It's okay to lean on me

by eternal_aegis

Summary

In the aftermath of a mission gone wrong, Dazai patches up Atsushi's wounds after the latter's healing ability gives out. There's a bright side to all of this - Atsushi finally confesses how he feels.

“Don’t worry. I’ll take care of it, Atsushi-kun.”

Dazai smiles softly and Atsushi is gone, looking up at this beautiful man in the dingy light of a train station restroom. One of Dazai’s hands is resting next to his thigh as he leans down and dabs at his side, cleaning off dried blood with a wet paper towel. Atsushi lifts a hand to the back of his neck as he flushes slightly, and then looks up at the ceiling, ignoring that dark head of hair. He closes his eyes, listening to Dazai’s calm breathing and the sound of the sink running next to him.

Notes

BSD finally broke me. I wrote this at 1:00 A.M. rather than sleeping because I had so many feelings about the characters. Also I desperately need a crash course in AO3's formatting, as right now I only feel confident in the italics tag, and that's it.
“Come on, Atsushi-kun, just a little further,” Dazai says lightly, though he doesn’t quite nail it as Atsushi’s enhanced senses pick up the tension in his voice. He nods, vision swimming when the movement jars the wound in his side. The street is thankfully empty, so there’s no one to question what a scrappy teen in blood-soaked clothes and a tall man are doing together in the middle of the night. Clearly not solving a case, nope no-siree. He gives a little giggle at the thought, then focuses on walking steadily. He’s so tired, all he wants to do is lay down and sleep.

“You're such a weakling,” Atsushi mutters, though the pain in his side isn’t getting worse, but it isn’t getting better either. He purses his lips and keeps walking, following his mentor. How had a simple case gone awry so quickly? He shakes his head and just focuses on placing one foot in front of the other.

When they get to the train station, Dazai ushers him into the bathroom, herding him like a mother duck. It sent a little curl of warmth into his chest when Dazai picked him up like he weighed nothing and set him on the counter. “How bad does it look?” Atsushi asks, trying to distract himself.

Dazai digs through his pockets and pulls out a roll of bandages and miniature first-aid kit, sending a mischievous look at him. “It appears we’ll need to amputate.”

Atsushi gives a soft snort, wincing as Dazai adjusts his position with light touches, gently guiding him through taking off his blood-soaked shirt. His healing had started to give out towards the end, the sheer amount of damage causing the tiger to wear out as the fight had dragged on. Dazai tosses his shirt into the sink next to him.

“Make sure they use the good s-saws,” he stutters out the last word, the cold air making goosebumps appear on his pale skin.

Dazai smiles softly and Atsushi is gone, looking up at this beautiful man in the dingy light of a train station restroom. One of Dazai’s hands is resting next to his thigh as he leans down and dabs at his side, cleaning off dried blood with a wet paper towel. Atsushi lifts a hand to the back of his neck as he flushes slightly, and then looks up at the ceiling, ignoring that dark head of hair. He closes his eyes, listening to Dazai’s calm breathing and the sound of the sink running next to him.

Dazai’s hand presses faintly on his side and Atsushi gasps, a sudden jerk of pain lancing through his body. His vision goes foggy before he comes back to a hand on his face and brown eyes staring into Atsushi’s, dark brows furrowed on Dazai’s face and lips pursed as he says something.

“What?”

“I said, how bad does it feel?” Dazai repeats, his other hand moving to brush the silvery hair out of Atsushi’s eyes.
“Ah, three out of ten?” It could be worse.

Those brown eyes furrow and Atsushi squirms at the soft rebuke before it’s spoken. “Liar.”

Warm hands leave his face, moving back down to his almost blood-free side. Dazai pulls out a small packet of cotton balls and wets them with something from a clear bottle, and then there’s a firm hand on his shoulder.

“Don’t move.”

The smell makes Atsushi’s nose twitch and he bites his lip. There’s a stinging flash and he can’t breathe. His body wants to jerk away from the hand that’s sterilizing his wound yet he can’t because of that grounding touch on his shoulder. Something warm drips onto his chin and he hears a sigh. By now, Atsushi’s eyes are closed as he focuses on staying still, tense anxiety making his stomach curdle. A faint whine rises in the back of his throat that he can’t push down. His palms clutch the counter until they almost feel numb, and then he relaxes when the pain ebbs away to a low ache. The hand on his shoulder strokes into the curve of his neck, prompting him to relax.

“Atsushi-kun,” Dazai’s voice sounds in front of him, prompting him to open his eyes. He blinks a couple of times, then lets out a low breath, exhaling softly. The hand on his shoulder moves to his neck and tilts his face up; Dazai’s thumb brushes against his bottom lip and Atsushi’s heart skips a beat.

“My, you can’t stop hurting yourself, can you?” Dazai says as he moves his hand away, showing the blood on it from Atsushi’s face. Atsushi probes the inside of his mouth with his tongue, feeling the source of the blood against his lip. He brings a hand to his face and wipes the blood off of his chin, licking his lips to get rid of any remaining. He hears a faint, strangled noise and looks back at Dazai. Dazai, who is staring at him with a strange expression on his face, then he shakes his head, his even more messy than usual hair curling around his face.

“Sorry.” He blinks a few times confusedly and sees the tips of Dazai’s ears redden.

Dazai exhales softly, then holds up a piece of white cloth, some sort of padded bandage. “I need you to hold this to your side.” Atsushi nods and lifts a shaky hand from the counter to take it, letting Dazai adjust his grip and set his hand against his side. Dazai begins to wind bandages around his chest, securing it in place.

