even volunteers and these convicted to death are fighting for their lives. Little their lives matters. It’s all about the spectacle. They are nothing more than the entertainers for the Roman people’s joy. And they value no more.

Here, they are fighting against animals, criminals or each other (whatever the Emperor wants) and if He decides that it wasn’t ‘funny’ enough, ‘entertaining’ enough, ‘bloody’ enough; he kills them. Otherwise, he grads them another day in this intoxicated world. Simply as that.

Here is where he lives. Where he shines.
He is a gladiator, and damn good one.

The last one of the criminals fells on the sand, unceremonially. He was a rather big and masculine man; with dark skin and ugly dirty marks on his skin. And yet! He was nothing for him.

He is bathed in blood. His hair are all over the place, since he cut his right side to free himself from the other criminal’s hands. Now his fire red hair is longer at his left side and only till his jaw at his right side. But that’s okay. It only intensifies the craziness in his eyes. This azure eyes that jumps at every corner of the arena, waiting for his next victim.

He is surrounded by a circle of dead bodies. Some miss parts. Some unrecognizable. They are not all of his victims. The other guy and the rest of the now dead gladiators did a good job too. Gave a nice show too. But they weren’t the winner. No, the record is still in his bloody hands.

Mori stands up and the crowd that had gone wild sits back to its sits; waiting. They were cheering loudly as the show proceeded and when the duel had began, they were cheering for more blood. Almost all of them had stand up from their sits, enthralled by the adrenalin and the enthusiasm of the deadly fight.

The gladiator looks up. He is breathing hard. His unfocused eyes lock to the Emperor and he immediately fells to his knees. Sword still held tight. Too afraid to let go. This man holds his life after all, and he didn’t fight almost to death all this months just to give up now. No.. he won’t go without fight.

The Emperor doesn’t look at him. He looks at the crowd.

He raises his hand and the crowd cheers.

The gladiator gets to live another day.
Nakahara Chuuya survives yet another fight.

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The city hasn’t change at all since he last saw it. It still has the grace from all this years ago and seems un-aged. Still a marvelous powerful city; too arrogant and corrupted enough to let go of its throne. Rome is an empire and its rulers are all people with the ambition to rule the world. Easily you can imagine that a city like that is a tough appointment for the fools who dreams glory over its underpinning. Every single enemy was defeated to the ground and that only lead to more powerful, more arrogant and more selfish people to rise. The colonies may see Rome as a powerful mother to obey and to protect them, but the reality was a bit of different than that.

Dazai Osamu is no happy to be back.

It’s been years since he left. And by saying ‘left’, it means banishment.

He left after the civil war ended and Mori became the new Emperor. No, it’s not a punishment. Dazai was self-banished at Athens. Why you ask? Simply. Because he was mourning the loss of his good friend. He still is, if you ask. Oda Sakunosuke was accused (false-accused, according to Dazai) to treason and sentenced to death by the last Emperor. Shortly, after that Dazai took part at the war beside Mori and help the downfall of the previous Emperor. Mori took the throne and Dazai left, disgusted as he was by the politics and backstabbing of his country. He found shelter in Athens, where he made a name of himself as lawyer and orator.

He would prefer to stay at Athens if he could, but Mori summoned him back to be his right hand man.

‘Troublesome’, he said, but he knew well that Mori’s words were a command and he cannot disobey them. But that was fine too. His students wanted to see Rome and wouldn’t shut about it until they tag along with him.

Now officially Dazai had one student, a young boy named Akutagawa Ryuunosuke, no older than 20 years old. He was an immigrant from Sicily. Along with his little sister he had ride a boat and search for a better life than the poor one they had born to. Dazai teaches him the laws and the legal stuff on both the Athenian and Roman legal system, along with oratory. He will be a great orator
when he learns how to restrain his anger. The other ‘student’ was an 18 years old boy named Nakajima Atsushi from Thebes. He wasn’t an Athenian citizen but a slave. Nonetheless, Dazai toke him under his wing and teaches him the stoic philosophy. He is defiantly talented, but he needs to believe a bit more to himself. He is full of energy, stubborn and pure innocent and kindness in the same time. Dazai has many times simile him with a tiger.

These two were very competitive till they decide that it was better to just fuck each other than kill each other and now they are dating. Fortunaly, it works for Dazai and their small circle of friends and family now that their bickering is cause. Unfortunally, Atsushi is still technically a slave till they come back to Athens and Dazai can give him his freedom. Because of this, Dazai can’t do much to give him comfort in Rome and thus he has to endure whatever shit these nobles will put on him. He had to leave behind the clothes that Dazai and his lover gave him and dressed in a simply white robe meant for slaves only. Back in Athens Atsushi was respected, here he couldn’t even speak without order.

Dazai sighs deeply. They will reached the palace in 30 minutes and he is truly not ready for it. He missed nothing on his absent and he is no eager to be back.

He turns from the window of the carriage to look at his students. Atsushi is curl up in a ball and uses Akutagawa’s thighs as a pillow while Akutagawa is sleeping with his arms crossed on his chest. For once his deep frown isn’t present.

Dazai chuckles at the sight.

What is he gonna do with them?

Mori will defiantly want to mess with them and he can’t promise that they will keep their mouths shut. Plus in Rome it’s a huge disgrace for two men to be in love, so as long as they stay here they will need to keep it low and a secret. They won’t be able to sleep in the same bed either and Atsushi will be send to the slaves’ room at night. Akutagawa will not be pleased with this and Dazai can’t promise that they will not sneak to meet each other. The problem is how good they are at hide and seek.

The carriage comes into a sudden stop that jolt Akutagawa awake and throw Atsushi from his sit. Dazai barks a laugh that only earns him a glare from Atsushi.

“So sorry sorry Atsushi! Need help?”
“No need Dazai. At least I’m awake now”, Atsushi said shrugging.

“Did we arrive?” Akatugawa’s voice was still sore from sleeping. He cough a couple of times to make it better.

“Yup we did! Remember what we said boys?” Dazai smirked knowingly.

His students sigh deeply. “Don’t be too obvious and don’t piss people off”. They said in union. Well mostly Atsushi, Akutagawa mumble something under his breath.

“Aaaand?”, Dazai coaxed them.

“We won’t be too loud.” Akutagawa said in low voice looking out of the window causing Atsushi to flush a bit.

“I’m sure I said no fucking at all – ”

“Dazai!”

“Okay okay. Sorry!” Dazai giggled. Damn it, he is gonna miss messing with them while they are here.

There was a soft knock at the door before it opened bringing them back to reality. The first person to greet him back home was a face Dazai would rather not to see at all if possible. There, same as always, stood Sakaguchi Ango. Ango were one of the few that watch the fight of the Emperors from afar. He was in the republican’s consul at the late Emperor’s time and now that Mori is in charge he is at the Senates. He is an intelligent man, but for Dazai he is a coward. Ango was once his and Oda’s friend, but when Oda needed him the most he ran away, choosing to save his skin, protected behind powerful men’s backs, rather than stand by his friend. He had sent some letters to Dazai but Dazai burned them all. He read none of them. Full of apologies, lies, grief, friendship maybe, Dazai didn’t bother to figure it out. He stopped caring the moment he taste betrayal from a friend.

“Dazai, welcome back” It is easy to forget a person’s voice. It is easy for memories to fade away. Gone by the wind, like a forgotten dream.. but it’s also easy for them to comeback. A voice brings a memory. This voice brought the memories of endless nights with wine and smiles; talk about everything and nothing; just three friends and a cat for company. “Glad to be back?”
“As glad as a dead man would be.”

The sorrow was there. In Ango’s glasses eyes. Regret. In Dazai’s eyes there was only anger. Anger and grief. Four years now.

“Of course but for now let’s stay at Rome, okay?” he gave a small sad smile “And you are?” he turned to Akutagawa.

“My name is Akutagawa Ryuunosuke. I’m Dazai’s student at the art of law.”

“Student?” Confusion washed over Ango’s face. The Dazai he knew wasn’t one to take students and hear someone who wasn’t himself patiently, let alone take the responsibility to teach someone.

“People change.” Dazai simply commented before he gets off.

Ango didn’t comment nor looked at Atsushi at all. He turned around and lead the way to the palace. The journey was short and silent. Dazai didn’t look around, because he knew the palace, each and every corner of it. Akutagawa was stoic but his eyes glow from time to time. A silent observant as always. Atsushi, though, was thrilled. He was looking around excitedly. He hadn’t do three or so steps before another slave knocked him down and glare him reminding him to help with caring ‘his master’s luggages’. Aaahh they truly were back..

Ango lead them to the throne room where Mori was waiting for them. Smirk on place and sharp eyes greet them. Ango fell to his knee and announce them. Atsushi was gone to take their things to their room. Someone would show him around the place. Mori stayed on his throne.

The whole throne room was design to show the wealth and power of Rome. A white marble room with golden high doors and solders to guard them. In front of the throne was a red carpet and on the right side of it was a low table with fruits. The left side has also a table with various papyri; documents maybe? Behind the throne was a huge map, engraved on the wall. On the right side of the room was a huge open balcony that supervise the city, only golden curtains to hide the view if the Emperor wanted to. The left side had only a door, the entry prohibited for anyone beside the Emperor himself.

“Welcome welcome Dazai! Welcome home! It’s been a long time since we last saw each other!” Mori opened his arms wide, a false mimic of a hug. Dazai could laugh at the word ‘home’. This
place wasn’t really a home for him. Not even when Oda was alive it could be called ‘home’.  

“Long time no see indeed. I can honestly say that I preferred it this way. Especially, with this weather! Athens has a better one! Don’t tell me that the weather made you sick and you suddenly missed me!?” The false concern was an old game for them. Dazai never particular liked Mori to begin with and Mori hadn’t show any different emotional either.  

“Eh? What has the weather to do with your return? I simply miss my son.”  

Dazai was aware of the socking look he receives from Akutagawa. The boy turned to face him speechless. None of the people who he had met in these four years knew that he was the son of the Roman Emperor, the strongest man in the whole known world. Dazai never liked showing of his ‘privilege’ of being the second to the throne, simply because he wasn’t. 

Like the previous Emperor and the Emperor before him and before him and so on, Mori followed the tactic of ‘adoption’. Normally, when an Emperor would lose a son or a grandson they would adopt a virtuous man, well loved and capable at the strategy and military art to take his place to the throne and lead the country to a glory future after him. Mori was chosen by his predecessor as the next Emperor and Mori chose Dazai as his not long after. Dazai was only 15 years old then. He was from a noble powerful and rich family, but he was a genius trapped in a child’s body and everyone could see that he would have a bright future. 

Now, Dazai wasn’t exactly lovable because of his sharp tongue and high sarcasm (let’s not speak about the thousands of secrets he knew and the blackmail material he has for everyone even from such a young age). Dazai may be a scary person in certain occasions but he was the next promising future for the Roman people. The tyranny of the Mad Emperor had come to an end thanks to his help anyway. He was only 18 then, imagine what future he could create when he take the throne. 

But Dazai didn’t want the throne, didn’t want any of the fame, any of the money, power, face respect, fancy food and clothing, any political wife that will only spy him so her daddy, brother, uncle, or even a child that could cut his throat and to take his place. He just wanted to live. For once to do truly good. Fight for the poor, save orphans, teach. He just wanted to fulfill a promise. 

Between them was no love or mentoring. From the moment Dazai and Mori met an invisible wall had raise between them and a chess game began. Dazai never wanted the power that he was given and Mori never wanted to give it. Mocking and sarcasm hidden behind smiles. Rules to keep Dazai in his place and spies leaving him no freedom. Buried into books and education to become the perfect Emperor that would never take a throne well bound to Mori’s ass. They never were ‘father and son’, they were opponents who were waiting for the other to make a mistake so they could bury them to the ground and get over with. Each one of them having their own plans for their victory.
“I’m just worrying about my beloved father’s health that’s all.” Dazai shrug it casually.

“I see. And who is this young man behind you? You didn’t take a son, did you?” he joked, but his eyes were calculating. A new pawn on their game was always troublesome.

“And miss the celebration? Never!” he responds naturally “He is Akutagawa Ryuunosuke, my student. I teach him law and he is quiet the catch!”

Akutagawa bowed his head deeply in front to the Emperor felling to his knee, but he couldn’t help a red flush that paint his cheeks when he heard Dazai’s rare praise.

“I see I see! What a pleasant surprise! I will be waiting to see you grow to a fine lawyer then! You are in great hands I assure you.”

“Thank you for your world, your majesty. Dazai is a great teacher and a very intelligent man to be learning from.” Akutagawa didn’t dare to lift his eyes from the floor, but his voice was firm. He was ready to argue about Dazai’s teaching skills. Then again he is always ready to fight.

“Wow you make me blush, Akutagawa!” Dazai whined playfully.

“Pfft haha I see that you are the same as always” Mori’s comment lack the usual venom he normally speak with. This time it had the fade taste of fondness. Maybe he had miss him? “Go rest Dazai; later let’s eat together. I prepared a feast for your return.”

“Are you spoiling me Father? Maybe you have lots of work for me that you want to please me before I start working?”

“Mmmm.. something like that. But we will talk about it over dinner! Now rest. I will see you later.”

“Of course, I can’t wait to see Elise again, no mistake that it’s her idea, right?” Dazai throw the words over his shoulder as he began walking towards his bedroom. Akutagawa hot on his heels.
“Ah you know how Elise is. She missed you and of course it’s only a chance for her to …. play.”

“But of course.”

That was Dazai’s last words before the tall golden door close behind them; sealing away Mori’s dark smirk.

Ango was still on his knees.

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When they reached at Dazai’s bedchamber they found Atsushi organizing his luggage. He was in middle of taking Dazai’s clothes out when this two barked into the room. Akutagawa moved first kissing Atsushi sweetly on his forehead. The whiteheaded hugged his neck and nuzzled his nose to the raven’s chin.

“Really? You were separated only for 30 minutes maximum!?” Dazai whined while closing the door.

“I don’t think that you should be the one complaining here..” Akutagawa snapped.

“What happened?” Atsushi looked between the two. He had leave them alone for 30 minutes and they fight already?

“Oh nothing. Just that our great teacher here forgot to mention that he is the next in line for the throne of Rome.” Akutagawa glared at Dazai.

“WHAT!?"

“Atsushi shhhh they will hear us!”
“what!” Atsushi whispered lowly but no less shocked.

‘Cute’ Akutagawa thought as he went back to kissing Atsushi’s cheek.

“Aaah I didn’t mention it because I won’t be. I have no desire to be or he to step down and honestly I don’t believe that I will live long enough to see that day.” Dazai answer softly as the fell on his bed. He couldn’t care less about the throne really.

“You don’t know that Dazai. A throne to take sure is a lot of responsibility but it’s the cause that matters. And please let’s not do this conversation about death again. I won’t let you die so shut up and live.”

Atsushi’s kind words little mattered to Dazai. He had accepted his fate long ago. Even if Dazai wanted to fulfill his late friend’s wish and live helping this in need, it was no secret that Dazai saw nothing exciting in this world. Dazai had lived his life shield into books and rules and fake or not at all friendships. He was happy for a while in his little circle of three people, but that end shortly. Mori never forgot to remind him his position and the previous Emperor had made sure of it. Even now with a ‘family of friends’ back in Greece, Dazai never quiet felt like he belonged there. Maybe because he was hiding who he truly was or maybe because he always felt like being watched, Dazai could never tell that he lives happily.

This time though Dazai didn’t mean this kind of death, didn’t mean his various unsuccessful attempts to end his life by drowning or hanging himself. No, no this time. It was a ‘classified’ secret that Mori kills the people oppose to him or that he works the world to his favor and not the other way around. Dazai was simply waiting for when Mori will get bored of him and decide to get rid of him. He was waiting for the time that he will wake up with a knife to his throat or with poison into his food. He was waiting for purple eyes to be the last think he will see.

“For now let’s settle down and see where we are going. I don’t want to be here for long and you seriously don’t have to sit here too; when you feel like it, you can return to Athens” Dazai simply dismiss them with a sigh. It will be better to keep them out of this mess.

“We are staying as long as you stay. We came together, we leave together.” Akutagawa turned fully to Dazai “When you give the word, we leave” such a bravado.. Atsushi smiled sweetly at both of them.

“So what now?”
Dazai chuckled painfully. It is a blessing to have them as students, but it will be a pity and a curse for them to die because of him.

“Now we go for a walk! I need to show around, am I?”

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The dinner took place at the rich garden of the palace. On the marble centre of the garden was a big table with the best food, all exotic and well made. In front of the table was a small platform where the musicians sat with their instrument on hand. Dancers and waiters where moving all over the place to please the nobles who came. Around their big circle of feast were beautiful trees and plants. A second table was set next to the nobles’, turned slicing at the back. Atsushi was prohibit from the feast so he was left with the other slaves into the palace.

Mori was already sited talking with some senile. Elise was next to him devouring her food. Her hair had braids on them and she was wearing a fine silk robe, no doubt brand new. When she noticed him, she stopped eating in favor of waving to him excitedly. “You came! And you brought a new friend! What is your name?” Dazai is lucky. Only two seconds and then she find a new plaything.

“Sorry Akutagawa!” Dazai breathed as he run away leaving a puzzled Akutagawa to deal with an excited Elise booming him with questions. Even if he was gone for years he was nothing in front of a new meat for her to play (read: piss off, torture, exhaust, dress up etc). Gods help the poor boy..

“Glad you came! I half expecting for you to run off” Mori commented as he top a slip of his wine.


“Tomorrow we have the gladiators’ games. Got to feed them well, don’t you think?” Dazai hummed in agreement as he too took a slip of his wine. The waiters quick on their feet to please everyone. “Well now is not the time, you must meet the nobles. Now that you are back you need new friends.”
‘Friends heh?’ What a joke.