Dazai’s hands leave him as the detective takes a step back and levels an evaluating gaze at him. He attempts to straighten his back and shivers at the loss of warmth.

“Wait here,” Dazai says as he shrugs his coat off and drapes it over Atsushi’s shoulders, wrapping him up in it. He then takes the somewhat less bloody shirt from the sink, turning the water off as he does so, and wrings it, subsequently hanging the shirt on the hand-dryer by the exit.

A sudden spike of fear lurches in Atsushi’s chest, thorns pricking at his skin. “Where are you going?”

“Don’t worry, I’m just going to buy us tickets for the train,” Dazai flaps his hand tiredly. “Just stay there. I’ll be back soon.”

“Okay.” Atsushi leans back against the wall and pulls the coat tighter around himself, closing his eyes as he breathes in Dazai’s ever-present smell. Metallic warmth, hints of something rich yet bitter, - coffee? - and oddly, lavender, all fuse together to make something that Atsushi can only think of as safe, something so uniquely Dazai. It’s warm too, so warm Atsushi wonders how Dazai isn’t melting
all the time.

He slips into a haze, between one blink and the next, Dazai is back and he’s snapping his fingers in front of Atsushi’s face. “Atsushi-kuuuun, A-tsu-shi-kuuuuuuun,” he drawls out, “the train’s almost here.”

He gives a little groan and then slides off of the counter, almost stumbling as he hits the floor. Warm hands steady him and he leans into Dazai’s chest, wearily trying to get his legs to cooperate. He can hear a whistle blowing as the train pulls into the station. Dazai has his shirt in one hand and he can feel the heat radiating from it. Atsushi forces tired limbs to move and manages to get his arms into the sleeves, but after several seconds of fumbling with the buttons, Dazai brushes his hands to the side and buttons them up. Atsushi hums and returns to leaning on Dazai while he does so. Dazai re-settles the coat around him, letting it drape over Atsushi’s shoulders like a security blanket.

“Just a little bit more, Atsushi-kun,” Dazai murmurs into his hair, sending a chill down his spine. “You’ve been doing so well.”

That chill turns into a curl of heat that brings a flush to his cheeks and he looks down. His hands are freezing and he can feel the tug of sleep drawing him back. He starts when he feels a warm arm wrap around his waist and Dazai drapes Atsushi’s other arm over his shoulder, supporting him as he begins to walk. Atsushi focuses on putting one foot in front of the other, trusting in Dazai to handle everything else. It’s what he always does, without even an ounce of hesitation.

He’s guided to a nearly empty car, only two or three other people are in it and they all seem to be sleeping. Dazai pulls him into a booth and he leans against the window, faint shivers overtaking him as the air-conditioning in the train seems to suck all of the warmth out of him. Atsushi blinks startledly when the older man slides into the seat next to him, their thighs touching. Dazai reaches across Atsushi’s lap with his right hand to take Atsushi’s left, his fingers curling around his wrist loosely, thumb pressed over the veins as he takes Atsushi’s pulse. Somewhere in the back of his mind he notes that while Dazai is very touchy, he’s never been this touchy with him. The tiger's rumbling is filling his ears.

Dazai tsks softly, “You need to eat more. Are you hungry? I can get you something to eat.”

Atsushi couldn’t stop looking at his hand. The hand that Dazai was holding. That hand. Those long fingers made a perfect circle around his wrist. His throat felt dry and he gulps. Why now, of all times?

“Hey,” and there were those fingers on his face again. The more he looked into Dazai’s eyes, the more he realized how many different colors existed in them. Flecks of amber and gold lurked in the deep brown, while different lighting seemed to change the color entirely. He could spend a lifetime trying to drown in those eyes.

“Atsushi, pay attention.” Dazai’s voice takes on a sharp tone and he blinks, trying to remember the question.

“What?” he asks and he sees Dazai’s face soften, though worry still draws his eyebrows together.

“Are you hungry?”

Hunger seems so far away to Atsushi right now. He shakes his head tiredly and sees Dazai frown.

“No. ‘M just tired. It’s cold, Dazai-san.”

Dazai hesitates for a second and lets go of Atsushi’s hand, shifting away from him. He almost
whimpers at the loss and it catches in his throat, making it difficult to breathe. Vines are tightening their grip around his wrists, bringing tension to his shoulders. He doesn’t understand why everything is becoming so overwhelming, and then he feels Dazai’s hands around his shoulders. The world goes sideways.

Atsushi’s head is on something soft, and it takes him a moment to realize he’s being cradled by Dazai’s body, laying half on top of him on the barely wide enough bench. Dazai’s vest is off and folded into a pillow underneath his head. Dazai is arranging the coat to cover them, carefully tucking Atsushi’s feet under his own legs. Atsushi stares up at Dazai and the world is tilting once more as Dazai gently lays down, Atsushi’s head resting on the brunette’s shoulder.

There’s an arm around his shoulders radiating heat onto his back and Atsushi could almost purr from how comfortable it is. Long fingers stroke into his hair and he lets out a small whimper.

“You did very well, Atsushi.” Dazai says quietly. Five words that strike him to the core, and Dazai probably knows exactly how much they affect him.

His flush comes back with an intensity and Atsushi hides his face in Dazai’s neck, feeling red spread over his cheeks. He idly wonders how he still has enough blood to flush like this. It’s probably the tiger’s fault.

He works on trying to control his breathing, but it’s hard when his heart is pumping so loudly. He’s fairly sure everyone else in the car could hear it. Atsushi curls his hands underneath Dazai’s shirt and he hears the older man’s strangled hiss at the cold, then feels another hand join his, bringing much wanted warmth with it.

Dazai shifts a little more, slipping a long leg between his thighs and pressing Atsushi further into the padded booth, taking care not to put pressure on his wound. It feels like he’s surrounded with warmth and Atsushi blinks back tears, that harshness in his throat ever present. He can’t remember the last time someone had done something like this with him. Any part of this, from treating his wounds so gently to cuddling with him just because he was cold. He had always been out cold when Yosano-sensei treated his injuries, and Kyouka was still too hesitant to move past brief hugs. She tensed up whenever people touched her for too long. And if you thought the orphanage had ever been any measure of comforting, you were dead wrong.

“Hey, hey, c’mon don’t cry.” Dazai’s voice takes on a hushed, panicky tone as tears start to land on his neck. Dazai’s hand pets through his hair as Atsushi sniffles. He lifts his arms up to wrap them around Dazai’s neck, hugging him loosely.

“What’s wrong?”

“N-oothing, I’m just...” Atsushi mumbles out, moving a hand to wipe at his eyes.

“Just?” Dazai asks lightly, a hand resting gently on Atsushi’s side.

“Just happy you’re here.”

There’s a long silence and Atsushi looks up to see Dazai looking stunned. The man is frozen and it’s only when Atsushi places a hand on Dazai’s cheek that he reacts.

“Oh,” Dazai lets out softly as he blinks, long lashes fluttering over warm brown eyes. He looks down at Atsushi again and freezes.

“It’s true. You’re always taking care of me and I’m...I’m thankful, that I know you and get to work with you.”
Atsushi’s heart feels more like that of a rabbit’s than a tiger’s and all of his tiredness has retreated to the back of his mind, something clutching at his heart with long fingers as he stares into Dazai’s eyes. His gaze flickers down to Dazai’s pink lips and drifts back to his eyes. His flush is spreading and he’s pretty sure he looks like a mutated tomato at this point. The tiger’s ears are perked as it lays still.

He moves to take his hand away and Dazai’s hand catches it, as fast as lightning, and holds it there. Now they’re both blushing, like this is a competition and the winner gets to do whatever they want to the loser. Atsushi wouldn’t mind participating in that competition - either way the outcome would be acceptable. His mind drifts at the thought.

“Atsushi, I-” He’s brought back to reality when Dazai starts to speak and he hurries to get his thoughts out.

“I care about you, Dazai.” He says, leaving off the honorific that seems to distance them every time he uses it.

“I think you’re amazing, and I’m so, so glad that I met you. And I like the way you look when you actually smile, like when you’re pranking Kunikida-san and he doesn’t realize it. And the way you laugh. And the way that-” and Atsushi’s cut off by a warmth against his mouth.

Dazai’s kissing him, and it’s like nothing he’s imagined. There’s a softness, a give to Dazai’s curvy mouth that Atsushi thinks he’ll never be able to get enough of. He leans into Dazai, pressing his hand softly against his face, cupping his jaw, giving a hum of appreciation. Happiness is building in his chest, like a hot fire on a cold day. Reciprocation seems to have changed something, and Dazai’s fervently kissing him with an intensity that Atsushi is drowning in. He tries to shift upward and gives a jerk and gasps as the movement pulls at his wound, ending the kiss suddenly.

Dazai’s hand is back on his side and his pupils are blown wide, though concern marks his features.

“Are you alright?”

Atsushi nodded swiftly, biting his lip. What was going to happen now? What if it was a mistake. What if Dazai had only been doing it because he’s worried about Atsushi having a negative reaction. Was he forcing Dazai into this? Cold thorns seemed to prick at Atsushi’s skin and he gave a shiver, eyes caught by Dazai’s magnetic gaze.

“Atsushi.” Dazai’s arm is wrapped around his shoulders, fingers idly combing through his hair.

“Ye-es?” Atsushi asked, bracing for the worst.

“I like you too.”

It hits him like a train, funnily enough, and then Dazai’s leaning down carefully, those eyes making him feel like a fly trapped in honey, and whispering against his lips.

“May I kiss you again?”

He gives a sigh of relief, “Please.” Something uncoils in his chest and he feels everything drain away as Dazai presses kiss after kiss on his mouth. The pointed spikes of anxiety fade away. There’s a heady rumble in his ribs and he feels the brunette grin against his mouth.

“You’re purring,” Dazai practically purrs out himself, eyes that are usually guarded now sparkling in delight.

“I’m ha-” and this time Atsushi is cut off by a yawn out of nowhere. Dazai gives a snort of
amusement, pressing a kiss to his lips while Atsushi is still blinking confusedly. He can feel the exhaustion coming back, crashing into his mind like a wave.

Dazai is shifting and settling them both back down onto the bench, pressing a hand along the curve of Atsushi’s spine.

“Get some sleep. I’ll keep watch.”

“Mm, ‘lright Dazai,” Atsushi mumbled as he pressed a kiss to Dazai’s jaw, tucking his head into the crook of his neck. He trusts him.

There’s a brief pause as Atsushi can feel Dazai’s throat bob as he swallows, and says, “Osamu is alright.”