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The night came faster than Dazai expected. He had to admit that Mori knew how to make a good feast and even though he met every single important noble he had some good time. Mori truly wanted to make him his right hand and so he made sure to introduce him to everyone present. He talked about all of his assets of course. His fake praises and his fake ‘father attitude’ may touched the nobles’ heart with all the ‘my son is back’ bullshit, but didn’t reach Dazai’s ears. After some point he had to go play with Elise, so that Akutagawa could put a bit into his mouth, it was fun. He must said the same story about ‘how great Athens is’, about ‘the marvelous theatres they have’, about ‘the new interesting philosophic theories’, about ‘the politic, the laws’ and who knows what else over a hundred of times. And when they got bored, they turn to Akutagawa for interesting stories and especially for spicy details about Dazai’s personal life and teaching. The poor soul was between Elise and the nobles like a gladiator between two lions!

Speaking of the gladiators, this round of warriors was rather… predictable. They were all big in size and masculine. They were ugly at first glance and barbarians to the second. Obviously they were all foreigners and have no manners. Then again most of them would die tomorrow- if not all of them- so eating as a dog, drinking like a horse and touching every dancer like an octopus makes perfect sense to Dazai. They were perfect for fighting and they were brought specifically for that. They would fight well no doubt about it. Dazai could tell that it is gonna be a boring game from miles away.

Don’t misunderstand. Dazai never find anything exciting at the bloody games nor particularly enjoyed watching people die for no reason. If the people were happy about them, let them so. Dazai’s present at the games was only because Mori brought him along. Now that he is back he will have to watch them again. Dying so painfully was never his forte. For Stoic philosophy death should serve as the greatest motivator to live in the moment, regard of Dazai suicidal thoughts. To have this kind of death was tragic at least, horrible at most. Unfortunately, the games where for the people to forget their problems and the city’s problems, it was necessary for the so call peace. If Dazai live enough to sit on the throne, he would love to see the end of them.

Among the crowd Dazai’s eyes catch a crimson of red. He tried to see better without Mori catching him. Who is this?

In the middle of the drunk and gluttonous moribund was a redhead beauty. So strange among them but for being here he must be deadly. He was drinking what must be one of his lots cups of wine
and certainly not the last of them. He was lining back at his chair observing the feast. He did not touch any of the dancers more occupied with the wine and food. He was too pretty to be here. Azure eyes, small face, juicy lips and a petite body. He was beautiful with the flowers behind him, almost ethereal if it wasn’t for the gladiators around him. So different he was from them.

‘How did you get here, little camellia?’

As if he read his thoughts, the gladiator turned and locked his eyes with Dazai. They stayed like that for some moments. The gladiator looked like he was searching something in Dazai’s eyes, gazing at them like that. The music seems to be stopped and everyone disappear. He couldn’t look away. Like enchanted he was.

*He still is.*

Dazai breathe a smile and raise his glass as a toast to the beautiful gladiator. His return was to snore a laugh and get back to his drink, avoiding his gaze.

Ouch.. Okay he didn’t expect that. I mean come on! They had a moment!

‘Aaaaah that really hurt my pride..” Dazai may not strive for relationships and love and whatever, but he has pride about his skills on flirt. A chance for good flirt was always welcome to Dazai’s life and this … pretty (damn it) gladiator obviously had no taste at all! He may die tomorrow! Was winking back so bad?

Not long after the fail flirt- which continued with lots of stares from Dazai and lots of glares from the gladiator- Dazai and Akutagawa retire to their bedchambers. They stopped briefly at the slave’s room to see if Atsushi had gone to bed. He had but with a few low ‘Aaaatsuuushiiii’ he woke up and he wished them for a good night rest sleepily; inside the shadows of the silent corridor. There was no kiss between the lovers or a pat at his head from his mentor. A lovely gaze and a light squish at his pinky finger were enough. They couldn’t afford to be seen.

The first night of his return didn’t go poorly. It went better than he expected and it could have gone lots worst. Through the night he checked all the nobles and senates, calculating their value and how much they could possible change their chess game or any possible allies at best. Little were the results of his search unfortunately, but that’s okay. Today it was a simply dinner. Tomorrow is the true test.
If you place yourself somewhere close to raw emotions, where you are exposed to violence and death, instinct and desire, you can brush against man’s true nature.

If he was lucky enough, he may see the beautiful gladiator again walking away from the Arena. Safe and sound he hopes. He certainly wanted to see him again. Such a pretty flower was rare to bright among the lost lives and the corrupted city. It would be a pity not to say hi..

*And where is a better place to check this than the games?*

*How foolish you are, you poor soul. You forgot the eyes that are watching you.*
Dazai woke up around dawn. He didn’t sleep well; too busy fighting with memories, which came to greet him back ‘home’. He woke up with his breath stuck on his throat. He woke up with a sharp inhale and eyes shot open. He woke up with cold sweat running on his forehead. He didn’t move at first, he had long learned not to jump out of the bed when the memories of red hair painting the white marble floor and a body laying down unceremonially a few meters away still warm flash behind his close eyes.

No, he stayed unmoving waiting for them to pass. He tried to catch his breath trying not to make a sound. He closed his eyes again. He frowned as the red was still there. He breathed as he felt his heart ache. It wasn’t a long time since he had dreams like this; rather this time they were more lively, rather this time it was more red, rather this time he was still there.

He opened his eyes when the first drop of sweat swam toward his neck.

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After a few turns around his bed chasing a sleep that won’t come back, he decides to take a walk at the gardens. The gardens where located at the back side of the palace, hidden from the public view. They were not too big. Rather, they were big enough for a walk to clean your mind, hidden from curious eyes, but small enough to not go too far. If Dazai or anyone else wished for a longer walk, they could visit the Villa de Borges; a beautiful villa with huge gorgeous gardens and lakes to get lost in peace.

For now though, a short walk will do.

He dressed to his usual black robe and wash him face for a minute or two. He will bath later anyway, but some cold water was refreshing. After he looked a bit more human, he head out of his bedchambers. Bandages hidden behind sleeves and a neck bear for them to glow bright.

He didn’t meet many, if any, people at his journey. That was predictable of course. It was hardly 5:30 in the morning. Besides the guards and any servant or slaves on early duty, the corridors were empty. Well not for much longer, their official duties will start around 6:00 and since there will be games today it will be quite hazy. But for now a bit of peace and quiet was welcome.
He walked slowly through the corridors. They were all painted lively with mosaics of the Romans' history. Glorious battles and long forgotten faces, one hiding the other, as a new Emperor raises on the throne. The busts were following him with their dead eyes and each heavy bruzin door he passes looks one step closer to crash him down.

The shadows were also acting funny as Dazai passed. They were playing their own game of remind. Reminding of a once brotherhood of three and a cat passing them. Reminding of a once brotherhood of three and a cat ditching responsibilities. Reminding of a once brotherhood of three and a cat laughing at a long forgotten bad joke.

*Reminding of a once brotherhood of three and a cat that were once alive.*

Dazai took a deep breath as he reached the gardens. The air seems cleaner here. The sun starts to rise lazily in the dark and Dazai lets himself to be lost at the morning mist and the lovely plants. The mornings chill greeting him. He walked a few steps mindless briefly remembering to not fell on any tree.

He didn’t blink much.

*If he did, the black behind his eyelashes will become memories.*

He came at a stop in front of a small elegant foundation. It was a poor thing really. A marble wet circle with a fat baby on top trying to shoot arrows to catch a cake maybe. Oh sorry! He meant Cupid, the God of love, son of the Goddess of love and beauty and all pretty things. He is not even the true Greek God of love, Eros!

What a joke..

Love it is.

What a lie it is.

Like a gorgeous hooker, who takes you to the highest pleasure only to leave you in the middle of the night, with your wallet empty, a cold bed and an ugly remind that ‘hey you are another miserable
guy -heartbroken maybe- that ‘no one want’ thing’ dropping you from whatever fantasy or ecstasy of the night you had, of whatever face you were thinking, to land on an lonely reality. Broken as you are.

Love is like the Empusa Lamia that made a young man to love her unconditionally just to eat him later.

It’s a hideous thing.

Dazai never knew mother love. His mother wanted to do nothing with him. He hardly had any happy memories of her; smiling down on him, feeding him, taking care of a scratch. And his father? As an ugly human as he was, he was chasing his own Lamias. Till one turned and beat him to the heart. Not that he was much around when he was alive or much to a father for him. It was a political marriage anyway. He remembers one time that Dazai needed help to take back his kite that had stuck on a tree; his father never turned his head to look at him, the result of course was a broken ankle. He heard that his mother got married again not long after his father’s death, since she was from a great noble family and left Rome. He saw her once, as he was traveling to Athens at the bay. She had three children messing with her robes. They were laughing and she had a smile that he had never seen before. He doesn’t even remember her name now.

Even his supposed family with Mori, wasn’t really a family. Mori himself had married three times and had flirt with various women in his life. Here a marriage is a deal. Elite marries elite, power marries power to gain more power. His marriages were only to make deals, to gain allies, get rid of ‘too much of a weight’ people. They meant nothing for him and they didn’t stay for too long. When he find a better deal, he would get rid of them. For a man to do that wasn’t a big of a deal but for a woman was a great stigma. And truth to be told, Dazai didn’t find any pleasure in the whole thing and neither Mori apparently.. ‘It was a fake love’ he said.

Dazai didn’t know any friends’ companionship either. He was too of a smartass for his own good and his only two friends; one end up dead and one a traitor. Here he had only friends who wanted favors, friends that would backstab him later and friends that didn’t smile, friends that wanted him when they were in need and never when he was. But in Athens.. There Dazai met some friends. Good people, who cared and even if they would complain (a lot) about him and his personality or his tactics, they were still warm towards him. Still, they weren’t… they didn’t… they didn’t feel like home.

Dazai never felt in love too. He had dated, he had fucked, he had flirted, he had eloped... but he hadn’t love. He hadn’t been loved too. Through his adult years there were many beauties who ‘loved’ him, only to rob him or to political use him or to show off and he too never find something better there than a pleasure bed. He didn’t particular care for who he will bed. May be a woman, may be a man little did it matter than a quick stress relief. But to have his heart stopped? To feel the air gone and the Goddess to whisper him a name to never forget? To dream of smiles and warmth and ..
bliss? No.. Dazai never had felt it. And he was envy of his students. He was envy when he would find them staring at each other, no one speaking but *looking* and..

What is he even thinking?

He won’t even live that long.

Although, he has a bit of guilt in his heart. He wasn’t honest.

*There was a moment that your heart stopped and you never wanted the time to pass, right?*

* He didn’t release how fast the time passed, lost in his mess world of thoughts. He just got aware that people start walking in the gardens. He moved from his place in front of the foundation and head back.

As he was entering his room, he came face to face with a flushed Atsushi. “Oh thank Polydephkes! Where were you? I was searching you two hours now! Even your breakfast went cold! Do you know how long it took me? I almost burn the kitchens” he sounded pained and exhausted.

Dazai smiled sympathetically at his discipline. “At the gardens walking” *did I give you a hard time?* “Why? Missed me sooooo much?” he teased as he lead Atsushi back inside. A tray with long cold tea on rise stood on a low table next to the bed. *Same old Atsushi.*

“Haha very funny” the poor boy collapsed on bed “I was searchinf for you to take you to your morning bath, *sir*, which I was preparing since the morning! Why are you so fonf with bathing, you Romans? It’s not a bad thing if you won’t bath for two days! And please let’s not talk about shaving! And you have huge bath rooms too! It took me a while to prepare each room! Perfectly for your ass!”
“Oooh is little Atsushi annoyed from the Romans’ clean care?” he too collapsed in bed, suddenly tired.

“No, bathing is good, but I don’t think that you need five rooms to get clean everyday! Ryuunosuke was socked!”

“Hehe it’s quite different from Greece, heh?” he pats his head “You will get used to it, little tiger! Do they treat you well?”

“Well its okay I guess?” he nuzzled at the touch “It’s not like home and not like Athens. It’s more streaked here but the food is a bit better..”

“Buuuuuut?” he coaxed him.

“It’s not home. I miss home. At least I was someone there and a bit respected than just ‘boy’, who runs all day to pleased masters that I don’t know…” his face clouded a bit before he popped up to lean on his elbow facing Dazai and look at him horrified. “Yesterday a servant lost another servant’s clothes during his bath time and he got chased out! The owner took his clothes and he had to walk naked till the servants’ room! No one saw him today!”

“Really?” Dazai faked being in socked. The servant was lucky that he didn’t get beaten to death! Atsushi nod with wide eyes still shocked. Sometimes it felt like talking to a small child. Atsushi could get really cute asking questions or telling news. “That may happen sometimes so be sure to refuse if someone asks you to watch their clothes!” another enthusiast nod, no doubt memorized already. “Also I will informant them that you are my servant so you won’t have to serve anyone else okay?” He had just assumed that they will put Atsushi in his care, but apparently someone had forgot to inform them.

“Okay Dazai! Thank you!” he smiled bright.

“Heh there is my little tiger! But don’t smile so sweetly or Akutagawa will get jealous~~~”

“Oh crap I forgot about him! He is still in the bath!” he shot up and run toward the door before he stopped suddenly and turned back to Dazai. “You are coming with me too! You need to bath!”

Dazai chuckled as Atsushi tag him along by his wrist already half out of the room. “Yes sir, yes
It was nice having fun like that; it made reality a little bit bearable..

*  

The bath and breakfast didn’t take long. After he got ready he met up with his pupils at Akutagawa’s room. As they walked past the now full of life corridors, Dazai briefly explained them the Romans’ day routine.

They wake up by seven o’clock and eat a light breakfast and then take a short bath. The whole morning is dedicated at their work till 12:30 when they stop for brunch. Lunch is by 14:30 and then they got to the gym and for a proper bath till 19:00 when it’s dinner time.

“That’s very different from Athens..” Atsushi comment softly.

“Then we are going to the Senate now?” Akutagawa’s eyes sparkle with interest.

“Noop!” Dazai said brightly. “Beside the fact that it’s boring as hell, we have the gladiators’ games today! They are to welcome us back. I think there may be a theatrical play later today?”

“Really?! A Roman play?” Atsushi loves the theatre. He always goes back at Athens.

“Oh I’m sorry Atsushi I’m afraid that slaves aren’t allowed inside the theatre here.” Damn he could hear the boy’s heart cracking open. He looks about to cry! “Tell you what! The first thing we are going to do when we go back is to visit the theatre! Sounds good?” he asked hopefully.

“I guess. Thank you Dazai!” he gave a small cute smile “How are the plays here?”

“Honestly they suck!” he snored bringing a chuckle out of Akutagawa and a shocking face from Atsushi. “They are all copies of the Greek ones with little to no different. You won’t miss anything,
trust me.”

“Oh..” he looked down for a bit. “Okay thank you for telling me!” and he is cheerful again. How are you doing it? Dazai just smiles.

“So we are going at the Arena?” Akutagawa interrupt.

“Yup! You saw the gladiators yesterday at dinner, right?”

“At dinner? What were they doing there? Maybe bodyguards?” Atsushi asks curiously while Akutagawa just nods.

“Nope! Before every game the local leader prepares a wealthy dinner for them and takes care of them with a nice bath. Here is the capital so the task is on the Emperor’s hands. The idea is of their ‘last dinner before their possible death’ so they eat well. It happens every time, like yesterday. It’s a short of tradition”

That won him some ‘ooooh’ from his students along with a ‘that’s so sad’ from Atsushi. He would rather not to take them to the Arena, but Mori is expecting them. He prefers to not give him a reason to toy with them. So he shallows his worries and prays that they have a tough stomach.

They made their way silently after that. They didn’t meet Mori once on their short journey. That’s good. He would like to post point their ‘talk’ for another time and more privately. They get in the carriage from the day before and head to the Colosseum or how he calls it

“The stone theatre of death”.

* 

The Colosseum is an enormous building that’s for sure. Spacious, imposing, wealthy. And yet they waste it in killing people. This wasn’t even its first goal. It was build for being a theatre but time showed that a living hell is more fun that Plautus or Sophocles. The previous Emperors, wanting to give people less reasons for riots, decide to put live meat as their atoning victim. ‘It’s not like Romans are participating; the gladiators are all foreigners and Italians, so what’s the wrong with it?’ Hypocrisy that’s it. They are humans too.
Well… were humans.

When they arrived the show had just started with a few gladiators fighting with lions. The slaves move the purple curtains for them to pass, leading them to the small balcony where the Emperor and his close people sit. There was an empty chair next to Mori and another one next and slightly to the back to it. Dazai sat next to Mori and Akutagawa took the other. Atsushi remind standing behind Akutagawa.

“How came it hasn’t start yet?” he asked when he got comfortable.

“I was waiting for you of course. You are late.” He answered nonchalantly while signaling for the slave to take back the last lion that was devouring a poor soul.

“Oh sorry my bad! We stopped for some crab meat while coming here!”

Mori answer him with an unimpressed hum. “Anyway you are here now, so” he stands from this throne “LET THE GAMES BEGIN!” he screams and the audience went wild.

And then silence. He closed his eyes. He took a deep breath. Someone behind him was praying. Someone next to him was laughing. Someone pulled the wires and the small platform they were on it rises from their abysses. The cracking sound was relaxing. Crack-crack-crack they are here. Some start running forward; he walks. The audience is cheering. The sun is hot. The sand beneath his feet is long familiar. He keeps his lips into a firm angry line. He grips his sword tighter. Ahead of him a second platform rises. At his right a third one. At his left a forth one. They are all here.

He takes a deep breath.

He opens his eyes.
Nakahara Chuuya stands like a camellia among the bloody sea of bodies already falling.

He looks up. Straight to the Emperor. He has an amused look. Somewhere to his right a head is being cut and rolls to his feet. He doesn’t pay any mind to it, because his eyes have catch a gleam of brown hair. He is looking at this head when someone stalks from behind him; sword rise high. What a fool. He turns to the right and fells at his left knee. Right hand line up with his appointment middle and he waste no time cutting him in half.

Somewhere someone is cheering. Somewhere someone is keeping bets on them. Somewhere someone lost money and somewhere someone won. He pays them no mind as he stand. He titlles his head back and looks.

He is not looking at the Emperor.

He is looking at a smirk fitting perfectly with whisky eyes.

He wet his lips with his tongue. The eyes are moving in simultaneously, following the motion.

He turns and kills.

It happens fast.

He moves fast. Elegant. Bold.