Atsushi smiles tiredly into Dazai’s neck. “Night, Osamu,” and he can feel a faint shiver as Dazai presses a kiss into his hair. Everything is warm and just right, and he can hear Dazai’s heart beating steadily in his chest. Darkness welcomes him, and he drifts to sleep, happy, the tiger’s rumbling purr sounding in his mind.
Chapter Summary

Abilities come with a backlash, and Dazai's been focusing on not using his for quite a while.

He gives a hum of satisfaction and draws his hand away. By morning, Atsushi should be fully healed. There's a strain blooming in his head and the ocean in his mind is brimming with hunger, raging at the dam he’s been building this evening. He’ll probably spend a few hours later staring at the ceiling as it crashes into him, wiping everything away and soaking into his bones. Worst comes to worst he’ll come back to himself in a few days.

There’s a surge and No Longer Human pours through him, nothingness rushing into Atsushi through their kiss and with a dulling sense of horror, he can feel Atsushi’s tiger snarling as the water swirls through their bodies.

Chapter Notes

First off, thank you so much everyone for the positive feedback! I was delighted and greatly incentivized to add to this.

One of my many sins is that I never know when to stop using commas. Also, TW: dissociative episode starts to happen in this chapter. Buckle up kids, I added angst. You’re welcome.

When Atsushi is asleep, Dazai slips his fingers down to Atsushi’s neck. He’s still breathing steadily, heart still beating, and Dazai lets out a sigh of relief. He hadn’t realized that Atsushi’s healing wasn’t in fact an inexhaustible resource. It’s something he’ll need to keep in mind, he thinks, flickers of something uncomfortable rising in his chest.

He doesn’t need this right now. He should be arranging for them to get picked up at the station, texting Kunikida about their status, thinking about the next step. There are a million other things he could be doing and all he can think about is the boy in his arms. Somewhere deep down, there’s a dark beast curling around this moment. He breathes out, letting the current of No Longer Human wash over him, clearing his head. It doesn’t help. He draws it back, letting that constant source of void lap ravenously at the shores of his mind.

Atsushi’s far too trusting. He doesn’t know why this sticks out to him, why his lungs falter when he remembers those soft words. They remind him of another man from another life and his grip tightens around Atsushi’s shoulders. His thumb traces over his neck. Still breathing. He forces his hands to loosen.

He leans back against the window, watching the scenery go by. A conductor stops by and collects the tickets, raising an eyebrow at the sight of the two of them. Dazai idly thinks about remarking on
the man’s not so secret smoking habit, putting two and two together from the man’s nails. His wife
doesn’t approve, he can tell that much from the aggressively-ironed creases on the uniform and the
wedding band.

He just smiles blankly, a chill of hostility in his gaze, Atsushi curled into his body and Dazai's hand
resting on the nape of his neck. The man moves on after punching their tickets, not caring enough to
say anything. Evening turns to dusk turns to midnight, the train moving on the tracks through the
night. He ends up texting Kunikida, telling him that they won’t be coming in tomorrow. He doesn’t
get a response until a few minutes later, a ripple of amusement drifting in his head as Kunikida’s texts
dance between outrage, concern, and acquiescence. He sends a text to Kyouka in-between
tormenting, sorry, teasing Kunikida, telling her to go to bed. Her style utilizes flat, terrifyingly correct
grammar and he wonders just how much of it is Kunikida’s influence and how much of it comes
from her time in Port Mafia. She’s asking for an update on Atsushi’s status and he sends her a picture
of Atsushi’s sleeping face.

There’s a small smile twitching at his lips that he can’t get rid of; it only grows whenever his
attention falls back to Atsushi. Not even No Longer Human can drain this emotion from him, like it
does everything else.

There’s a furrow forming between Atsushi’s eyes and his hands are clenching in his sleep, his body
trying to make itself smaller and Dazai is struck by how much his heart aches at this. There’s an
unfamiliar feeling burrowing into his ribs, one that he’s never had much use for before. He presses
his thumb to the crease and hums into Atsushi’s ear, other arm gently stroking down Atsushi’s spine.
The weretiger slowly relaxes into his hold, tension leaving his body and breath returning to normal.
Something’s hurting in his chest and he lifts a hand to Atsushi’s hair, silvery locks flowing like the
moonlight that peeks in through the curtains.

Want is a strange feeling, he decides. Somehow Atsushi manages to move the oceans of his mind
easily, creating tidal waves of emotion that cut past the abyss that lurks deep down, that emptiness
that hollows him out, day after day. The boy has always managed to surprise him, he thinks fondly.
Normally he’s not so tolerant of surprises, but this seems natural to him. Natural like trusting him
seems to Atsushi, and his heart pangs once more.

Eventually the intercom on the train buzzes and announces that they’ll be arriving soon, causing the
gears of Dazai’s mind to start clicking again. Atsushi’s light enough that he can carry him and he’s
already looking on his phone, quietly calling a cab to pick them up at the station. He lets his
fingertips caress Atsushi’s cheek and a drop of No Longer Human flows through them. Dazai closes
his eyes as he feels out mentally, searching for the ripples until Atsushi’s power pings on his senses.
It takes more effort to merely feel out an ability, rather than cancel it outright. Concentration draws
him in deep until he can feel the tiger’s strong breaths gust against his cheeks and hear the protective
rumble in his head. Atsushi’s ability is an amazing thing, he briefly thinks, and then focuses back on
his task. There’s a thrum of energy in the background and he can sense the wound in Atsushi’s side
slowly stitching itself together.