One moment he is cutting a head, the other he breaks teeth with his bear fist. He doesn’t miss a step.
Like listening to a silent music. Two are coming his way. Or he is going to their way? They realized it too late. They are already down. He kicks. Middle air, tackling, turning and kicking to their head. He hits. Hard, sharp, everywhere. When they are on the ground he leaves them. Moving forward.

A man much taller comes in full speed towards him. He stops and breaths. He stops him by holding hands and Dazai takes a minute to realize that they are not actually *holding hands*, but he is stopping him from moving forward. The sand beneath him starts recede and he is falling back. That’s inevitable to happen. The man is way taller than him and much more muscular. But he doesn’t back down. He kicks him to the shin and when the man lose momentarily his balance, he takes the opportunity to throw a leg to his hip and climb to his back; chocking him.

The man fells and Dazai realized that he has moved closer to his sit.

Mori chuckles “Find something that you like?”

“Only if I need a new liver.” He sits back. The gladiator moves forward.

Mori chuckles again. “His name is Nakahara Chuuya. He has the record of the most wins.”

“I can see why. Wouldn’t he be less of a weight if he was in the army? He is getting wasted here. If you had him back at the rebellion, you would be the Emperor sooner.”

“Mmmm.. maybe. Who knows? These times have long past to talk about it now.” He accepts a glass of wine. Dazai takes his own and watch as Akutagawa refuse his, trying not to show his disgust, and Atsushi behind him is trying not to throw up. “Anyway, it’s not long since I got him. He is from a Colony at Asia. He didn’t go down easily, I give him that. But he refuses to come with our side and well.. He is a fun spectacle as you can see. If he wants so much to die, we can have some fun along the way.”

Dazai hums “The people seem to like him. Are you sure that they won’t ask for his freedom?”

“He is too much of a money maker to do that” he shakes his head after he drink some “whoever bets on him wins, so hardly they will let the gold goose go”

Dazai nods. Chuuya kills.
“Will you kill him?”

“When the right time come.”

The audience cheers. There is a duel going on down there. Chuuya seems to talk with his appointment; a black bald woman. She has scratches and her skin is painted with black ink. She had earrings on her ears and nose and she was missing a finger. they continue talking for a minute or two; they must know each other but right now one of them must go down, otherwise the audience will get bored and the beasts will come out to play.

“Get over with it already!” someone yells.

“Give us a good show!” someone else screams.


They look at each other one last time. They nod three times. They fight for five minutes. Chuuya looks back at him after seven sharp breaths.

The fight is over.

I won mackerel…entertained enough?
They didn’t linger much after that. Dazai saw everything he wanted and his students were too busy trying not to throw up their breakfast. He stands up from his sit and turns to leave.

“We will have dinner at the triclinium today. Alone if you don’t have a problem. We have a lot of talk to do.” Mori doesn’t turn from his sit. He doesn’t look back at him, but his words are firm.

“Are my vacations over?”

“Well it’s something that has to happen sooner or later. You don’t mind fastening things up a bit, do you?”

“No let’s get over with it really. I will see you then, Father” he leaves without looking back.

“That was awful!” Atsushi sobs when the carriage’s door closes behind them.

“I know right? Mori’s robe was hideous! Green is not his color!” Dazai answer chewing casually the crab’s leftovers.

“That’s not what I meant Dazai! How can this be entertaining?”

“As much as I agree with you Atsushi we can’t do much about it. As long as the people love it and have fun with it, the games will continue. I’m sorry that you had to see that. Next time I will go alone okay?”

“Next time?! How often does this happen?”

“There is no reason for that.” Akutagawa interrupt Atsushi’s crisis “The Emperor is watching us, isn’t he? That means that we have to show up everywhere you go and be good, right? Otherwise, we and mostly you will have a problem. Right?” aah always catching up immediately..
“Unfortunally yes. So be good okay? I don’t want him to mind something other than the empire. Even more with you two. Got it?”

“Sure thing. I didn’t like his face anyway. Or that little girl” a shiver pierce him.

“Sorry but I can’t help you with Elise. She is like the queen here.”

“Who?” Atsushi looked puzzled since he didn’t know who Elise is. Yet.

“Will you be okay tonight?” Akutagawa ignored Atsushi’s question.

“Are you worrying about me Akutagawa? You touched me! You do care after all!”

“What in Hercules’ name are you talking about?”

“We are talking, Atsushi, about the fact that today I will eat with Mori so you and Akutagawa here will have all dinner time alone! In his room. Alone~”

That was enough to distracted Atsushi, who stopped breathing when Akutagawa confirmed with a nod and a half smirk. His eyes widen and he blushed furiously before hiding his face.

“I hate you two!”

“Oooh I love you too Atsushi~” he said as he send an imaginary kiss to Atsushi.

“That’s my line Dazai!” Akutagawa hissed while smacking the invisible kiss.

*  

He was walking slowly till the triclinium. He met no one as he stalked his way to the room. The corridors where unsurprisingly empty given that Mori said ‘alone’. No soul will bother them tonight.
There were no guards keeping watch by the tall doors. That left Dazai having to push them with his both hands to enter. Upon entering he was greeting with three spacious beds with red covers making a Π and a low golden barbeque at the middle; meat was burning slowly. Each bed had a low table at its side with appetizers already waiting. The beds were big enough to fit three people on them making a perfect place for nine people to dine. The big window behind them was cover with black cloth, but it didn’t stopped the fresh air from coming inside.

He took of his shoes as the tradition command and move to the left one as Elise was laying at the right one. She was at her belly, legs risen high kicking on the air. She was drawing while humming a rhythm Dazai didn’t know.

Mori was sitting at the middle of course. He had a new glass of wine at his hand and was reading some documents. He didn’t lift his eyes. Dazai took silently his sit.

“When you said ‘alone’ I didn’t imagine such a dead dinner! Bored of people?”

“Hardly.. I would like us to converse in private.”

“Because?”

“Because I have a job for you” he finally turns to look at him.

“Who do I kill?”

Mori snored a laugh. “Sadly no one! I didn’t ask you for that. I want you to go to the Byzantium and make a deal.”

“Aren’t they our allies?”

“They are but the leadership changed and we need to see if we are still allies. The new one is young and no doubt a fool.”
“And you want me to make sure he will believe we are his best choice of allies.” Mori offers a nod looking back at his documents. “So who is our new enemy? You have problem in paradise?”

“I will never have” his glare is sharper than a knife and Dazai can only breath out a hum “Just same old barbarians from the North. As winter comes they become more alive than usual. I want to be sure that if they decide to pay a visit, we will be ready.”

“Why Byzantium? It’s far’

“Because there is a new player. Worry not. You will tour to all of our allies in given time.”

“But first we take care the new one since we have pinned the others.”

“See? We are on the same page.”

Elise’s pencil stops. “What about his dogs?” she turns her head to smirk darkly at Dazai “Will they stay to play?”

“Mmmm…” Mori touches his chin pretending that he is thinking deeply. “What do you think Dazai? I would not mind keeping them as long as you are gone. I’m sure that they will have a lot to learn here. Especially that little tiger of yours?”

Dazai sees red.

“You wouldn’t dare.”

“And why is that, my pawn?” his smile is supposed to be sweet but it’s disgusting.

“Because it’s too soon” he replies not missing a bite.

Mori’s smile widen into a smirk. Eyes lighten and breath caught to his throat from the excitement.
“Entertain me well Dazai and they may see the sun above Athens again”.

Dazai looks at him dead at the eyes.

“When do we leave.” He hisses,

The laugh Mori leave was piercing to his core. Was an ugly one. From these that he donates to his victims’ ears as the last music they will ever hear.

And then it hits Dazai.

This is the last he will hear too.

*But Gods they will not hear it. No. He swears it.*

He stands before the foundation again.

His feet led him here.

Which time is it? He had lost count of how many times he opened his eyes just to see the foundation in front of him.

He looks down.
He is barefoot.

He looks up.

The moon is high, way past midnight.

He looks ahead of him.

The God of Wind brought some camellia petals with him. They land softly on the water’s surface.

He stooped to pick one.

It had a nice color. *A pale red.*

“You shouldn’t spy on people you know...” he doesn’t look away from the pretty flower. “It’s rude... mackerel!”

“Honestly I was paralyzed from your beauty, little camellia” he comes out from behind the tree he was hiding. He wears black and he has black circles under his eyes. He looks tired.

“Your flirting sucks. ‘Little camellia’? Really?”

“Oooh come on! You gave me a cute nickname too~”

“It was an insult”.

“I say that it’s romantic!” he says teasingly.
Chuuya sighs. “Believe whatever you want. Mackerel.” He smirks before he put back the camellia to the water.

The man hums a laugh. “What are you doing here Chuuya?”

“How do you know my name?” he asks softly as he turns fully to look at him.

“I guess it!” he replies happily.

“Guess it?” he asks amused.

“Yes indeed. The Ladies of Fate are very generous with me.” He smirks coming a bit closer.

“Mmmm... as the God of Lies I presume?” he tittles his head a bit to the right “I saw you at the balcony today. Enjoyed the show?”

“Mm... defiantly” he is only a breath away now. “You were magnificent, Chuuya~” he draw each syllable causing him a shudder.

His smile widen.

“I thought so. You were ready to jump” he moved one step closer almost closing the gap between them.

The brunet shallows hard.

“Name, before I cut your throat.” He hissed a breath away from his lips.

“Why don’t you find out, little camellia?” he whispers back.

A violent shudder pierces him again.
He moves away from the other. He looks down to make this breathing even. Only then he notices that the other’s fingers arches like they want to reach for him. He looks up and he is still looking at Chuuya. Eyes searching for something within him.

Chuuya breathe a sigh and walk past him toward the palace.

“I’m leaving tomorrow.” He stops to his tracks “Duty calls..” he doesn’t turn but he feels the other fully turned watching his back. “..It won’t be for too long though. Will you stay alive for me, little camellia?”

His whisper is a silent plea. Breathed only for the wind to hear and hands clench tightly to his robe. His breath is sharp and suddenly Chuuya also finds it hard to breath.

He tittles his head back (as he did back at the games); he looks at him (as he did back at the games); he breathes a sigh (as he did back at the games).

“He disappears between the chrysanthemums.”

Chapter End Notes

hello again!!! sorry for the late update but my pc broke down and it took a while to fix
it plus I had a life crisis when the tech told me that I may have lost my fic for good! MAKE COPES PEOPLE!!! anyway I hope that you like this chapter! tell me what you think okay? also who do you think is gonna be the new character for ch.3?

facts:
1. they are two kinds of fighters in Ancient Rome: gladiators who fight humans and the venatores who fight animals.
2. ancient Greek and Roman were eating laying down at their side. the triclinium is the latin word of their "dinning table" and it was happening like I discrabe. their routine too.
3. the local leaders the day before the gladiators' games would make them a wealthy dinner that was "their last dinner" as many of them would die the next day.
4. I will say it now but its the centric of this fic: the greek love was the platonic gay love and that was unacceptable to Romans. they had wives with political marriages aka deals and many times they would take a divorce to marry another woman when they would find a better deal. basically they had wives for show but ....ehm...girlfriends for the sex but there were times when they may have a boyfriend too (a young boy mostly). the emperor Andrianus was the only who had a boyfriend for life (and even if he was a great emperor and brought peace, he was criticized very much for that) and the mad emperor Nero had one too, tho he was parade him more than partner for life.
5. Roman wives had more freedom that the Greek ones. In Greek there where times when a girl would marry her uncle so the family's wealth and good blood will stay clear and only if the father die and the girl was unmarried (this is been called the tradition of the epikliros).
6. slaves had more privilege in Greece and they were working as normal people and had the basic education. In Rome there were strict rules and not much freedom.
7. Polydephkes is the twin brother of Castor, brothers of Helen of Troy. they were very respectful in Rome and they would protect the soldiers. women pray to Castor while both women and men pray to Polydephkes. Hercules was also very rectfull and equal to Zeus (or Juvo) the men pray for him. its the Oh my God of the time.
8. Lamia is one of the empusas, a duty of the underworld that punish the bad. they got used as examples to prevent people from bad things. the episode I said is from Filistratus the second and his biography of Apollodororous Tuanes that chased the empusa out.
9. Plauto was one of the first Roman comedian and Sophocles was one of the three best Greek tragic writer. it is true that the Romans didnt create their own theatre plays but went to Greece, find an play, translate it to latin and present it. but there was the rule of the writers to not present the same play as another Roman.
10. the episode with the slave who lost the other slaves clothes is from the Terentu's comedy "Eunuchus". this happened a lot in public baths, where slaves would go and poor people. the houses had 5 rooms that was "the baths" : the locker room, the cold shower, the lukewarm shower with massage and aromatic oils, the sauna and some had a gym too. the baths were women or men only or mixed with special time each.
11. Important! the Greek God Eros and the Roman Cupid is not the same!!! Eros was created with Gea (earth) and Chaos and made the world BEFORE THE GODS. he is like a brother to Aphrodite who too create the world with her second power (not love) fertilization or her child with Hares. the Roman Gods are a slightly different from the Greek ones since many Gods were created. here Aphrodite or Venus give birth to Hares or Mars' child Cupid the valentain angel that we all love and I dont. (valentain is not for me really. ) an interesting funny video about the greek love and eros is this one (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HLo1jZA1iVw ) and its the myth of Phych and Eros which I love!
12. Roman didn't particularly like Greeks and Anatolian people coz they think of them as effeminate people and only caring about wealth, food and are snicky.
13. the ancient people were drinking a lot of wine coz there was no desserts ther eand they needed to take sugar for somewhere. they drank it with water in it and the organizer of the dinner would decide how much to put inside. wine was given to slave too. Romans had a thing for shaving. they kept this first bears but after that they were shaving everyday.

14. Rome was the big country of Italy and had bad relationships with the Italian cities. aaaaand that were the facts of the day! thank you for reading! see you at the next chapter! be well:)

P.S. special thanks to youtube for their three hours of epic battle music and eminem ft.sheeran! without these two this fic would have never been write.
tumblr : @daughterofsinsloth
They reached the carriage that would take them to the port at dawn. The palace had just started waking up and apart from the few servants carrying their luggage, the place was quiet. No nobles came to say goodbye – not that it was expected – and Mori himself had say his...farewell yesterday.

Atsushi was trying to keep his eyes open since the other servants that were glaring at him, but anyone could see him dozing off from time to time as he helped packing. Akutagawa on the other hand was completely awake but the morning cold had caused him to cough roughly a few times. Dazai was the only one asleep on his feet.

As soon as the carriage door closed Atsushi fell asleep on Akutagawa’s arm, who tried to warm up a bit; Dazai already in dreamland.

The journey to the port was quiet. After they got off the carriage Atsushi carried their luggage and they boarded on the ship that would take them to Byzantium. The journey would be two weeks long and they would stop briefly in Athens for a day or two. It was a nice opportunity to see some friends and family or maybe take anything that is needed.

They took the royal ship of course, because it was a palace business. It was full with soldiers and new servants all dressed nicely to make an impression. Mori was a man who valued making a good impression after all. ‘A good impression always makes a difference, Dazai. Show them who you are and win their respect. And crash them later with class.’, these were always his words. Stupid if you asked Dazai. You didn’t have to dress nicely and make a good entrance. Words are better than actions for him. Everyone understood who you were when you spoke, not when you are dressed like a peacock.

As they climbed the ship’s stairs the captain came to greet them.

“Good morning, sir. Are you ready for the trip?”

“As long as you and your crew are; so are we. The sooner we reach our destination the better” Dazai offered a few words and left to find his cabin without a second look. Akutagawa and Atsushi followed him.

“It will take one week for us to get to Athens and another to arrive at Byzantium, right?” Atsushi
asked as he closed the door. They would share a cabin for the trip. Normally they wouldn’t as the ship has three cabins, but Dazai gave one to the captain and one to the servants. It was better than letting them sleep outside.

“That’s the plan! Though we can’t stay too long. We have a mission to finish, okay?” Dazai reminded them.

“Yes sir!” Atsushi cheered. A wide smile in place; energy already restored.

“Then let’s rest till Athens. That cold was unpleasant.” Akutagawa moved to lay in one of the three beds. Atsushi caressed his hair softly asking if he wanted some tea, which Akutagawa quietly rejected. He settled instead with Atsushi in his arms after Dazai reassure him that he wasn’t needed. The two soon fell asleep once again.

Dazai closed the door softly behind him; he chose to spend his morning on the deck, watching the journey now with all the sleepiness gone.

* 

The days passed surprisingly quickly. There was not much to see anyway. Just sea, seagulls, some other boats or sometimes the coastal cities or a beach. They passed Sicily casually. Akutagawa yielding to Atsushi’s constant whining, started showing him some places he used to live or at least he was remembering. A cliff here, a beach there, a city where he slept for one night, the port that took him to Athens. They didn’t ask for more and Akutagawa wouldn’t give more information; and they wouldn’t either if they were in his place.

No storm found them. Maybe a cloud or two. Maybe a ‘little strong wind’, but no storm. ‘That’s a good omen!’ the captain said. “I hope.” was Dazai’s response.

They arrived in the morning. The docks where busy with various merchants and their merchandise. From spices to slaves to armor to clothes – anything you can imagine!

Dazai ordered the captain to remain at the port for the day and the servants not to follow them. He didn’t want any of them to tell Mori where he or his friends lived. They were free to tour around but they were to return to the boat by nightfall.

The path was a familiar one and as they got closer to the city people started recognizing and greeting them. Dazai was a famous orator and lawyer here and Akutagawa’s skills were no joke. Atsushi’s
kindness and upcoming philosophy study were enough to give him some respect and preference over the other servants.

They didn’t stop at all until they reached home. Their house was located at the foot of the hill of Acropolis; just a few meters away from the theater of Dionysus. It was big enough for four people and a couple of servants. Marble and two-stored with a small garden at the back, where they grew the necessary food. Mostly vegetables, fruits and some wine. The front yard had some beautiful flowers. The well next to the door provided them with fresh water every day. They didn’t farm animals.

Right now the servants were taking care of the garden and no student or clients would come to bother Dazai; he met them at the Agora anyway.