He gives a hum of satisfaction and draws his hand away. By morning, Atsushi should be fully
healed. There’s a strain blooming in his head and the ocean in his mind is brimming with hunger,
raging at the dam he’s been building this evening. He’ll probably spend a few hours later staring at
the ceiling as it crashes into him, wiping everything away and soaking into his bones. Worst comes
to worst he’ll come back to himself in a few days.

He eases himself and his precious charge up into a sitting position, trying to think about how he
wants to move Atsushi off the train without disturbing him. He needs all the sleep he can get, he
thinks idly and his mind hums again as he remembers the sweet way Atsushi had pressed into his
kisses. There’s a shiver that traces its way down his spine, unwelcome, and he shakes his head.

Atsushi ends up solving this problem for him, as he feels a hand on his shoulder, so very present through the thin fabric of his shirt, and looks down to him opening his eyes, gold mixing with violet in a spectacular way. His breath almost rushes out but he catches it at the last minute.

“Ah, you’re awake.”

Those eyes blink a few times, still foggy with sleep and he feels Atsushi lean forward and rest his head on his shoulder. There’s a soft hum of acknowledgement and Dazai can’t resist resting a hand on Atsushi’s back. The water in his mind howls and Dazai mentally adds another layer of bricks to the dam. His coat is drowning Atsushi in its folds, and he desperately wants to take a picture and keep it with him, always.

The train gives a low whistle, drawing him out of the moment and he feels Atsushi soften into his arms. “We’re back in Yokohama. I’ve called ahead for a cab. Do you feel up to walking?”

“Yeah,” Atsushi responds and the way sleep has deepened his voice makes Dazai shiver inside, tucking that thought away safely. The train slides to a halt, Dazai bracing the two of them against the jerk that accompanies it, and he stands up, gently pulling Atsushi along with him.

Atsushi is still leaning lazily against him, nose pressed between the crook of his neck and his shoulder. He can feel soft gusts of air brushing against him as Atsushi breathes, and it’s more comforting than he thought it could be.

He regretfully pulls back, wrapping an arm around Atsushi’s shoulders and leading him out of the train. He sticks his tongue out at the conductor’s back as they leave. There’s a taxi idling out front and a window rolls down, a face looking out at the two of them. Dazai almost wants to hide Atsushi away; a voice inside softly, wonderingly whispering mine, as if it can’t quite believe itself. His breath catches when Atsushi slips an arm around his waist, sharp nails pressing into his shirt. The door of the cab opens up and he ushers a reluctant Atsushi into the seat, the boy curling back into him the moment their seat belts are buckled.

He gives the address to the driver and loses track of time, the pale hand holding his gaining most of his attention as slim fingers twine with his. He’s ever so aware of the shoulder pressed against his own; he can feel a steady heartbeat when his fingers drift down to Atsushi’s wrist. Trickles of water are seeping into his mind and everything’s beginning to dull at the edges, yet these are the sensations he can hold onto.

When he looks out of the window he can see Atsushi intently watching him in the reflection. There’s something familiar in that expression, but he can’t quite place it. Atsushi’s hand tightens around his own, careful in the amount of pressure it’s applying. It’s grounding in a way. He’s not quite sure what Atsushi’s doing but finds it difficult to care.

He comes back to Atsushi undoing their seat belts and he mechanically reaches into his pocket to retrieve his wallet, passing the fare to the driver. Atsushi pushes open the car door and then he’s being tugged along, led up the stairs and to his own apartment as Atsushi’s hand anchors him. He feels fingernails prick at his pants as Atsushi reaches into a pocket and retrieves his key, unlocking the door without ever separating his hand from Dazai’s own.

His apartment is dark, yet Atsushi walks through it without any trouble, guiding him past the table that he always manages to stub his toe on. He vaguely realizes that Atsushi is leading him towards the bedroom, and there’s a wobbly flop of concern. Atsushi’s fingers press on his wrist, once, twice, and then he’s opening the door.
Those trickles are starting to gush through the cracks, tearing down that carefully built dam and Dazai tries to pull his arm out of Atsushi’s grip. Everything shifts and he realizes he’s being pressed into a wall and those catlike eyes are staring into his, hands resting on his shoulders and that focused gaze slicing through the water.

“I can sleep on the couch,” he whispers, even that hushed noise seeming too loud in his ears.

Atsushi frowns and lifts a hand to Dazai’s cheek, there’s an infinitesimal amount of space between their skin; Dazai’s eyes widen and he tries to flinch back, frantically shoving whatever he can at the water before Atsushi’s hand touches skin softly.

“I’m not leaving you alone like this.”

“You’re hurt - you’ll heal faster without me nullifying your ability,” he tries to offer pragmatically.

“I’ll heal enough later. Now let go.”

“But-”

“Osamu, let go,” and there are dry lips pressing against his own.

There’s a surge and No Longer Human pours through him, nothingness rushing into Atsushi through their kiss and with a dulling sense of horror, he can feel Atsushi’s tiger snarling as the water swirls through their bodies.

Then there’s this sickeningly familiar sense of blankness and he’s closing his eyes, the world drifting as his body slackens and Atsushi breaks their kiss, hurrying to take his weight. A hand slips under his shirt, maintaining contact as Atsushi shuffles them over to the futon. He’s being settled onto the floor and Atsushi’s untying his shoes one-handedly, tugging them off gently while holding his hand with the other. Atsushi kicks off his own shoes and pushes Dazai onto the mattress, and he blinks up at the shorter male.

Atsushi is a warm, welcome weight yet he can feel something screaming in his mind while he’s touching him. He’s curling his fingers around Atsushi’s while the other’s hand tugs at his cravat, slowly unwinding it from his neck.