They didn’t bother to knock of course. They were greeted first by the huge dining room. It was empty but nothing else was to be expected since it was still morning. The first floor was the dining room, the living room and the kitchen at the back, next to the door that led to the garden. Wooden stairs at the left corner of the dining room led to the second floor, which had only four rooms and one bigger room for the servants. One was for Dazai, one for Akutagawa and Atsushi and one for Akutagawa’s sister, Gin. The last one was a study room. It was covered with windows and books.

The moment they stepped into the house Akutagawa sprinted upstairs. For a moment the others couldn’t hear a thing but then Gin’s high pitched scream of joy made their ears bleed.

“Brother!!” she hugged him tightly, making it impossible for him to breathe “Why didn’t you tell me that you were coming?!”

“Surprise” He kissed her forehead ruffling her hair in the process. She had braided them into a ponytail with two braids on each side. A golden ribbon kept them in place.

She scoffed a bit fixing her hair back. “You and surprises. If you had told me I would have prepared something better for lunch!”

“No need to worry about that little Gin! We are as hungry as wolves, so we will eat everything! Seafood for a week sucks!”

“We didn’t eat only seafood Dazai…”
“Yeah but all we could see was fishes so..”

“Pff you and your logic! Why people think that you are smart, I will never know...” Gin hugged Dazai softly. Dazai may be a mentor for her brother but for Gin he was a close friend and almost a brother.

Dazai was the one who found them and took care of them after all. He made sure to give them a proper education and put food on their plates, a roof above their heads. He didn’t throw them away nor complained. In a way he was their savior. Who knew where they would be now if Dazai wasn’t the one to find them? ‘Lucky’ they were often called and in a way they were. Atsushi too. Many abandoned people like them weren’t so blessed.

Atsushi’s hug lasted longer. He had to reassure her that he was well fed and nothing bad happened to him. When she was pleased, she let go of him only to grab her brother and beg him to tell her stories about their time in Rome.

Gin was beyond thrilled about practically everything and overexcited about the theater. She only showed discomfort about the Arena. She marveled at the beautiful purple robe Akutagawa presented her with. He had bought it for her secretly. After lunch, which felt more than delicious, they moved to the study room. They checked the new books that Gin had brought and talked about the changes, that had happened or any juicy gossip in Dazai’s case. At noon Gin sent a servant to bring their good friends for dinner.

Atsushi already changed back into his original clothes that he would keep for the rest of the journey, at Dazai’s command; if anyone is asking…

Around dinner time they moved downstairs and shared a cup of rose tea as they waited for their guests. Soon there was a knock on the door and a servant ran to open it.

Kunikida Doppo was the first one to enter the house with an Edogawa Ranpo hot on his heels. They were both good and passionate people, earning them a place between the few dear friends in Dazai’s life. Kunikida was a theoretical philosopher that occupied himself with the mathematical world. His always active community role had caused him troubles numerous times. However, he was very lovable to the public so he had never gotten into serious trouble. He was friendly, kind and so mother-like that it was impossible to dislike him. His only flaw was his obsession with time and schedules. He follows his notebook by the letter and it annoys Dazai a lot. Every attempt to mess with it was unsuccessful and that annoyed him even more. He had once made the goal to ruin Kunikida’s day for a week, only to end up soaked by the river miraculously every single time.
Edogawa Ranpo on the other hand is a mystery. A well kept mystery with the amazing ability to reveal the truth with only one look. He could see people’s darkest secrets and there was nothing they could do. Beyond that, Ranpo was a child. Older than all of them but he enjoyed a good staged game. Ranpo was the foster son of Athens’ major, Fukazawa, a discreet politician that preferred to play detective to taking over his father’s duty. He was a brilliant detective of course. No case had ever been left open on his watch and no criminal had ever been left scot-free. Ranpo wasn’t naïve. Yet at the end of the day he still wanted to believe that there was some good inside of people. Dazai respected him a lot and accepted Ranpo’s brilliance, but he was also sure that there would be a moment when, presented with a serious matter, Ranpo would choose to save whatever bubble he lived in rather than ruin it. And honestly that scared him a little.

“Oh look who is back~~” Ranpo’s smirk greeted them before he crashed on the couch.

“Welcome back, everyone. Had a good journey I hope.” came Kunikida’s neutral greeting.

“Kunikida, Ranpo! We are back!!” Atsushi’s smile was dazzling “Where is doctor Yosano?”

“A patient kept her back, she will be here shortly don’t worry”

“Eh?! But it’s dark outside! She shouldn’t walk alone at this hour!” he turned back looking at the servant that was waiting for their orders “Can you send someone please to accompany her?”

“Pfft don’t worry little Atsushi! If anything happens the attacker will be the one to worry! Just trust my ultra deduction!”

“Atsushi” Gin smiled softly “Doctor Yosano is more than capable of protecting herself. It’s the other person who will need help, really.”

“That’s true. She has an excellent right punch.” Dazai was staring at nothing caressing his cheek.

“It was your fault for creeping out from behind” Kunikida muttered while shipping his tea.

“Have you never heard the term ‘surprise’?”
“Well we all learned valuable lessons that day, didn’t we?” he glared.

“Define ‘valuable’” Dazai said sarcastically.

“Okay. First we learned about –” let’s say that they learned a lot that day…

The time passed in a light atmosphere. Their conversation was only momentary cut when Yosano joined, only to start again more fired up.

Yosano was one of the few women that had an active role in the community and the only one that worked as a doctor. A marvelous frightening woman who dedicated her life saving people. With a heart of gold and punches of iron, she will defend anyone at anytime in favor of her patient’s life. A trustworthy, wise friend. Her own secrets kept well hidden but her heart bare for people to see. She had saved Dazai multiple times from his suicide attempts and each time she would greet him with a scolding and a warm pat on the shoulder. She may be someone that Dazai trusted with his life and in the sometime he can’t trust her to understand.

Morning found them in a circle with warm food, loud laughs, tipsy from the wine and with flushed cheeks due to smiling too much. Morning found them with Atsushi inside Akutagawa’s embrace, with Gin’s head lying on her brother’s lap. Morning found them with Yosano talking animatedly waving around a half-empty wine bottle with one arm and head locking Kunikida with the other. Morning found them with Ranpo half-off the couch mattering about a mystery rival from a faraway country that he has to absolutely win against but finds it difficult because he is also absolutely adorable. Morning found them buried in Kunikida’s notebook pages completely ruined with Dazai jokes.

Morning found Dazai with a smile on his lips and long cold wine.

* 

The afternoon found them on the deck, enjoying the breeze.
Sailing has never been something fun for Dazai. When he was younger Mori would take him to various campaigns and wars. Summer, winter, fall he had fought during all of them. Well not really fought since he was a strategist but he still lived at the military camp and tortured enemies or fought in minor wars. His relationship with the sea was only as a makeshift camp while the soldiers fought on land. The problem was that he has fewer escapes plan and fewer options. Dazai hated having little to work with.

*He felt trapped again.*

So the sooner he stepped on land again the better.

* * *

Two weeks on board finally came on an end. They could now see the port and the city of Byzantium in its full glory.

It was a gorgeous city. Rich and wealthy. The people were dressed nicely and chic. The finest and rarest wares of them all. Gold everywhere. Wine everywhere. Here the people were used to good times and wealth. Their previous King and the King before him created a gold city with pleasure and sins as their rulers. Only feasts and parties could be heard here. As allies, they had a great army with many soldiers, and sometimes invented great things. As friends, they provided Rome with rich goods and gave land to Romans' villas. But they weren’t warmongers like the Romans or philosophers like the Greeks. For years they were under dictators that held them down, till two Kings came and showed the true glory of this place. Now it was only matter of time to see if the new king was better or worse than his predecessors.

The person of interest was Tanizaki Junichiro, a young man who was incurious till now. He was mostly known for his good looks, his shy personality and for being overprotective over his sister, Naomi. He was smart and kind, but then again most kings are. Naomi was another puzzle. She kept a low profile and was most famous about her love for her brother. These two were inseparable.

Dazai could work with that. Inseparable people were the most easy to manipulate because they didn’t want to lose each other. He just hoped for no secret surprises.

When they got off the ship, they moved towards a golden carriage that would take them to the palace. The three got a brief tour with the carriage and soon reached the palace. Where they were greeted by a small feast with soldiers dressed nicely and dancers coloring the place. There was a red carpet waiting for them and at the high end of the stairs was the new King with his sister.
'Same as your father.. Gold before brains hah?'

“Good evening lord Dazai! Did you have a nice trip?” Tanizaki asked politely as they shook hands.

“As nice as two weeks on board can be!” Dazai chuckled. “I hope you have something else than fish for dinner!”

“Be not afraid of that!” His teasing needs work…

“And this lovely lady here must be her highness Naomi” he kissed her hand. “It’s a pleasure”

“The pleasure is all mine, my lord. I have heard a lot about you” she coaxed sweetly.

“Good things, I hope”

“But of course! And who are these lovely gentlemen behind you?”

“Ah! Allow me to introduce you to my student and successor, Akutagawa Ryuunosuke and his personal servant, Nakajima Atsushi.” He gestured towards them.

Akutagawa offered a deep bow, while Atsushi fell on his knee with a breathless ‘Your majesty, your highness.’

“Hello. Had I known that you would bring a servant I would have already prepared a third room!” Naomi said apologetically.

“Ah! You don’t need to worry about that! A second bed in Akutagawa’s room would be perfect! You see my dear student has a serious health condition so he needs to have Atsushi constantly with him since he has his medicines!” Dazai turned to glare at Akutagawa, who after a small surprised look started coughing furiously to make a point of ‘serious health condition’. Atsushi on the other hand panicked for real so the act was saved at least…
“Oh my! I understand! If you need something, please come to me! We have many useful medicines okay?”

“Thank you very much, your highness…”

“Shall we go inside then? We won’t do all the talk here!” Tanizaki turned to leave with a small smile and an awkward sigh. He offered a hand to his sister, who gratefully took it, and led the way to the dining room.

Dazai’s mind was running a mile ahead trying to figure them out. At first glance it looked like Naomi did all the talking and that Tanizaki had his father’s love for showing of.

“What was that?” Akutagawa whispered behind him.

“A gift. Spare me the noise complaints okay?”

Akutagawa remained silent and Atsushi looked nervously around; memorizing the place no doubt.

They couldn’t afford to make mistakes...

*

“Hear me out. Mori gave us an important mission. He wants us to tighten the alliance, our enemies are starting to reappear and we have a new player in the game. We must not scare them nor give them a reason to switch sides. Understood?”

“Yes, sir!” they said in union.

“Good. Now hear closely. I want you, Atsushi, to look closely at the place and learn anything you can about everything that is going on in the palace. Even the smallest of details, I want to know them. Memorize the ins and outs, names, rooms, anything. Akutagawa you are going to be the star. Draw as much attention to yourself as you can. Meet everyone important and make friends with
“Okay. What is going to be your role?”

*Dazai smirk darkly “I will be the decoy of course.” His eyes darken “I will buy you time and then…”*

“What?”

“We attack.”

*

The first day passed smoothly. It was supposed to anyway. Just so they knew what they were dealing with, where they could move freely and where they should stay low. After dinner and a ‘small’ party for their arrival, they went to sleep. The second day started with a tour around the city. Naomi took upon her the role to play guide and show how much her grandfather and father did for the city. Her brother may not have been a King for too long but he had rebuilt some parts of the city. Tanizaki himself stayed behind to attend some matters of state. He promised though that he will meet them for lunch.

The meeting point was a big balcony at the right side of the palace. From there you could see the sea and the ships that came towards the city as they took their lunch.

But Dazai didn’t want to start just yet. Tanizaki looked like he wanted to deal with them and send them home, so he could continue his work smoothly. Dazai had other plans. He wanted to observe them, to figure out who they were and what their goal was. Everyone had a goal; they just showed it at different times. Tanizaki must have one; otherwise he wouldn’t be a King.

The third day Tanizaki gave up. He brought Dazai to his study room to talk about the truce. Akutagawa and Atsushi were with Naomi at the gardens for a tea season.
“So let’s talk about business!” he cheered lightly. *Awkwardly.*

“Let’s. Let’s! I supposed you know what kind of truce we had with your father?” Ugh Dazai would have to lead the negotiation.

“Ah yes of course. I assume that you would like to stay on the same terms?”

“Oh well! I’m negotiating with you not your father, my lord.” His laugh didn’t reach Tanizaki, who exhaled as if he was holding his breath.

“Of course you are not. It would be a little hard” he joked. A painful joke, if you want. It was obvious that he hadn’t negotiated with anyone more than two or three times; he was more nervous than a King should be. Normally negotiations were the first thing an Emperor taught his successor. It was weird that the King didn’t teach him that. *Different culture?*

“Indeed!” *play along… “So! We had agreed with your father that Rome and Byzantium will be allies that share an army in times of need and that you will be our supply to basic products. In addition, we will provide you with protection against any enemy you may have and any supplies you may need. Are they good terms for you?”*

“Indeed!” *play along… “So! We had agreed with your father that Rome and Byzantium will be allies that share an army in times of need and that you will be our supply to basic products. In addition, we will provide you with protection against any enemy you may have and any supplies you may need. Are they good terms for you?”*

“Yes they are. But…I think there were more terms?” *ah~ so you do know that…*

Dazai smirked “Your father had given us the … privilege to oversee your transactions and any deals you take. You –”

“Don’t move unless you say?” he said calmly turning to look at him.

Dazai froze for a second. “You could say that. Just some measures to make sure everything will be peaceful between us.” He finished with a smile. The professional one. The one he has every time he has to explain something for the million time to an idiot client. “I get that you are not happy with this particular term?”

“As you said I’m not my father” he crossed his arms on the wooden table “I think that we could reconsider this particular term, yes”.

“It’s for your safety, my lord.”

“Lord Dazai we both know that it is not. We both also know that the North is waking up. We are closer and we are your steady defense against them.” So you know more that you let on show hah? Sneaky…

He laughed again. “That may be true, but you need to offer something more to gain you-”

“Autonomy, freedom.”

“Place” he hissed. “Do you have something in mind?”

Tanizaki stayed quiet for a minute or two. He didn’t look away from Dazai as he exhales sharply. “Do you know that Dostoyevsky came here first?”

He didn’t answer. He didn’t blink. He breathed a laugh. “You are threatening me. ‘Take your domination over us or we will go with the enemy’, is that what you would like to say, young Tanizaki?”

“What if it is?”

“Then this meeting will be longer.” He promised sweetly.

* 

“So I guess negotiations did go well?” Atsushi said when Dazai barged into their room.

“That little shit Tanizaki! More mysterious than a dog!”

“Why every time you don’t like something, do you bring up dogs?”
"Because they are evil! Like him!"

"Did a dog chase you again?" Akutagawa said as he got out of the bathroom. He had a towel around his hips and one around his neck, which he also used to dry his hair. They had just bathed. Atsushi was sitting in front of a mirror combing his hair, dressed in a bathrobe.

"No! He is just annoying. Making it hard!"

"That's why you missed dinner? You were gone for hours!" he eyed him from the mirror.

"Yeah and we have yet to reach a conclusion." He passed around the room for a while. "Akutagawa!" he suddenly turned pointing at him with a maniac look. "I want you to sneak into his study room and steal something for me!"

"How am I going to do that and why?" he raised one eyebrow.

"With a distraction! Me and Atsushi will help and you will break in! And also because I told you so! Don’t you want to help your mentor?" he pouted.

Akutagawa sighed "I’m going to regret this. What do you need?"

Dazai brighten. “His notebook! Leather with a leather ribbon around it! Brown and kind of old.” He smirked.

*  

_Gods I made a terrible terrible mistake_…

Twenty five minutes. 25 minutes all he could hear were moans and growls and ‘Ryuunosuke!’ and ugh!

“I can’t do this!” he yells as he throws away the pillow castle he made around him in hope of keeping the noise down. It didn’t. “I’m going to kill them and then go back to bed!” he jumped from
the bed and moved to the door that connected the two rooms. He paused a moment to take a deep breath, getting ready for the horror that awaited him.

“OKAY THAT’S ENOUGH!” he burst into the room with such a force that the doors hit the walls with a loud bam.

The time seemed to stop as the moans stopped. The only sound that could be heard was Akutagawa’s sharp breaths. The scene that greeted him was Akutagawa bouncing Atsushi on his lap as he himself was on his knees attacking his neck and Atsushi practical covering Akutagawa’s back with scratches. And then they noticed him. And then Atsushi screamed; jumping away from Akutagawa, but also dragging him together.

Great. It’s in my head now.

Akutagawa used the time while Atsushi covered himself to glare at Dazai real hard. Dazai answered with his own hard glare.

“D-Dazai what are you doing here?” Atsushi’s face was all flushed as he tried to cover what he could.

“Atsushi! What did I said about noise complains, my little tiger?” that sweet smile of his could only mean that he was very annoyed.

“We…were we … l-loud… sir?”

“Mmm!” a very scary smile…

“Sorry. Now do you need anything else?”

“Ryuunosuke!”

“Ah~ Akutagawa you wound me! My prodigy is so harsh!” he put a hand over his heart the other on his forehead.
“Stop being melodramatic. Now if you excuse me, GET OUT!”

“Ryuunosuke!”

“Oh wow how you managed to woo Atsushi, I will never know…”

“Dazai! Gods this is so embarrassing!” he buried his face in his hands.

“You think that’s embarrassing? Well you really didn’t hear yourself back then…”

“Are you done?” Akutagawa sigh.

“For now! Really guys we need to keep a low profile! You are here all fun and love and didn’t care about your poor mentor sitting by himself trying to form a plan and being all lonely!” at this point he practically lay on the door like an actor in a tragedy play.

“Dazai if you were lonely why you didn’t say anything? You are always in-”

“Don’t invite him here!” Akutagawa hissed reminding Atsushi the state they were in; him still on Akutagawa’s lap.

“Oh-oh I...I mean not now but whenever you want! That’s why we are here!”

Dazai sigh again finally stepping away from the door. He had a sad smile on his lips. “Thank you, little tiger, but I think I would prefer the company of alcohol. Have fun you two. In silence~~~” he said as he exit.

“Do you think-”

“No. Leave him be. Clearly he has someone in his head.”
“Eh? Who?”

Akutagawa silenced him with a kiss.