“Is this how you feel all the time?” He hears faintly through the clash of waves.

“Mm,” he tries to muster the will to respond, feeling buttons being carefully undone. “Not all the time.”

There’s a hand resting on the nape of his neck now as Atsushi pulls his shirt off then tosses it to the side. Atsushi’s taking his hand now and pressing it under his shirt to his chest, his heart thumping under Dazai’s palm. He shrugs off Dazai’s coat and starts undoing his own shirt, pushing suspenders to the side. He’s making an effort, Dazai realizes, to not lose contact. The ocean’s still flooding but ravenous waves are slowly calming, faster than usual.

Atsushi is pressing into him, his bare chest a line of heat along his form and he’s fussily pushing Dazai more firmly onto the bed, urging him to roll onto his side. All Dazai can do is let Atsushi move and manipulate his body how he wants to, drowning in the void of No Longer Human.

He breathes out a sigh and Atsushi is finally content with their position, curling around Dazai’s back and tugging the covers up. Somewhere in the back of his mind, he can hear a tiger paddling in the water, and it’s enough to make a faint wavelet of amusement tangible through the waves. Atsushi’s pressing a kiss to his shoulder, his arm wrapping around him, startlingly strong fingers tangling with
his hand and being held to his chest.

He’s drifting. He can’t tell if he falls asleep at some point but when he comes back to himself, the ocean has receded and Atsushi’s head is on his shoulder once more, silver hair spread across his neck. He stares up at the ceiling and then closes his eyes, folding an arm over Atsushi’s back.

It’s too comfortable to move, he decides, and he feels through No Longer Human, absorbing it back into his body. A hand catches his wrist and he opens his eyes to see Atsushi glaring at him. There’s a minute tremor that runs through his body, and then Atsushi’s gaze softens though it’s still just as intense. A hand runs through his hair and he watches Atsushi watch him.

“I told you to let go.”

Dazai opens his mouth to protest, then stops when the hand in his hair tugs none too gently at it. Silently, he lets go and the water, rather than aggressively pouring out, just gently seeps back into Atsushi’s body.

“Good boy,” and Dazai feels his face burn. Atsushi’s eyes widen in delight and he has the audacity to smirk, and then he just shifts to lay back down on Dazai’s shoulder.

There’s no going back from this, Dazai thinks suddenly. He finds he’s quite alright with this. He’s made a number of decisions in his life that could be called questionable, but he feels that this one won’t haunt him in the future at all. There’s a rumbling purr coming from the smaller body resting on top of him, and Dazai’s content to just run his hand down Atsushi’s back. That little beast from before is curling around this moment in his chest, and he can’t find the heart to chase it off.
There's enough room for the two of us here

Chapter Summary

They're going to need to talk later, but for now morning brings both comfort and secret pains to the surface.

He can almost taste the salt-water on his tongue and there’s something lapping at his fingertips, and Dazai’s shaking in his arms. Half of the things he’s whispering are things he’s fervently dreamed of, while the other half are things that he just feels Dazai needs to hear.

“We like you. All of you, even the empty spaces,” Atsushi’s pleading, that flow of water so close to breaking through Dazai’s tense control.

“Tigers can swim, Osamu,” he says in the most deadpan voice he’s capable of using, and he can hear Dazai’s choked laugh as tears gather in his eyes.

Chapter Notes

Atsushi is awkward mostly, though sometimes it loops around to confidence. The meter is broken. How the fuck he manages to be smooth enough to seduce AND fluster Dazai is a mystery at times.

Also, I’ve come up with a baller yet unorthodox playlist for this fic that I’ve been listening to. It’s been boosting my writing speed greatly.

I am confused at how I started out with a sweet concept, like sweet summer child the pain is all gone now, and yet I ended up with this.

Atsushi’s face is burning and he can’t move. He’s going through his memories of last night and desperately hoping he dreamed some parts of it up. His pillow rises and falls steadily, he checks again and yep, it’s still Dazai’s bare shoulder, the man looking peaceful in sleep’s embrace.

He lets out a squeak as Dazai shifts in his sleep and curls around him, burying his face in Atsushi’s hair. Did he really say those things last night? After sleeping in the train, everything felt so much more surreal and there had been something tugging in his chest. He felt thankful for that instinct, without it he wouldn’t have noticed Dazai’s alarming behavior as No Longer Human subsumed him.

There are still bandages wrapped around parts of Dazai’s body - his neck, some loosely wrapped around his waist, and more extending from his wrists to his elbows. Atsushi almost screams when he feels Dazai’s hands curl around his bare back, choking the sound back into his teeth. His heart is pounding in his chest and he can feel the tiger perking its ears up, then snorting in scorn as it realizes what’s going on. “Scaredy cat,” it purrs fondly at him, dipping its paw into a puddle of water and splashing it at him.
He shivers, the water feeling familiar - he can’t remember how many times Dazai’s calmed him down with gentle hands and that intimate feeling of water trickling down his spine. Soft, regular breaths are brushing through his hair, tickling at the back of his neck. Atsushi shifts and lets one arm drape over Dazai’s back, his hand reaching up to play with brown hair. It’s soft despite all of the abuse Dazai must put it through on a daily basis, trips through the river notwithstanding.

There’s a smile working its way onto his face and he dares to glance up at Dazai, heart skipping a beat as the morning sun fills the room with soft, natural light. Dazai looks radiant like this, faint signs of stress stripped away from his face and hair curled messily over his ears, mouth half-open as he sleeps. There’s a glint that’s reflecting light right onto Atsushi’s nose, he sneezes and squints at it.