*

Dazai didn’t linger much at his room after that. He got dressed and left to take a fresh up walk.

He walked around for a bit, occasionally bumping into people. It is funny how free people were here. Back in Rome there was no soul walking after midnight. If you got caught, you were in big trouble. If you were not a particularly likable person, it was a reason to mark you as spy or even kill you. This city looked like it never sleeps…

At the end of the corridor Dazai spotted an open door and light from inside the room. It seemed like it was a living room, one from the many the palace had, but a private one. No guards to be seen. When he approached it, he saw no other than the King and princess chatting happily. Wine glasses in hand; they were sharing the same couch with Naomi cuddling Tanizaki.

Now that’s interesting…

He knocked on the door lightly and entered with a half smile. “Do I disturb you?”

“Ah lord Dazai! Not at all!” Naomi cheered moving the slightest bit away from her brother.

“Can’t sleep?” Tanizaki asked. He nodded toward a servant to serve Dazai some wine. Dazai himself sat on the couch on their right side in front of the window.

“Nope… Too hot!” he joked.

“And loud” smirked Naomi. “We have ears lord Dazai.”
Dazai drank.

They stayed like that for a while. Talking about the city tour, gossiping about people they knew. Without realizing the glasses became two and then four and the six. Naomi never leaving her brother’s side. Tanizaki relaxed and Dazai laughing.

“Tell me lord Dazai. Why are you here?” Tanizaki asked softly.

“To observe you of course!” he said fast. And then froze. *What?*

“I’m sure about that…” Tanizaki looked at his wine before glancing back at Dazai. “Why?”

“To decide if we want you alive.”

Dazai took a sharp inhale. Eyes widened. *Fuck.*

Naomi didn’t move. She didn’t look up. But she smirked. *I see.*

“I understand that. And what do you think?”

“I haven’t decided yet, but you are annoying” he said fast. *Too fast.* “It’s the wine then. Should have figured it out. It was too good.” He glared.

“My Naomi is an expert at potions. A bit of truth potion is always welcome, don’t you think?”

“Only if the appointment is tough! You flatter me, milady.”

Naomi shrugged “You did give brother a hard time.” She laughed.

“Can we talk for a bit?”
“You are far too polite for someone who poisoned someone else.”

“I didn’t poison you.” he hissed.

“And then, boy?” he demanded. Dazai may be poisoned but he was far from going down.

“What do you want?” Tanizaki asked.

“To go home to Chuuya. Don’t change the subject. I’m at your mercy not the other way around.”

Naomi shifted; Tanizaki gritted his teeth.

“What’s your plan?”

“Told you. Observe. You are new, young and naïve. I want to make sure that you are no threat.” He sipped again. “Come on you can do better than that and I don’t want to go back there.”

“Who is Chuuya?” Naomi asked. *Dirty move...*

“Someone that I’m interested in. Not someone you should care about.” He sipped again. “I’m waiting Tanizaki.”

“Mori put you up to this?”

“Who else? He is the Emperor.” He shifted to his side, turning to be directly in front of Tanizaki as he sipped again.

“You don’t plan to change the terms, right?”
Dazai smirked “Now we are playing. Not; if you don’t show me what you can do. King.”

“We can change sides.” He unconsciously brought Naomi closer.

“That if you play like that. If Mori is hard for you to handle, then you haven’t seen Dostoyevsky yet. Do better.”

His tone was final and his gaze was still. Tanizaki ground his teeth again.

“What are you hiding? He seriously must not have sent you here just to observe.”

“What I hide is not for your concern. For the matters that have to do with you, I’m honest. Observe is all I do” Dazai does not miss a bite.

“Then you must have a better offer than Dostoyevsky. Otherwise your…. Observation is for nothing.”

“Oh I have an offer. But I will tell you only if I’m sure my trip is worth it.”

Tanizaki didn’t talk for a minute or two; Naomi looked back and forth between them. And then Tanizaki breathed.

“Then you came here for nothing.”

“Perhaps, boy. But we are still negotiating.”

He finished his drink.

*
“What did I said about noise complaints?” he was waiting at his balcony door. Arms crossed.

“It brought you time didn’t it?” Akutagawa climbed on the balcony. He was dressed head to toe in black and was wearing a black mask that covered him up to his nose.

“And fame.. Where is Atsushi?”

“He kept the curious eyes away from the study room. The servants here are more willing to help you if you need something so-”

“So you made sure that everyone will hear Atsushi and oh so kindly provide him with painkillers and a chair to sit, while every free servant gathers around him to hear the gossip first hand?”

“And show what is mine. Two birds with one stone.”

Dazai breathed a laugh. “Damn you are starting to become like me.”

“Thank you, sir”

“I didn’t say it as a compliment.”

“I didn’t take it as one.”

Dazai chuckled and ruffled his hair. “Did you find it at least?”

Akutagawa took a single piece of paper from the inside of his clothes and gave it to Dazai. “Did you have any doubt?”

“Not at all!” he laughed.
“What is it?”

“What is it?”

“Proof. That the previous King was murdered.”

∗

“As much as I understand the importance of this mission, you could at least tell me beforehand?”

These were the first words Atsushi said to him. After Akutagawa came back to their room, he waited till Atsushi barged in all gloomy and fairly pissed. He wordlessly took off his clothes and lay under the covers; not looking at him once. Akutagawa was totally doomed. He took off his clothes and lay beside him. Atsushi had his back turned and didn’t show a sign of acknowledging him. He sighed again.

Okay… It’s time to feel the consequences. He thought as he turned to embrace him from behind. At first Atsushi didn’t say a word; simply laying there. And then he moved away from him. It was a small distance, almost nonexistent, but it hurt. A lot.

“Well you had fun, didn’t you?”

That’s when Atsushi hit him. “I can’t believe you” he uncurled from Akutagawa’s embrace and turned his back to him. “Using our lovemaking like that!”

“Atsushi. Atsushi. I’m sorry okay? Really really really sorry” He embraced him again and started kissing his shoulder. Atsushi scoffed in return. Akutagawa caressed Atsushi’s arm slowly and exhaled in his hair. They were lying on their bed, covers up to their hips, clothes dismissed on the floor. They had long abandoned clothing while sleeping and preferred to sleep naked in each other’s arms. “You know that I would never do that on purpose.”

“And then what do you call this?!” Atsushi scoffed again.

“Showing what is mine?”

“Try again.”
He sighed. “Look. Atsushi look at me please?” He did look at him. If by look you mean glare… “Dazai needed a distraction to buy me time to sneak in. I could have found a better way; I won’t deny it! But… okay… remember yesterday at the feast when that servant was talking to you and… being close?” Atsushi nodded. “Well I didn’t like it! Just…” He swore under his breath.

“Ryuunosuke?” Atsushi fully turned to look at him “Why didn’t you say anything?”

“What could I say? We don’t spend so much time together anymore and people here are… more open and it annoys me because I can’t! Tonight when we made love, yes I was a bit rougher because I wanted to make a point but I would never just … use you in a bad way nor hurt you. And it pisses me off because I love you and I want to show it more. So I thought… I thought that it will be a good distraction for me and that people would know that you are mine. Till we get your freedom and we can marry. Is what I thought…”

He didn’t looked at him for a while. Just breathing heavily. Holding him tighter. Ashamed. He heard a sniff and looked at Atsushi, who was tearing up.

“You want to marry me?” Atsushi breathed. Akutagawa nodded. He placed his free hand to his cheek, caressing lightly. “I love you too. Very very much. And I want to marry you too! But do not keep secrets from me anymore okay, my love?”

“Okay” Akutagawa inhaled deeply. “Okay no secrets but people won’t touch you!”

“What about talking?” Atsushi bit his lips smiling.

“Depends”

“You are impossible.” He may have say that but he kissed Akutagawa passionately. “I love you.”

“I love you too.”

*
Two days. He was waiting for two days. And then a chance came.

It was a ball. One of the wealthy one kings do. Where they trap you inside a large ballroom and you get drunk, exhausting you with dancing. That was his chance.

He had instructed Akutagawa to make friends and Atsushi to help with what goes in and out of the kitchens. He wanted to make sure that no one will get him drunk again or risking other people switching to Dostoyevsky’s side too.

He himself kept a close eye on the Tanizaki siblings while flirting with every woman in this room. You know… for cover.

The parties here were different that the Roman ones. They wouldn’t sit and eat on beds till the end of the night talking together, but sat on chairs and tables and then dance all night; with drinks in their hands, they would wander from guest to guest talking and flirting. Here people were more free and honestly had more fun. Dazai had more fun. It’s not like the Greek either. Which was good? Greek ones were all philosophical like and boring ‘the general is talking about that great battle again’ like! Definitely good.

Here you didn’t realize how fast time passes. It all went smoothly. Relaxing and having genuine fun.

And then a lady fell on the floor.

And then a general got dizzy.

And then the music stopped.

And then the lights went off.

And then Tanizaki lost Naomi from his arms.

It took a while for the people to calm down. The candles that lit the place had to be restored and it didn’t help the confusion. Solders were running here and there helping the guest. He servants threw
down the wine and the food. Somewhere a woman was crying. Somewhere a man fell down. Somewhere Atsushi found Akutagawa and they hug. Somewhere soldiers were searching. Somewhere the candles were being light up.

In front of Dazai Tanizaki stood.

In front of him Tanizaki looked at an empty hand.

In front of him Dazai stood.

“Your princess got stolen from you” he whispered “Won’t you go find her?”

“I will ruin the world to find her.” Tanizaki hissed.

And he did.

His eyes were burning.

He searched for three days without stopping. The forth he finally had a lead. They wasted no time; the soldiers were ready and as soon as the messenger brought the news the mission began.

“You should think this through.”Dazai advised.

“I’m. We go in, she goes out.” Tanizaki didn’t stop walking. Fast on his feet, he didn’t wait for Dazai to catch up. “No one will be left alive.” He promised darkly.

Dazai sighed. “Let me help” he grabbed his arm bringing him to a sudden stop. “You will need help.”
“I don’t need your help!”

“You don’t, but your soldiers do. You are moving your entire army just for a girl-”

“A GIRL? Just for a girl?” he interrupted again. His eyes had gone open wild. “We are talking about my sister here! The princess-”

“The princess of Byzantium, next to the throne blab blab blab.” Really now... “Calm down!” He ordered. “An entire army will do no good. If you remove every single soldier, just as you did, from every possible spot THEN it would be easy for whoever is behind this to get in and claim the place.” He explained. Tanizaki seemed to recognize at last the fault in his plan.

“What do you propose then?” he voiced quietly.

“Take a team. The best of the best. Your most trusted ones.” He let go of his arm. “A secret mission. Get rid of the outside enemies. Break their defenses and then attack fast and hard.”

Tanizaki took a deep breath and nodded his head slowly. “We don’t know who we are dealing with our how many they are.”

“No we don’t, but neither do they. Your best soldiers.”

“And what is your role in this?” He didn’t look at him. His gaze hadn’t left the floor not once since Naomi’s kidnapping.

“I shall show that I’m your friend and ally!” He smiled. Only then Tanizaki looked. He narrowed his eyes suspiciously and looked. Truly looked.

“Let’s go” was all Tanizaki offered.

The moment he stepped out of the palace, the soldiers got into position waiting for orders. Tanizaki barked orders and formed a team with fifteen people and got on his horse. Dazai offered Akutagawa
for extra help and refused any of Mori’s guards that had accompanied them.

After that they moved fast. The place she was being kept was a small house just outside the city. When they reached the walls they got off and move on foot along the walls until they found a small hidden door. They passed through it and started moving again. They wore cloaks and moved with light steps trying to stay unnoticeable.

It took them ten minutes to find the house; there was light coming out of the inside of the house. Dazai counted five guards outside and could discern five more inside.

Tanizaki beside him stiffened. He was ready to charge in no doubt about it. Dazai sighed. Looked like he would have to play leader. He ordered six men to deal with the guards and five to search the place for more enemies. He, Tanizaki, Akutagawa and the remaining four would go inside. They would be the needed distraction for them to get inside and save the princess.

When the distraction worked they moved to the backside of the house. From the outside it looked like the house had two rooms. One large room that was the living room and kitchen and one smaller that was the bedroom. The bedroom’s windows were locked and thus that must be where Naomi was. The opted to barge in by the side window now that the attention was on the outside battle. One soldier broke the window and they dove in. Dazai ordered three soldiers to wait outside in case someone tried to leave.

Tanizaki didn’t lose time. He attacked any man who stood in his way and finally the man who was standing in front of the bedroom door and kicked the door open. The men he didn’t kill were taken care of by Tanizaki’s soldier and Akutagawa. Correction; they all fell by Akutagawa’s quick knife skills and the soldier stood there like an idiot - not that Dazai kept track or something.

Dazai jumped inside the house and moved between the fallen bodies. Of course he was waiting for the battle to end to present himself. He reached the bedroom just to see Naomi getting free from the bounds and jumping to her brother’s embrace.

As they held each other, he smirked.

He turned and ordered the soldiers to take no captives and to retreat as silently as they came.
But you missed Tanizaki’s eyes on you…

*

The night led him to a balcony at the top of the palace’s front side. From there you could see the city and the millions of stars in the sky. The sea salt was strong on the wind and the breaze messed with his hair lightly.

He was not alone.

Tanizaki didn’t turn to acknowledge him. He continued staring at his sleeping city. Only when Dazai took a place next to him, he offered a single glass with alcohol.

“Not another potion I hope.” He drank it anyway.

Tanizaki laughed “It wouldn’t work on you anyway” he drank “How did you do it?”

“I told you the truth. I just choose which truth. It’s a simple trick really. Mori’s first class.”

“I see. Should expect it.”

“Should. But you are still young. You have a long way before you, but I’m sure that you will do well.” He ruffled Tanizaki’s head, successfully knocking his crown down.

“Not if I have you as an opponent. Or Dostoyevsky” he bent down to pick up the crown.

“You don’t have to worry about me! We are friends now! And if we continue to be, you will not have to worry about Dostoyevsky either.” He drank again breathing deeply. He turned his attention to the city below “Tell me. Why did you do it?”

“Only if you tell me how you did it.”
He laughed. “We stopped by at home. Athens. While everyone was busy getting drunk, I went for a walk. You know being a famous lawyer has many perks. One of them is meeting people. I knew that Dostoyevsky would approach you first and try to take you over to his side. It was the only logical decision. All I needed was to give you a reason not to. So I paid some people to kidnap the princess. Had Akutagawa to humor the nobles and Atsushi to getting them drunk.” He said proudly and then softly “I wanted to see who you truly are. The first three days didn’t tell me much, but the kidnapping? I learned everything I need.”

“Which is?”

“That you love your sister and would do anything for her. I respect that. But you are impulsive! You will abandon everything to save her; even if that means your own people. That’s not necessary bad. You just need to think before you act. Form a plan, move low, hit fast and hard. That’s what makes you a King. And you can get there. You are half there already.”

“Just needed a push…”

“And that’s my better offer than Dostoyevsky’s. So how does feels like to be a King?”

“It sucks.” He drank a big sip before he turned to look at him “But it’s worth it.”

“That’s the spirit!” Dazai cheered “Your turn.”

“In his final years my father got mad from an illness. He started doing wrong things and making life difficult for my people. Also giving Rome all the power over us. He made decisions based on money and power that left none to our people. The trade went down and the army was becoming weak. He got rid of the powerful nobles and anyone who could defy him. He spent wealth only for himself and his mistresses. He locked me inside the castle and wanted to marry Naomi to some old asshole from the East.”

“So you decided to act.”

“A country can’t be ruled like that. Only problems would come.” He took a sip. His drink started getting low. “Do you know the saying ‘Bad times bring good men. Good men bring good times. Good times bring weak men and weak men bring bad times’? he passed to see Dazai nod “It’s a vicious circle. It could only end badly for us. We kept it hidden as much as we could and when we
couldn’t anymore; we acted.”

“It must cost you.”

“Everything does. That’s what ruling means, I learned today.” He smirks “I don’t regret it. If we hadn’t acted back then, then you would be here as an enemy and not as an ally.”

“So you had Naomi poison him and you finished him off.”

He nodded once before he close his eyes. He took some breaths and opened them slowly.

“I knew writing it down wouldn’t help but I had to. To … take it out.”

“Stop the nightmares.”

Tanizaki turned to look at him. Dazai had a dead look on his face. He stared at nothing and looked like he had stopped breathing.

“So you know well…haha” he laughed and then pursed his lips. “I hope it ends better for you.” He sighed again before he turned to leave “I had fun negotiating with you!”

“No you didn’t”

“No I didn’t. I’m expecting you out of my city by noon.”

As the King of Byzantium left, Dazai downed the last of his drink and left it on the railing. He took some deep breaths and looked at the sky.
“I’m coming home Chuuya~”

*Only two glasses were left on the marble railing when the morning came...*

“Why are you smiling like an idiot?”

“I just beat a very good opponent, shouldn’t I?”

“It’s creepy…”

“Mean, Akutagawa!”

Chapter End Notes

hello! sorry for the long wait! exams, moving out and a small writer's block kept me away but at last I'm here!!!
hoorayyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyy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also this chapter a lot of people helped! sodenoshirayuki_23 gave me some ideas about tanizaki and ThiaNiko with Glenraven beta it coz I honestly suck at grammar - now I understand it complitely - and Glenraven also checking my ideas! I thank you all very much! <3 and a speacial thank you to bsd discord for motivation and music! <3 please leave a comment! thank you reading! see you soon!

facts:
1. Asia along with the Greek area Thessalia are the Hogwarts of the time. especially women were interasted with magic.
2. every time you read 'couch' please think of a bed. its the beds that they were sitted for rest or eating and not for sleep. everyone besides Rome also had tables with thrones (not chairs coz who needs chairs?) to sit. they may use bed too.
3. homophilia was more acceptable at the East but still gossip material. that one of the reasons Romans didint like East, coz they werent manly enough.
4. killing your father to take the throne was extramely popular and not many actually died naturally to give the throne - dont try it at home!
5. women have a it more power at the East. at Rome they have behind the scenes, while at Greece depents the city.
6. at Rome we have the Emperors. At the East with have Kings. At Greece we have the local Lord who is either democratic, oligarchic or turns into a tyrann.
A letter to your heart and for my heart.