Dazai has pierced ears. There’s something that twists hotly in his stomach at the realization and the tiger bursts into roaring laughter, pounding one great paw into the ground as it rolls fitfully. He’d glare at it or something, but he’s slowly losing brain cells to the sight of Dazai’s earlobes. He’s furiously thinking through every interaction that’s led to this point, but he realizes that he’s never seen the older man’s ears fully uncovered before. He’s reaching a hand up to an ear before he can think about it, gently pressing his thumb against the smooth, simple stud.

He’s lost in the morning light, curled up with Dazai on the futon, fingers carefully pressing against that pierced ear. The tiger is letting loose hiccups, still chortling at Atsushi and muttering something about the look on his face. It’s like having an annoying best-friend who’s not afraid to throw down for you, yet who finds you hilarious for the weirdest reasons, living in your head. Dazai would probably say something about the way Atsushi and the tiger separate themselves, calling it some fancy medical term for the trauma they’ve suffered.

There’s a stir of motion and a hand is tenderly covering Atsushi’s own, brown eyes blinking down at him and a subtle smile curving on Dazai’s face.

“Morning, darling,” he sings out and Atsushi’s face is on fire, again.

There’s a flicker of glee in Dazai’s eyes and Atsushi knows he’s going to be absolutely terrible. He can’t wait for whatever happens next. He’s not disappointed - Dazai’s taking his hand and pressing a soft kiss to its knuckles, then dropping his hand and pressing a warm palm to Atsushi’s neck, gently urging him to tilt his head back.

He leans up and meets Dazai’s mouth, his eyes fluttering closed as their lips meet. The tiger is letting loose hiccups, still chortling at Atsushi and muttering something about the look on his face. It’s like having an annoying best-friend who’s not afraid to throw down for you, yet who finds you hilarious for the weirdest reasons, living in your head. Dazai would probably say something about the way Atsushi and the tiger separate themselves, calling it some fancy medical term for the trauma they’ve suffered.

Please don’t grow fangs, he thinks, fear suddenly growing as the tiger stays quiet and watches. It snorts and gives a rolling shrug of its shoulders. “Pay attention to him,” it groans frustratedly, tail lashing in the air behind it.

It’s nice, kissing Dazai and holding him closely like this. Atsushi wraps an arm around his waist and the two of them awkwardly lean to vertical sitting - success! And then he’s leaning forward and trying to map out that curve with his mouth, memorizing and painting a map in his mind. Dazai’s gasping for breath against his mouth and Atsushi breaks away, looking at the flustered redness on his face. He’s grinning giddily now, pressing soft kisses on Dazai’s face, trailing a path along his jaw.

He finds a spot just below Dazai’s ear and he hears Dazai cut off a strangled moan when he nips the sensitive skin there.
He’s got a finger curled in the bandages around Dazai’s neck and Dazai’s letting out soft, lovely
whimpers as he continues exploring his mentor’s body; Dazai’s hands are curling into his hair and
Atsushi can’t help but close his eyes whenever Dazai pleasantly tugs at it. He’s practically sitting in
Dazai’s lap, hands trailing over his frame - and then his stomach gives a monstrous growl. The tiger
screams in his head and sinks to the ground, beating its own head against the floor with a dull thud
as it groans.

He and Dazai blink at each other, and an echoing rumble comes from Dazai’s stomach.

“Are you hungry, boy?” Dazai’s smirking at him and Atsushi can’t help but give a stifled giggle.

He flaps a hand helplessly at Dazai as he covers his mouth with the other and tries to look away.
“I could, hhnnh, really go for some Chazuke.”

He breaks down and wheezes out the last bit, head falling onto Dazai’s shoulder as his body shakes
from laughter.

Dazai gasps out, “The river seems to have,” he’s trying so hard to keep a straight face, “taken my
wallet,” and he breaks into laughter on the last word, arms curling around Atsushi’s back.

The room is filled with laughter for the next few minutes, as every single time it feels like they can
wind down, Dazai manages to catch Atsushi’s eye with a look and that sets him off again, which sets
Dazai off again, until Atsushi’s pressing weak hands against Dazai’s face as his body shakes with
humor, begging him to stop.

They’re pulling each other up with drained limbs, humor seeming to have robbed them of all their
strength, stumbling towards the kitchen. Atsushi’s barely feeling any of the usual pricking thorns that
seem to grow on him throughout the day; Dazai’s warm hand in his own is the only thing that his
mind is dwelling on.

Dazai’s kitchen, while far from being well-stocked, at least has enough supplies to make a simple
breakfast for the two of them consisting of miso and rice. He idly watches Dazai blow on his soup
before drinking it, the man flushing when he notices Atsushi watching. The tiger’s whining in his
head about the distance and Atsushi leans into Dazai’s side, their knees bumping together. It’s hard
to not get distracted and Atsushi focuses on finishing breakfast before the tiger gets any ideas. It
grumbles and falls silent far too quickly, curling around him.

There’s an arm wrapping itself around his frame, a sensation that’s becoming familiar and fingers are
gently trailing back and forth on a bare shoulder. He’s suddenly realizing that neither of them have a
shirt on and he has to fight to maintain his composure. There are a lot of errant thoughts running
through his head, filling his stomach with butterflies. He wishes he could digest them. Are his plants
in the stove? He should turn them off.