Chapter Notes

SPOILER: please mind that at the first part of the fic, the words in bold text are Dazai's thoughts, but with Oda's voice. It's an inner monolog of course, but Dazai's voice of logic is Oda since he gave him a new reason to live and Dazai tries to live accord to it. happy reading!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The journey back was quicker. They opted to make a non-stop journey, much to Akutagawa's pout. The Tanizaki siblings had given them supplies to last the whole journey back and Dazai would like to report back as soon as possible, rather than having Mori’s grumbling for as long that old man thought funny.

The people welcomed them back warmly of course. A small parade for them to celebrate the successful deal started the moment they set foot on land.

‘That damn old man and his predictions!’ was Dazai’s thoughts. Mori didn’t have the slightest doubt that the missions would be a success so he made sure to brag when they would come back. ‘That fox!’ It pissed Dazai more since Mori acted all mighty when he threatens him to do well. Mori has always been that way. He pushes people to the end, makes them think that there is no way out, just to laugh at them when it would be over.

‘It is only logical. If you make them feel in disperse they will give their 100%. Never accept something less other than perfection’. Sometimes, Dazai feels like he lives with another Mori version who lives inside of his head.

They didn’t linger for too long. A wave here, a smile there. Dancers and soldiers around them. When the gold doors closed behind them, the crowd died just as fast as it had begun.

Clap, clap, clap.

“Congratulations, Dazai! A well done job!”
In the next heartbeat, everyone fell to their knees. Dazai glared at that ugly smirk in front of him. At the next heartbeat he smiled sweetly, eyes closed to keep the hypocrisy away. “Your majesty! Did you come to welcome us back? You shouldn’t have!”

“Of course! After you did so great it’s a certain thing to do! I had no doubt of the result! Care to tell the Senate about your exciting trip?” Mori’s wicked smile meets his own sweet smile. His eyes glowed when Dazai was taken aback. There was nothing worse than a long meeting with eyes watching him to ruin his day.

“Always ready for the hyenas to eat me.”

“Bold words, Dazai. Fifteen minutes. Prepare a nice speech.” The ‘don’t make me phrase was spoken merely through his eyes.

When he finally left, everybody rise to their feet, Dazai turned to his students. “If I die Atsushi takes everything.” And then he left like the wind leaving behind a stoned Akutagawa and a glowing Atsushi.

“YES!”

*

Little to say that the day went horrible. Not the meeting. The Senate was more than pleased with the result and the new condition was more than friendly for the empire. The elders were observing him closely of course. Asking again and again, with questions that Dazai wouldn’t answer. He didn’t say anything about how Tanizaki took the throne or about his relationship with his sister. It was not his business anyway.

“Consol Dazai” said the only nice person here. The man’s name was Hirotsu Ryuuryou, and he was one of the few survivors of the last Emperors reign after Mori’s rearrangement. “I’m more than delighted about our new ally, but are you absolute sure that Tanizaki wouldn’t change sides if Dostoyevsky were to offer him….a better deal?” He was also smart. Hirotsu didn’t believe a word of how Dazai present the good deal. He stayed quiet for the most part and only when it was almost over, he expressed his concern that Tanizaki had accepted this way too easy, and that Dazai had proposed something else.
Dazai said that he simply pushed too much and he refuted every offer Dostoyevsky promised logically. “We are talking for a mastermind and for a rookie King here. I wonder how easy it was for you…” he simply said. The rest of the Senate stand straight on their seats. They expected a better answer.

“Ah you see Tanizaki may be new, but he is much smarter than his Father! He thinks of his people's well being and we agreed that Dostoyevsky’s cold tact is not the best for peace.” Plus Dazai had already abducted Naomi, so he could do it again easily. Not that they needed to know that.

“I see. And you are sure of it?” he finally asked after a few moments of silence.

Mori’s eyes were cold on his back.

“But of course. You have nothing to be afraid!” he said cheerfully. “You have the word of the man who helped stabilize the peace after all!” he smirked. His words were a reminder of what the infamous Dazai Osamu could do. The strategist who took down the mad Emperor in a night. The next heir of the throne. The cold blooded genius.

The answer satisfied most of the elders. The rest believed that if it was so easy, they should have took more or even took the Byzantium itself. ‘These fools... If it weren’t for their money and intrigues they wouldn’t be here.’ Dazai brace them off saying as politely as they could that they are idiots and if reality was so simply people would be flying by now.

After the meeting was over, Dazai run away the fasts he could. Until then his day was good. He came home, showed good result and put every old fart to each place. Mori disappeared the moment it ended so one headache less. The only he wanted now was to return to his chambers and when the night fall to visit the gardens. He wanted nothing more than to see his little camellia.

*What could go wrong?*

“Dazai”

Dazai stopped at his track. He slowly closed his eyes and breathed for a bit. He didn’t talk and he didn’t spoke more.
Deep breathes. Open your eyes. Where are you? Behind the Senate. Good. Is there anyone close? No. Good. Take a deep breath, Osamu. No need to be upset. He must simply want to talk. I don’t want to talk. You can’t avoid him forever. Turn around. I know what he is going to say. It will be better if you hear it from him. You also have something to tell him too right? I know what he is going to say. I know. But do you know what you are going to say?

Are you ready to forgive him?

“Dazai.” Ango said again. Dazai took a deep breath and turned. When he was facing him fully, he opened his eyes and smiled professionally.

“Ango! You were quite far back there, that I almost didn’t notice you!”

“I preferred to listen today.” He fixed his glasses. “Your story was so interesting, my lord.” Eyes stare into him carefully.

Dazai didn’t back down, he smiled sideways. “I’m always happy that you enjoyed it.”

“What are you hiding Dazai?”

“‘Sir’ or ‘Consul’ for you. I’m the second powerful person in the Empire, don’t forget that.”

“I don’t… sir. I’m glad that you finally start acting like it.”

Dazai glared. “I needed a push, I guess.”

Silence.

“Maybe.”

“How dare you?” Dazai breathed, looking away. “That’s all you have to say? ‘Maybe’? Don’t you have any dignity at all?” he hissed. “Or did you lost it all when you sold him?”
Ango sucked a breath. He looked back more determinate. “People were dying—”

“So as him.”

“They were suffering—”

“So as he!” calm down. Dazai inhaled sharply. “He took everything from him and marked him as a traitor.”

“There was no evidence—”

“SCREW THE EVIDENCE!” he shouted. “He burned his children. He killed Odasaku in front me, while you were busy saving your ass!”

That made Ango shiver. “I was trying to survive. The Emperor was mad. He killed everyone for no reason!” he breathed erotically. “After Oda’s children, how could you tell if I was next or not?”

“I could tell!”

“You had already your way out. No one touches you—”

“And what made you think that I would abandon my friends?!”

“Stop interrupting me and listen!” In Dazai’s seven years that he knows Ango, he had never hear him raise his voice. Ango took a deep breath and calm himself. “Your fate had been written already, from the second Mori took you as his son.” He spook calmly. “I was ordered to be your friend, and prevent you from doing something stupid. But… I end up being your friend. My position was still susceptible. Did you ever wonder where your guards and servants went when you would sneak out in the middle of the night?”

Dazai listens but his expression was saying ‘betrayal’ all over. Dazai despise betrayal more than anything, and he had tasted it since his childhood. His mother was the first one to taught him that. He thought that he had finally find someone to trust. Something to live the next day for.
“When Oda became your guard, you click instantly and the problem stopped. I … really liked being around you two. But you had a goal. Mori wouldn’t let you stray away from it. When the Emperor gone mad he had to make choices to who he will keep by his side. You were on top of the list but I wasn’t.”

“So you went somewhere that you would be needed. Fair enough. That doesn’t explain why you didn’t stand by Odasaku’s side when he was a step away from being murder.”

Ango wets his lips. He didn’t say anything. He looked down. Ashamed or Guilty, Dazai wouldn’t present him.

*Cowardly. That's what you were a coward.*

“You abandoned him. After everything…” Dazai realized bitterly.

“Be honest with me. Did you ever think that he would survive?”

*Don’t cry out your tears, you don’t deserve to cry.*

“You bastard. I saw how you looked at him. Even if he hadn’t a chance… you shouldn’t have abandoned him. He died alone and miserably.”

“And that should teach you a lesson, Dazai.”

“That I should die alone too?” he had no energy to yell anymore. He felt tired. He felt alone.

“That you shouldn’t dream much in your position. Fulfill your destiny, and don’t stray away.”

*Nothing beyond what you would expect will appear. Nothing in this world can fill that lonely hole you have. You will wander in darkness for eternity.*
Dazai raised his head. He looked at him. Truly looked. Hard, in the eyes.

**What do you see? A scared child…**

“You made a mistake. We should always hope or we will fell on despair. Like you are now. Regret has shallow you.” He had no energy anymore. “You wanted to live, but you are dead inside. I wanted to die to be free, but I have a reason to live right now” he whispered. “You abandon the only one who truly loved you and who you loved. It must cost you everything.” He looked at him again. “I won’t do the same mistake. I know what to do now. Who I want to become and who I want to die as.”

**Be on the side that saves people. If both sides are the same, become a good man. Save the weak, and protect the orphans. Neither good nor evil means much to you, I know... but that’d make you at least a little bit better... Of course I know. I know better than anyone. Because... I am your friend.**

“Be a good person Ango. You may still be able to save some of your soul.”

**As he turned to leave, the voice inside his head start to sound more and more like an old friend, a man named Oda Sakunosuke. Maybe the only good person his old self ever knew.**

“People live to save themselves anyway. Or so they say.”

*

Dazai had spent the whole journey back to Rome inside his cabin. It was stupid, if you ask him. He had made himself almost sick. He hadn’t slept for days. And why?

“A letter?”
“Mm! That’s right Atsushi-kun! I want you to take this letter and give it to that gladiator. The one that won at the last Game? Short with red hair, can’t miss him!” Dazai cheered lightly.

“Okay… but why?”

“That’s not important~” he smiling. “Just make sure to give it to him as soon as we reach the palace!”

Atsushi eyed him suspiciously for a moment and then sighed deeply. “Dazai are you going to blackmail him? If it is so, please don’t! His life is hard enough!”

Dazai gasped dramatically. “Why would I possibly do that?”

“Because you haven’t blackmailed anyone yet?”

“Akutagawa, shut up before I make you eat that book. Now where were we? Ah yeah! I want you to take it to him, but no one must see you okay?” he spoke calmly, almost like talking to a child.

“Why no one-”

“Ah ah ah!” Dazai shake his finger “No one must know!”

“You are trying to flirt with him, aren’t you?”

“Akutagawa what did I told you about shutting up?”

Stupid. It was stupid. Dazai felt stupid.
He wasn’t a person to do something so… silly? romantic? sweet? No. He wasn’t. Dazai would always be straightforward. Push until he gets what he wants. Mischievous until he has his way. That’s how it was, always.

He just… he didn’t know. Why… why he want to ‘approach’ this differently. Why he wanted to try. It’s just... what? He knew Chuuya for two weeks now? But … Chuuya looked at him differently. He had almost challenged him at their first meeting! He couldn’t explain it well.

He just knew that Chuuya looked at him like he knew him. Looked at him for who he was and not some noble person looking for fun. Chuuya… Chuuya talked to him. He looked for Dazai. Chuuya wished for him to come back.

No one wished for him to come back. Not before he found something at Athens.

When Dazai looked at him, for the very first time he had been amused. When he watched him battle and refused to go down, he saw a will for life that he had long forgot.

He wanted to see more of that. Feel more of that.

So he wrote a letter. He wrote many actually. A hundred words, ten words. He rewrote it again and again.

Hello Chuuya…

My little camellia,

I missed you

As you see I’m back and well!

How are you? How is life?

Please tell me that you are alive.

I brought pepper flavor tea!

I did my job well!

I
Wish you could see the city! Amazing!

Chuuya.

Have you ever visit Byzantium?

Hello~

The stars are nothing compared to your eyes

I

Did you wait long?

I want to see you.

Did you miss me?

Chuuya

‘Chuuya,

I hope that you are well in health. I complete my mission well. I believe that I didn’t make you wait long. Would you like to accompany me to a walk at the gardens?

Midnight. Meet me at the foundation.

Be well,

Mackerel.’

-  

He gave the letter long before they reached Rome. If he had it still, he would rewrite it again. He burned those that had been left as notes. No one must learn. No one must know Dazai’s little source of happiness. No one must know of these azure eyes.

He didn’t spoke to Atsushi after he got back for the Senate. He arrived at lunch time. There were far more ears than he would like here. Mori had turned it in a small feast, no doubt for marketing proposes. Dazai didn’t mind… he would play along, he would look like nothing happened, like he is a useful son of the empire. And when Ango came, he smiled and greeted, they ate side by side. When he finished his food, he politely excused himself.

“Too tired from the journey! I shall see you at dinner, Father!” Mori answered with a fake smile mirror to his. A simply ‘rest well’ for a farewell as he return to his matters.
Dazai didn’t search for Atsushi. He didn’t want to learn if he had delivered the letter or not. He went to sleep, suddenly too tired, too exhausted to know if he could fight for a trace of warmth.

He will leave the Ladies of Fate to decide.

He had long quit hoping. For a companion. For a partner. For a hand to held. For a reason to live.

*

The dinner was quiet that night. Only him, Mori, Elise and Akutagawa, are present. They ate in silence. Enjoying the good food and the slow music.

“There will be games tomorrow. I hope that I will see you both there.” Mori said apathetically.

Akutagawa paused, visually caught off guard. “Unfortunately, I won’t be able to watch the spectacle. A would like to visit your library, both at the palace and the public. I’m afraid that I have neglected my studies for more than I would like. And since a bad caught troubles me, I would prefer to rest at the morning. If you don’t mind of course.”

“Oh?” Mori studied him for a second before he returned to his meal. “I don’t mind Akutagawa. Health is important and studies inevitable. My only wish was for Dazai to be as responsible as you! Have a nice time tomorrow” he smiled. “Take with you that slave of yours to make sure that you will be alright and don’t forget to eat. Lots of protein, okay?” He advanced like good doctor.

“Yes, your highness. Be sure.”

Ah~~~ Dazai had predicted that Akutagawa and Atsushi would make sure to lose as many Games as they can. He didn’t blame them. If he could he would too.

“If there are Games tomorrow, how come no one is here? Cutting the expenses?” Dazai interrupted.

“Not at all. Another noble is in charge of today’s dinner table. Since the Games will be against
animals, I gave him the privilege of the farewell dinner.”

“I see. That’s good then. They tend to be noisy when they have to fight animals.” Dazai simply
comment. He tried to keep his mask on, but deep inside, he was worried. Normally, there are
different gladiators for animals fight, but if there is someone popular and the public wants him, they
with throw them to the lions. Literally!

‘Will Chuuya fight?’ He wondered. ‘There is no doubt that Chuuya is an excellent fighter, but what
can he do against hungry lions? Will he fight? Will he be okay?’

They ate the rest in silence.

‘Well… there is only one way to find out…’

*

It was around twelve thirty when he head to the gardens. He walked slowly, enjoying the night
graze. He closed his eyes and walked a few more steps till he could hear the sound of the foundation.
He smiled softly before he opens his eyes again; he exhaled once and stepped into the small circle of
flowers.

Strangely, even if he was worried that Chuuya wouldn’t come, the moment he stepped inside the
garden, he felt no fear. Something within him told him that of course Chuuya would be waiting for
him. And he was right.

There. On the marble fountain, sat the beautiful redhead. He was looking at the sky. He didn’t seem
to acknowledge Dazai’s presence and simply continued watching the sky.

Dazai moved forward.

“Stargazing?” he voiced softly as he sat beside him.
“You are late.” Chuuya simply comment.

“Sorry” he chuckled. “Dinner ran out late.” He too, lifted his head to watch the stars.

“That one over there” Chuuya pointed to the sky “That’s Orion. The three stars is his belt.”

Dazai left a quite ‘oooh’ looking at the named constellation. “How can you see Orion? It’s a bunch of stars?”

Chuuya eyed him before he looked back at the sky with a smirk on his lips. “I really like the night sky, and I used to read a lot about the stars.”

“Oh! So Chuuya is smart after all!”

“I’m going throw you to the fountain.”

“Haha sorry sorry” he smiled. They fell into a comfortable silence for a while. Simply watching the sky. “Were are you from?” Dazai asked. He was curious about the redhead and defiantly wanted to learn more about him. Have patience or you will become rude…

“From afar.” Chuuya answered quietly. “You?” he bats his eyelashes a bit.

“Latium.” So beautiful you are.

“Is it far?” he bit his bottom lip. Lightly moving forward. So cute.

“Not really. It’s just at the other side of Italy.” He explained.

“How is it?” Chuuya seemed more curious.

beautiful scenery thought. And lots of temples” he added quickly, Chuuya’s eyes glowed, he noted. “Do you know that Aìnias, Rome’s finder first establish Latium and made a family there?”

Chuuya nodded excitedly “I have read about it. The city was Alba Longa but was named Latium from his wife Latia.”

“That’s correct!” he cheered and Chuuya smiled proudly. “How is your home?”

That saddened Chuuya. “My home was beautiful.” He said looking down.

“I’m sure that it still is. Just – ”

“Less free?” he interrupted. “That’s what you do. You only know war.”

“Fat words from a gladiator.” He snapped.

“I didn’t say that I’m innocent. But I don’t ruin homes.” He hissed back.

Dazai had nothing to answer to that. It was partly true. It was politic.

“Why did you bring me here, Dazai?” Chuuya asked tiredly.

Dazai didn’t want that. He didn’t want to see him tired. He didn’t want their night to end just yet.

“I brought you something.” He was looking at his hands. He felt shy to say that out loud. At the only free day he had at Byzantium, he spent it searching for the perfect gist to bring to Chuuya. He felt foolish.

That surprised Chuuya. He turned to look at him but Dazai avoid his gaze. “Why?” he muttered.

Dazai shrugged, playing with his hands.
“What is it?” he moved a bit closer when he saw Dazai not answering.