Goddamnit, there’s a hand on his face and now he has to kiss that look off of Dazai’s face. It’s a
weird mix of hesitancy and something else that he immediately doesn’t like; in summary, it doesn’t
belong on Dazai’s face, ever. The tiger’s rumbling in possessive agreement. Long eyelashes are
fluttering on his cheeks and he can feel a hum making its way out of his chest.

A hand is barely pressing on his side, fingers feeling out the edges of where he’s bandaged. It
doesn’t hurt and he figures that he’s pretty much all clear, so he leans into the touch. How are
Dazai’s lips so ridiculously soft? That’s more of a question he’d like to answer with some intensive
research.

He’s happy, beyond happy as Dazai kisses him back, little waves of giddiness washing over him as
he sways into Dazai’s touch. That same watery trickle is barely ebbing down his spine, and he realizes that it grows stronger the more distracted and flustered Dazai is becoming. The tiger and he lock gazes and nod in sudden, crystal clear agreement.

It’s never been as easy as this for them to actually come to a consensus on a decision. Back before he met Dazai, even for a long time after, they had argued internally, constant bickering and hatred plucking at the strings of their relationship. That’s changed though, and he can feel the tiger leaning into his side while he leans into Dazai, shifting to press him into the counter.

That hand on his waist is pulling him closer and he slides his legs down to the floor, steadying Dazai as the chairs get nudged to the side and they’re both standing, still touching with a rising sense of urgency. That counter is pressing into Dazai’s back. He feels the need to say something, anything, as he feels the water flowing and Dazai hiccuping into his mouth. The tiger’s practically dancing in raindrops and he can picture his clothes getting wetter in that mental landscape.

He’s reminded of last night, of the haunting ache that he had felt reflected off of Dazai and that pit of emptiness that Dazai seemed horrifyingly used to, and he feels a red tinge of anger at the thought. It’s part of Dazai but he doesn’t want him to feel like that, ever again.

Touching him had seemed to help, that excess ocean that had flowed through him not an unwelcome presence. He absently wonders if Dazai has ever had anyone else to hold onto in moments like that. Dazai’s breaking off the kiss and bending his head down, burying it in Atsushi’s shoulder as his hands clutch at Atsushi’s back. The rain is faltering and the tiger’s frustration is mounting, feeding into Atsushi.

He’s pushing that emotion aside, years of experience constantly feeling emotions like that coming into play. He moves his hands and settles them, curling them over Dazai’s head and petting at his hair. He feels a flinch right before his hands land and there’s a snarl inside, who hurt you?

“Sorry, just give me a minute love,” Dazai’s whispering into his ear and he’s so aware of how his mind is feeling painfully dry. There’s a growl trying to shake its way free of his chest and he chokes it back into a rumble. He’s pressing a wet kiss to Dazai’s neck in that same spot he found earlier, he’s whispering earnestly back into his ear, *come back, come back, let go for me, it’s okay, I like you, I can love you, I trust you, please, please trust me - you’re safe here.*

He can almost taste the salt-water on his tongue and there’s something lapping at his fingertips, and Dazai’s shaking in his arms. Half of the things he’s whispering are things he’s fervently dreamed of, while the other half are things that he just feels Dazai needs to hear.

He’s been seeing it in the way that most people avoid contact with Dazai and the way he engineers it too - even normal people can sense that there’s a hungry void lurking under all of the jokes and posturing. The agency’s full of people with troubles, like him, like Dazai, but he’s almost shaking with a need to find out what happened to make Dazai like this.

“Stop, please,” and Dazai’s voice makes him want to find something soft and bundle him up in it, forever.

“We like you. All of you, even the empty spaces,” Atsushi’s pleading, that flow of water so close to breaking through Dazai’s tense control.

He’s tilting Dazai’s head up from his shoulder and pressing his hands to his face, looking into brown eyes that twist his stomach deep down, turning hot anger into protective heat.

“I don’t want this to drain you, to drown you like me. I don’t want you to become numb. It takes and
takes and takes.”

Things are slowly clicking into place for Atsushi. He knows that some ability users are more affected by their abilities than others, and he knows that Dazai’s connection to No Longer Human has always been strong. What he had felt last night was probably only one incident in a long line of others. And there are other things too, things he might never know unless Dazai chooses to share them with him. There’s so much more here yet all he wants is for Dazai to be okay.

“Tigers can swim, Osamu,” he says in the most deadpan voice he’s capable of using, and he can hear Dazai’s choked laugh as tears gather in his eyes.

Rather than a flood, there’s just a trickle that ebbs and flows, winding its way through his body naturally. He’s kissing Dazai as the man lets go. It’s like he can catch a glimpse of a deep and insatiable, nigh abyssal sea before Dazai’s arms are wrapping around him and his attention is drawn elsewhere. The tiger’s curling next to him on the shore, their eyes looking out as the water stills.

He’s pulling Dazai over to the couch, which he’s got to admit is soft, and curling their bodies together, mirroring the way Dazai had been holding him last night on the train. There’s no place he’d rather be, he thinks as he presses gentle kisses to Dazai’s mouth. He lets himself indulge in that urge from before and pulls a blanket down from the back of the couch, draping it over the two of them. He knows they can’t stay there forever and eventually they’re going to need to talk - about Dazai’s feelings, about the anxiety that still sets thorns choking at his skin, about the issues with No Longer Human and Tiger - Beast Beneath the Moonlight. Unfortunately, right now he can’t quite be bothered to give a fuck about that. This moment is all he wants to think about and he can hear the tiger agreeing with him inside.

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