Dazai sighed and present him a hair tie that he had inside his pocket all day. It had blue crystals and shinned nicely under the moonlight. He gave it to Chuuya’s waiting hands; he didn’t miss the opportunity to stroke his fingers of course. Even if it was lightly.

Chuuya had a beautiful smile when Dazai looked at him again. It was small, but noticeable. He was looking at the tie and touched the gems one by one. “Thank you.” He whispered. “It’s beautiful.”

Dazai raised his hand and touched lightly Chuuya’s cheek before he moved it to his chin and raised Chuuya’s head so he could look directly at his eyes. “It suits your eyes.” He whispered, thumb caresses his cheek.

Chuuya blushed. “You know that I can’t wear it right?”

“I know. I hope that it will bring you good luck though.” If anyone found Chuuya with such a wealthy possession, they would accuse him for robbery, and if he appeared with it at the Games, it would look like he has a benefactor. Both equally bad for both Chuuya and the palace’s reputation.

Chuuya nodded. “I will keep it then, among my many possessions.” He teased.

“Mmm…careful not to lose it.” Dazai smiled.

They stay like that for a while, looking at each other eyes, Dazai caressing Chuuya’s cheek, Chuuya biting his bottom lip. Gods how he wished they could stay like this for a long time.

“You are being sappy” Chuuya comment softly.

“It’s good once in a while. Don’t you agree?”

“Who knows. Can’t decide if it suits you.”
“That’s mean Chuuya~” he whined.

“Pfft and you are back to the whining mackerel again.” He laughed breaking their eye contact. Dazai chuckled. He moved his hand back from Chuuya’s cheek. Missing his softness already. Chuuya turned to look at him after his laugh ended. He moved closer again; now shoulder to shoulder. Dazai ducked his head nuzzling their foreheads together. That earned a chuckle from Chuuya.

“Are you participating to the Games tomorrow?” he asked.

Chuuya shrugged. “I won’t tell you. You left me waiting till your noble ass decide to show up, so I won’t tell you. That’s your punishment! Come and see by yourself!” he scolded.

“Chuuya is so mean! Ruining the moment too!” Dazai whined puffing his cheeks.

“What moment exactly mackerel?” he slapped his hands on Dazai cheeks which left a sound that made him smile. “Anyway, I’m leaving! It started getting cold here and I have to wake up early tomorrow. You should go to rest too.” He said, standing up.

Dazai stands up with him, sulking. He tugged Chuuya’s wrist lightly halting him on his step.

“Take care tomorrow okay?”

“Hey. You don’t have to worry. I’m really good at fighting and now I have an extra luck with me!” he said waving the hair tie in front of Dazai, who narrowed his eyes; clearly not buying it.

Chuuya chuckled. “Goodnight Dazai” he said.

And then he stand on his toes.

And then he kissed Dazai’s cheek.

And then a blush painted his cheeks.
He took his wrist out of Dazai’s hold and disappeared.

He left Dazai standing there for an hour progressing what the hell happened.

And then he Dazai cheered loudly before remembering that it was dead inside the night and he wasn’t supposed to be here.

He opted to a victory dance instead.

For thirty minutes…

* 

The next morning greet Dazai with a terrible back pain. He had tossed to his sleep to the point he hurt his back! His night was also full of nightmares, where lions ate Chuuya and Mori in red panties mocked him. Horrifying!

The wait till the games didn’t help. He had said farewell to Akutagawa and Atsushi and spend the rest of his morning with various snob nobles. When he finally sat on the balcony in front of the Arena, he had lost every patience he had and he was ultimately furious to he point of his normal mask almost slipped off. Mori had eyed him suspiciously a couple of times and he had to actually put efforts to socialize with every noble, so Mori won’t question him!

When the first gladiators entered the Arena, he held his breath. He searched among them, eyes darting at every face, every corner, and every shadow. Everywhere.

_He is not here._
The games started and animals effused from the doors, without wasting time, they attack anyone nearby. The gladiators screamed and run and fight.

For Dazai the fight seemed endlessly. Finally, Mori stand to judge if the remaining three gladiators had fight well and shall live or if more animals should come. He looked at the crowd.

The crowd was not generous today. He yelled that the show wasn’t good. They throw rocks and demand blood.

Mori smirked. He raised his hand and then put it down. Dazai sighed.

*inhuman*...

The doors opened and the screams started once again.

*You lied to me."

“I believe that I didn’t! I simply said that I won’t tell if I would participate. I didn’t tell you something more.”

“Aaaaah Chuuya is mean!” Dazai sighed as he throw himself in front of the fountain, where Chuuya was seated.

“Now, where I have heard this before?” Chuuya joked.

Dazai puffed his cheeks. “Well, you had me worried! Do you know how scary the lions were? One was as tall as you!”

“I’m going to throw you to the fountain.” Chuuya snarled.
“Promises and no actions!” Dazai sulked in respond.

“Tsk. Needy mackerel…”

Surprisingly, they fell into a casual bickering. They would insult each other only to stare at each other sweetly after. They talk about this and that. Chuuya showed him some constellations and Dazai told him some first-hand stories about the history of Latium.

Without realizing it they lied side by side. They didn’t say anything. Dazai turned to look at Chuuya. He had closed his eyes and breathed steady.

“What are you thinking?” he asked.

“I’m thinking…” Chuuya opened his eyes. He tilted his head a bit to the side. “I’m thinking that it would be a shame.”

“What would be?” Dazai turned to his side, fully facing him Chuuya now.

Chuuya did the same. “For the morning to come.” He whispered.

Dazai exhaled. “I can keep you away from the morning if you want.”

Chuuya breathed a laugh. “You can’t. Don’t ask for too much or the Gods will punish you.” He moved his hand to Dazai’s face; fingers almost touching his cheek. “You belong to the morning. I belong at the night.”

“You can still come though-“

“I could but I won’t. I didn’t then and I won’t now. There is a reason for it, don’t you think?”

“Everyone wants to live, Chuuya.”
“But not you.”

“No. Not me. I have too my reasons though.”

“And then why do you ask me to change mine?”

“Because I for once would like to see what will happened if I start wanting to live on my own accord.”

“Do you think that I can help you with that?”

“You already did.”

Chuuya removes his hand. He turned again to the sky. “Do you know the story of Orion?”

“The constellation? He was an archer and Artemis killed him.”

“No. It’s not only that. Orion was the only person Artemis ever showed interest in. He was a great archer and a greater hunter. But her twin brother, Apollo, felt jealous, because Artemis would spend more time with the mortal and Orion would brag about the Goddess’s love and how his skills were equal to a God since he was the Goddess’s hunt partner. So, one day, when Orion was hunting, Apollo sent a huge black Scorpio to hunt Orion back. To save himself, Orion fell at the sea but Scorpio chased him still. Apollo, then, challenged his sister to shoot that thing far far far away in the ocean. He claimed that she couldn’t because it was so far. She said that of course she could and shoot. A perfect shot. Can you guess how sad she was after? She put him on the night sky for people to always remember him and his glory. But Apollo wasn’t done. He also put the Scorpio on the starts. So he always chases Orion but never catches him.”

“Why are you telling me this?”

“Because it means something. Do you know what?”
“That Apollo was a jealous asshole?”

“Don’t be rude to the Gods!” Chuuya scolded. “And no. It means that when you have something precious there are people that want to take it for from you no matter what. It could be another contestant or the precious one itself. If you caress it so much it will turn to bite you to the butt. It also means that if you have something precious you should keep it close to you and not parade it around. Arrogance is a flow that always destroys these around it.”

“And what the Scorpio means?”

“It means that the bad of this world will always hunt you down. The game starts when you decide how to deal with it. Orion choose to run. I choose to fight. You choose to bear whatever it did to you deep inside. Whatever you choose, it’s scary and exhausting and becomes unbearable after some time.” Chuuya turned to look at him. “Why am I telling you this?”

Dazai shrugged not trusting his voice. He didn’t turn away from these azure eyes. They seemed to keep them under a powerful spell.

“Because you already lost something precious to you. Are you sure you want to lose another one?”

******

A short side story by Tachihara Michizou:

“Aaaah I got lost again!”

Tachihara heard the anxious voice before he saw a white-head slave running down the stairs.
Normally, the dungeon was off-limit to everyone than the gladiators and the guards monitoring them. A slave being there – or more correctly searching for someone anguished - was unheard. How did he even pass from the guards?

“Ah! You over there!” he light up when he saw Tachihara “You are a redhead!”

“What?”

The slave came closer and started to examination him. “You are redhead, but tall.” He said sorrowfully.

“I’m sorry?!” Tachihara didn’t know why but he felt responsible for the man’s sorrow.

“Oh no no! I’m sorry!” he shook his head. “I’m looking for a redhead but short gladiator.” He explained.

.........?

Redhead but short…

“Chuuya! You are looking for Chuuya!” he beamed up.

“Eh? I don’t know his name! Is he redhead?”

“The finest of red!”

“And is he short?”

“Well he defiantly isn’t tall!”

“Ah! Then I’m searching for that Chuuya!”
“That’s great!” he said happily since he found out the…mystery? “Why?”

“Oh. Ehm… I’m not … supposed to tell…” the slave blushed looking down.

Tachihara understood that. He had see people lose their heads because they couldn’t keep their mouths shut.

“I understand. Just promise me that you mean well and I will lead you to him.” He said making his voice more baritone to look like more serious.

The slave seemed to think about his answer before he looked back determinate. “I give you my words, that my master wishes only the best for that Chuuya person.”

“Okay.” He nodded. “Follow me then!” he smiled. “Oh and promise me also that you won’t tell Chuuya about me calling him short. Please.”

“Eh? Why?”

“……… I’m trying to do a good impression” he blushed till his ears.

“Why?”

“You ask too many questions!!”

Chapter End Notes

hello again! thank you for reading!!! hoped that you enjoyed the new chapter! please tell me what you think or if you didnt understand something! The angst is finally hereeeeee till the next time, please be well!!!!!!!

facts:

1. Aias was one of the few survavors of the Troyan War. A Troyan himself and son of Aphrodity or Venus, had the prophessy to build Rome. After lots of Odisseous like-advantures he reached Anba Longa, where he married the princess Latia and had the
famous children Romus and Romilus who actually build Rome.
2. There are many myths about Orion. The one I choose was the easy astronomic one. In another story, Artemis kills him coz he cheated her.
3. As I said before there were two kinds of gladiators. The ones who fight against other gladiators and the ones who fight against animals (venatores).
4. Romans were show off people. Every time they won something they would do a victor parade with all the glory and the wealth. Of course nobles and rich people will do parades for no reason at all. Petronius, a satyricon writer had once talked about a rich man who made a parade from the public baths to his home! Talk about show off!
5. In Athens, slave could take the wealth of their masters after they die. Only if they leave it to them of course. That's why many slave had banks in Ancient Greek.

a huge thanks to @chal for betting it <3
have a nice dayyy
Does this count as an answer?

Chapter Notes
See the end of the chapter for notes

Two weeks.

That’s how long they had to talk. To cross paths. To see each other. Even at the arena.

Two weeks he had been thinking..

Is it worth it?

“It is.”

“What is?” Akutagawa commented softly without looked away from his book.

Currently, they were in Dazai’s bedchamber. They had managed to escape lunch with Mori and spend noon together. Dazai was seated behind his desk, which was littered with various documents and things that should have already been done. And yet he had spent an hour and a half, chair turned to the side looking outside his window at the beautiful gardens. Frowning the entire time.

His pupils on the other hand preferred the comfort of the bed. Akutagawa was reading a recent case that Dazai threw at his face earlier with a simple ‘you do it. Congratulations you are officially a lawyer!’ holding the files with one hand while the other was stroking Atsushi’s hair. Atsushi had fallen asleep not long ago. The quiet of the room was enough to let him drift off.

Dazai sighed letting the hand that supported his chin fall. “I was thinking about something; that’s all.”

“You clearly were. You have been staring outside for a while now.” Akutagawa looked at him from below his eyelashes but he kept his voice even. “Does it have to do with your overnight stay out?”
“You noticed.”

“It’s hard not to. I’m your student after all.” He smirked proudly.

Dazai chuckled. “Yes you are. You never fail to remind me!” He bit his bottom lip, looking outside again. Silence spread among them. Akutagawa let him be. He knew by now not to interrupt his teacher’s silences. “Akutagawa.” Akutagawa hummed. “I want you to do something for me.”

Akutagawa’s hand paused. He slowly turned to look at his mentor. ‘What would I gain from it?’

Dazai smirked. You are becoming way too much like me. “Now now it’s not nice to say it like that~” he turned to look at him fully. “Let’s say that if you help me, I will see what I can do to give you two a little time~”

“I’m not interested in ‘looking what you can do’, not for ‘a little time’”.

Dazai chuckled once then he looked back darkly. “Let me rephrase that. I want you to do something for me. If you do it then I will forget that little incident three nights ago. What do you say?”

Akutagawa glared. “I don’t know what you are talking about.”

“Oh, I think you do”

*

Three nights ago...

There was one job Atsushi hated the most. Work at the baths!

It was absolutely exhausting. Going up and down, left and right, cleaning even the smallest detail. It would be okay if it was once a day, but no! He had to do it once before they opened and once after
they closed! He may be Dazai’s private slave but he had to get them ready for his ‘master’. Not that Dazai would care at all.

But that wasn’t a big problem really. Atsushi could handle the work. The problem was that he had to do all the work. Normally slaves would divide the chores, but here the older servants would make him do all the work. The baths were what annoyed him the most, because their different temperatures made his body ache.

He had to admit that living at the Dazai household had made him lazy. There he wouldn’t work, but focus on his studies. Coming here took him back to a darker period of his life. One that he would rather bury deep into the ground and never remember it again.

Now that these days were back, he had trouble hiding his reactions from both Ryuunosuke and Dazai. He found himself falling asleep when with Ryuunosuke more often. He would eat a bit more hungrily than before. He would put a fight everyday to wake up since they would put him on more jobs that he has to and he would sleep late. Atsushi didn’t know if Dazai or Ryuunosuke noticed something. And if Ryuunosuke gave him a strange look, he would laugh it off. ‘No need to worry them. They have more important problems than one extra chore,’ he would say to himself. He had told himself this over a million times now. And he would say it as many times as needed. Till they could go back home.

“Hello.”

Atsushi startled; so deep into his thoughts that he didn’t noticed the servant that crept out behind him. “Oh sir! Hello!” he bowed.

He didn’t know why to call the other servant ‘sir’. He was just the oldest among them and apparently the most favorite. But he was a servant like the rest of them; a slave. Why make yourself superior among your equals? To be honest, Atsushi didn’t even remember his name! Atsushi would only meet with him when he bossed Atsushi around. Meaning most of the time of the day.

The servant smiled. “Doing the chores I see! But you are taking too long. Are you dawdling?”

“No sir! I just make sure for everything to be extra clean and pretty for our honorable guests!” Thank the Gods that oratory taught you how to talk nicely.

“Mmmm… I see.” The servant looked around. Atsushi was unsure on what to do. Should he go back to work? But wouldn’t that be disrespectful?

The servant darted closer. “Hey Atsushi. Want to learn a secret?” he whispered.

“Eh? Ehm.. what is it, sir?”

“They say that your master, the young lawyer is wooing a noble lady! How unfortunate for you!” He smirked.

“What?” Atsushi heart stopped.

“Yes yes. Servants saw them walking together. They seemed close! But poor you... You must not really think that you were important to the young master! Ts ts ts Atsushi. That’s a rookie mistake!”

“Ehm…what are you talking about?” No good. His voice was trembling. Cold sweat was falling
from his forehead. He felt his knees going weak.

‘Ryuunosuke would never…’

“Atsushi listen to me~” he moved closer. Atsushi took a step back. “I know that master is fucking you, but you should never forget your place! Your only purpose is to serve, not to be served. It’s just a game for them! You cannot seriously think that he would stay with you!” he chuckled.

He moved closer again. Atsushi took another step back.

“I think that you are making a mistake…” His back touched the wall.

“I think not~” The other trapped him against the wall.

His hand started moving. He first put it on his knee. Lightly bending over him. Then slowly he started moving it higher.

He placed his lips on Atsushi’s ear.

“He doesn’t love you.”

Atsushi’s eyes widened before he pushed the other man away. He glared hard. “You know nothing.” ‘How dare he say these things?’

“I’m not lying Atsushi.” He tried to get closer again. “Whatever he told you was probably just get you into his bed. Me on the other hand, I-”

“Trying to get me up against the wall? That’s why you were mean to me all this time?” Atsushi spit.

The servant dropped his ugly smile. “Watch how you talk to me slave.”

“You are as much of a slave as I am!” Atsushi came forward to face him off.

“I would never fall as low as you,-” he barked as he raised his hand. Atsushi straighted his back. He would never hide from a slap again. He locked eyes with the man. He took a sharp breath as the hand came down.

But he never felt the pain.

His eyes fluttered when he turned to look at his offender’s hand. It had stopped mid air. No. it was stopped mid air. Because there he stood. A very angry Ryuunosuke grabbing the hand so tight that Atsushi could see it starting to turn blue.


The servant didn’t lose his composure. The freed his hand from Ryuunosuke’s death grip and straightened his back.

“Just teaching this servant a lesson, my lord.” He sounded too professional

“As far as I’m concerned he is my servant and thus mine to discipline. Is he not? Slave?” Ryuunosuke narrowed his eyes.

“He is, my lord. I apologize if I overstepped my place.” He bowed. A fake reverence.
“You sure did, slave. Why don’t you get out of my sight then and I will discipline my servant?”

“Of course, my lord.” The servant said. He glared once toward Atsushi before he turned to leave. His victorious smirk didn’t go unnoticed.

Silence spread among them. When the servant was finally out of sight, Ryuunosuke turned fully to Atsushi. He started looking all over his body, checking for any injuries. “He didn’t hurt you, did he?” he asked when he found nothing. His hands came to rest on Atsushi’s cheeks.

“No. I am alright.” Atsushi cupped his hands and smiled softly. “Thank you.”

“What did he say to you?” he brushed their foreheads together. “Something stupid right? No need to believe anything that comes out of this dog’s mouth.”

Atsushi chuckled. “I know.” He started caressing Ryuunosuke hands. He closed his eyes.

‘Please don’t ask…’

“Atsushi?”

“Yes?”

“Is he the reason why you are constantly tired?”

‘Must you notice everything?’

“No. It’s only because of the work. Being a servant is hard, Ryuunosuke.” ‘Being a slave is very hard do you know?’

“Atsushi-”

“Now aren’t you here for a bath? Come on! Hurry up! Or people will start coming and we must not be seen, remember?” he said stepping away for Ryuunosuke. He took his hand and started leading them to the first room.

Ryuunosuke remembered. They must not be seen. Because people think that there is something wrong with them. But there is not. What they do, what they have, what they feel isn’t wrong. In fact, it couldn’t feel more right!

But they couldn’t be seen.

Because this was not home. And if they were seen then bad things would happen to Atsushi first and Ryuunosuke later. Dazai’s reputation would be ruined too.

No. they couldn’t be seen. Not before they are home. Safe.

But there was a thing Ryuunosuke couldn’t forget. That Atsushi had started getting thinner, more tired, and unhappy. That the other slave would look at him weirdly. That that man had overstepped many boundaries. That he dared to raise his hand against Ryuunosuke’s most precious person.

No. Ryuunosuke couldn’t forget this.

Later that night the slave walked back to his room, with no care in the world and a full stomach. He was striding confidently through the long corridors.

There, between the shadows, a dog appeared.
“Hello.”

The slave turned and he was met immediately with a punch. The first one was strong enough to make him turn his head to the other side, but the kick that followed was hard enough to throw him to the ground.

Ryuunosuke didn’t spare him a second glance. He drew his dagger and kneeled next to the fallen slave.

The slave didn’t say a word. He couldn’t move his widened eyes away. He kept holding his punched cheek and swallowed hard.

Ryuunosuke on the other hand smiled darkly. “Now a little bird told me that you aren’t very polite with the people here. That’s not nice. Don’t you think?”

The slave kept quiet.

Ryuunosuke started throwing the dagger from one hand to another without taking his eyes away.

“Smart of you to stay quiet; but it won’t help you. You see unfortunately I can’t hurt you. Much. I can’t make you disappear because that will become a problem for me if someone find out. But I’m very good at making it look like an incident.” He caught the dagger and with a quick elegant move of his hand he moved the dagger in front of the slave’s eye. Just a hair’s breathe away. “Why don’t you start by telling me what you did wrong?” He smirked.


“Because in two seconds I will start ripping you apart and I want you to know why.”

“I know why. Because I tired your bitch-”

“Wrong answer.” He put his free hand to the slaves mouth and tightened his grip he bring his face forward; sinking the blade into his eye. The slave couldn’t help but scream. His screams weren’t very loud due to Ryuunosuke’s hand. He tried to fight back; no luck.

“The weak will die and make way for the stronger. Don’t you think?” he stopped his moves.

Tears were running from the slave’s eye and he was breathing hard. He gripped tight on Ryuunosuke’s clothes.

“Now I heard that you are quit a name among the slaves! You forgot your place though. You thought you were what? A God among them? A King among them? How foolish. No matter how powerful it may be, a pawn is still a pawn. And I’m afraid that you are not a strong one.” He said as he threw the slave back to the floor.

The slave curled on the floor holding his hurt eye. “They will catch you,” he muttered through clenched teeth.

“There won’t be much left of you to catch me.” He stood up.

He started moving towards the slave.

The slave crawled away, leaving a trail of blood behind.

Ryuunosuke laughed darkly. “Running away won’t help you. You hurt something very precious to me.” He brought his foot down hard on the slave’s right foot. A crack sound could be heard and the
slave sucked in a breath.

“I say we call it even.”

The morning will find the slave missing an eye and two fingers. There would be cuts all over his body and he had a twisted ankle. He said that dogs attacked him as he was returning from his duty at night. But there was no need for excuses.

Because Dazai saw through them all.
And the slave still had his tongue.

*

Dazai leaned forward. “So do we have a deal, Ryunosuke?”

“What can I do for you?”

*

Here is what I want you to do…

“Good morning.” Akutagawa said with a charming smile on his face. “Here for work again? Lady Higuchi?”

Now I have noticed that Lady Higuchi seems to fancy you. We can’t let this pass, can we?
“Lord Akutagawa! Good morning!” Higuchi blushed. She couldn’t even look him in the eyes for too long.

Higuchi was a pretty woman around Akutagawa’s age. She was from a noble rich family that worked for the palace. She and her sister visited regularly, but now that their father was sick she as the oldest child took care of the ‘family business’. What she was doing was visiting the palace and supervising over the hearing the Emperor held for the poor who needed help or had complain. This didn’t happen every day but after she saw Akutagawa, she started appearing every day. She started dressing nicely and moving her hips more while walking. She would always greet Akutagawa the moment he stepped out of his bedchambers and insist to walking together to the throne room.

Of course Akutagawa couldn’t care less, let alone actually make any conversation with her. He simply walked her to her destination because Atsushi made a big deal over it and good manners and something else that he didn’t bother to hear.

So when she did her regular walk to his room and found Akutagawa waiting outside the door without his slave beside him, she was delighted! And when he half smiled at her and voiced a “Would you like to have breakfast with me?” with his deep voice, she decided then and there that it was her favorite day! Ever!

*It would be nice if you were a gentleman to her! She seems to like you a lot!*

“O-Of course!” her blush reached her ears and when Akutagawa offered his elbow for her to take, she forgot how to breathe!

*And what of it?*

*Well I was thinking that you need a friend!*

*No you weren’t.*

*No. I wasn’t.*

“You really don’t have to walk me to the throne room! I’m sure that you are very busy!” she said for the nth time, but didn’t remove her hand nor relax her grip. Why would she? They just had a lovely breakfast together!

“I insist! It’s a pleasure.” He smiled again. His mouth had started hurting.
“Well then the pleasure is all mine! You can use this walk to relax before your case!”

“Indeed! That’s a very good idea! You are a very smart woman, Lady Higuchi.” He laughed.

“Please call me Higuchi! The ‘lady’ makes me feel like an old woman!” she chuckled.

“Higuchi then.”

“And may I call you Akutagawa?” her face light up more.

“……………..sure.”

Nope, seems like she can blush and light up at the same time. Great.

“You seemed like something’s troubling you though……Is everything alright?”

Now is my chance. “Ah~” he let out a deep sigh, shaking his head. “There is this particular case that is troubling me. The offender is a gladiator and I must represent him, but I don’t have much … knowledge in this art.” He glanced at her from the side.

“Oh my! I see! It can be a handful, yes, but you are a very dedicated lawyer! I’m sure that you will do great!” she tried.

“But how can I, when I know so little about gladiators!” He put extra care into his frowning. “If I could only talk with a professional, maybe I could understand my client more! But I can’t meet any outside the Arena, not even my client without guards to watch his tongue!” he cried.

“I can help!”

It’s like a tradition for women to buy gladiators for a night. They pay plenty and the funds are very welcome to the state. The Arena’s manager is always ready to give you whoever you desire.
and the gladiator has no say in the matter. It’s a dog eat dog world anyway. If he is… good enough the lady may pay more as a thank you and the manager will give him a duel with a weak opponent. Easy win.

“You would do that?” He sighed again and stroked her cheek. “That will be a great help. Higuchi.”

They only let women do it though. A man? Disgrace!

“And if it helps you then I am more than happy to do it!” she smiled brightly.

Akutagawa chuckled. “Then can you ask for this person? I heard that he is the best!”

Bring me Chuuya and I will make your little problem disappear.

*

Chuuya was no stranger to this tradition. In his short years of being a gladiator, he had seen a lot of people being called out for the night. He personally detested this kind of thing. They would be a personal toy to whoever paid the most and then rewarded with a weak opponent. A coward’s win.

He was aware that many people would offer to buy him for the night, but he was worth too much of a spectacle to waste energy for something trivial like that. So it was a surprise. The manager came to his room, told him to dress as nicely as he could and they left. Simple as that. He didn’t offer him the name of his buyer nor the place they were headed.

He was curious really. The manager had repeatedly refused any offer from any rich noble that had tried. No matter the money. He only knew that the buyers were women, hungry for some excitement outside of their boring rich lives, and looking for some fun. This woman must be someone powerful enough that even the manager couldn’t deny her.
It was late. Far more late than someone should walk outside. The chill night and the empty streets creeped Chuuya out. It was awfully quiet. The manager walked quickly in front of him. He was maneuvering his way through the streets; often changing his course. He had lowered the light of his lamp and kept it close to his body as if he didn’t want anyone to notice them. He had refused to answer any of Chuuya’s questions and hushed him to stay quiet.

*Well that definitely helps the mystery... Just who is that woman and why so much secrecy?*

They seemed to walk forever till they reached an area, more public-like and less noble-like. It was obvious that this woman didn’t want anyone to learn about Chuuya’s service of the night. The manager knocked three times before he turned to Chuuya.

“I will come to pick you up an hour before dawn. Don’t step outside before then,” the manager said and then disappeared into the night without a second glance.

*Okay...*

Unsure what to do Chuuya stood in front of the door. Someone would open the fucking door, right? The outside of the house didn’t say much. Just a small house among others. The common Romans preferred living in small one-bedroom houses, much unlucky to the fancy taste of the nobles. This one was identical with every house they passed on their way here.

There was no way this was his buyer.

After a while, too long for Chuuya’s patience, the door opened, revealing an old woman around sixty.

‘*Ehm … okay what?’*

The woman looked around to see if someone was close and then nodded at him to follow her around the house. Behind the house were the stables and a small cabin. The windows were carefully sealed, but he could still notice the light from under the door. The woman knocked three times and then left.

‘*What?! What the hell is going on?!’*
This time he didn’t have to wait too long. After the old lady turned to the corner of her house, the door opened wide enough for someone to yank Chuuya in and lock the door behind him. For all the secrecy this meeting had, the door banged so loud, that Chuuya was sure a neighbor or two must have woken up.

‘Oh you want to fight lady?!’, Chuuya thought before he turned to see the mystery woman, possibly to punch his way out too fed up with her bullshit.

He turned with a glared and he met a stupid grin.

“What’s the meaning of this?” he hushed.

“Chuuya has been avoiding me for weeks! I had to ask some favors to see him again!” Dazai whined.

“Tsk! You know that we both have been avoiding each other, but that doesn’t explain this!” Chuuya gestured around the room.

“I missed you” he whispered. “So! I pulled some strings and stole you for the night! You should be glad, Chuuya! You got to have a tour of Rome after nightfall! Also, I’m such a nice host that I even made us dinner!” the other man pointed behind Chuuya cheerfully.

Chuuya half turned to look better at the cabin. It was small sure, but it fit a small one-person bed, a closet and a low table with two chairs. On the table were a candle and two plates with some expensive and tasty food for sure.

“You mean you got someone to make it. You are a pain in the ass, noble!” Chuuya spit as he moved towards the table and sat down.

The man chuckled. “That I am! But you are not far behind,” he said as he sat down as well. “You must admit it, little camellia~” he sang.

Chuuya sighed. Of all the things that happened in his life and all the things he expected to happen with his new line of work, Chuuya had to admit that he never thought that he would ever find himself sitting across the next Emperor, in the middle of the night, inside a surprisingly cozy cabin. Gods know where and eating like he had all the time in the world.
Dazai Osamu was definitely full of surprises. The bastard was good at planning the unexpected and Chuuya didn’t really want to know what strings he pulled to have such a dinner with him.

Chuuya was actually impressed!

He glanced at Dazai happily eating his food. His stare made Dazai look up. He smiled sweetly. “So. How did Chuuya spend his time without my awesome company? Missed me?”

Chuuya snored. “You wish, mackerel” he said and stabbed his food.

* 

“So, how did you end up here?”

“My city was invaded by your people.”

“My father’s people.”

“Does it really matter?” Chuuya said as he put another piece of delicious meat in his mouth. For the past half hour, they had been eating in silence. Once in a while, Dazai may ask some questions. How Chuuya’s life has been, how he is training and normal things like that, that normal people should talk about.

Except they weren’t normal people.

They were a gladiator and the next in the line of Rome’s throne.

If anyone were to know about this meeting, Chuuya would be dead and Dazai would be pointed as a disgrace.
“What do you want from me Dazai?” Chuuya asked tiredly. For the first time since he sat down, he turned to look at Dazai. All this…mystery (?) was exhausting and there was no way it would turn out well.

Dazai turned to look at him. He had a funny expression on his face. Mouth shut harshly, eyes looking at everything but never stopping at Chuuya’s eyes. He looked calm, but unlike any other encounter they had, this time Dazai didn’t joke. Didn’t mock Chuuya. Didn’t pull of the ‘knows it all’ façade.

“I want to know more about you,” he whispered.

“How?”

A sigh. “You…are very interesting …to me.” He said each word like he picked them on spot.

“How?”

“How not?”

“Because I’m just a gladiator. I’m expendable.”

“You are more than that.”

“Every day I’m being sent to the Arena to fight to the death and even if I win there is still a chance to be killed.” Chuuya said as he moved forward. “What exactly is interesting in me?” He hissed.

“That you keep fighting.” Dazai said determined. “Every day.”

“Lots of people are.”

“But you don’t give up,” Dazai pressed. At that moment he looked determined to prove Chuuya wrong. To point out Chuuya’s difference from other people.
Chuuya looked and Dazai looked back.

Chuuya sighed. “There was a war. Between the Romans’ army and my village. I was…” Another sigh “I was the leader but I did poorly. I ordered to evacuate but to stay close. I didn’t belief that we would lose. Obviously I was wrong,” he said as he sipped from his wine. “I led a team, we lost, my men were killed, the soldiers caught up with the villagers and they … either killed them or sold them as slaves. I was sent here to enter the army, but when I refused they threw me in the Arena.” As he spoke he didn’t turn to look at Dazai. He looked at everything but him. Now that he was finished, he met Dazai’s gaze.

“You were arrogant.”

That pained him. “Yes I was. And I paid for that.” He fell back to his chair. “So who are you?”

Dazai smirked lazily. “Now you are interested in me?”

Chuuya wet his lips “It’s only fair, mackerel”.

“I was a noble,” he chuckled. “Unwanted like now. Rich parents got married to get richer, but didn’t work out. I was smart so the last Emperor picked me up and made Mori adopt me so I ended up as the next to the throne.” He ate lazily.

“Now that’s not the whole story is it?” Chuuya drank again.

“I may or may not have blackmailed a few people to get me close to the capital. And accidently in front of the Emperor.” He shrugged.

“Not a smart move based on your choice of clothing…” Chuuya rested his chin on the back of his hand, elbow on the table.

Dazai looked up from his wine glass. He sipped slowly. “I learned to keep my friends close and my enemies closer.”
“That’s why you left?” Chuuya pressed.

“Careful Chuuya,” Dazai hissed.

“Answer me. My head is on the line.”

“As well as mine.”

“What do you want from me?” Chuuya growled.

“You. Simple as that.”

“People aren’t that easy Dazai.” He breathed a bitter laugh looking away.

“I know. I got that the hard way. Stop thinking simply. Make puzzles and crack them to millions of planes.” He drew the last of his wine “That’s why I’m changing strategy. No more hiding, no more running, no more chess play. What do you say Chuuya?”

“I’m saying that it will get you killed.”

“It will kill me anyway. So let’s take what we want and regret nothing after.” I have only ever regretted the things I didn’t do, Dazai. Deciding to live as I want isn’t one of them. “Let’s stop with the regrets and live a bit. Even for a night and tomorrow let’s think of a new plan to live another day. What do you say, little camellia?”

He stood up. Eyes half closed. Moving slowly. Left hand tracing the table. He stopped in front of Dazai. Right hand coming to rest on his shoulder lightly. Their eyes met and Chuuya threw a leg over Dazai’s; successfully straddling Dazai’s lap. Dazai inhaled Chuuya’s scent as he leaned closer.

“I say ….since we will be here till morning… why don’t we make use of the place?” he whispered into Dazai’s ear.

Dazai moved fast. His right hand knocked the dishes off the table, while he picked up Chuuya with
his left and placed him on it hard. “Do not tempt me Chuuya,” he breathed a growl.

“And why is that?”

“Because you won’t be able to walk out of here.”

Chuuya exhaled sharply. He bit his lip and leaned back, weight resting on his arms, legs opened a bit wider and robes falling higher. “Let’s see about that…”

One kiss.

Two kisses.

Three kisses.

And the sun is out.

Chapter End Notes

hello!!!!!! Im terribly sorry for the long wait! thank you for your love, support and kind comments! it means a lot! the thing is that I work three jobs plus uni, so for now on the updates will be slow. Im planning (hope and pray) to graduate this March so when that happen the updates will be back to normal and its Christmas time soon so its writing season! anyway the facts are all into the text and beting was by the lovely @glenraven !! thank youuuuu
please tell me what you think so far of the story! its gonna be a big help!
till the next chapter be well and have a nice day!!!

End Notes

okay. hi.
I may said "no writing again" but I went to Rome, fell in love with basically everything there, then the uni start yet again with 3 latin classes, two of them are about gladiators, I watched the movie with my boy Russell Crowe and I thought! WHAT IF SKK HAS AN AU LIKE THIS?!
and thus this fic was born.
I tried okay..
everything here is historical accurate, based on the classes and the various papers that has been written. I'm making my professors proud! I hope.. if I let them read it will I get an A at the finals?
"Inferno" is one of the circles of Hell in Dante's "Divine Comedy".
When I said that Mori raise his hand and Chuuya's life was spared it's because the researchers' opinion about that are divided. The latin text says that the Emperor "raise his right", but doesn't say what.Most researchers believe that its "the right hand" but american movies and some other researchers believe that its a "raise the thumb of his right hand". I choose the first opinion but you can imagine whatever you want!
I'm sorry for any errors. there is no beta.
thank you very much for reading it and thank you if you left kudos/comments. even if you didn't like it just think about how awesome idea this would be and its an interesting AU to discuss.
you can leave your thoughts about it, if you want, at the comments.
thank you again for stopping by and reading it! be well~
see you at the next chapter!
have a nice day

Please [drop by the archive and comment](#) to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!