liar, liar

by setosdarkness

Summary

It’s been nearly four years since the infamous double suicide from Yokohama University.

Four days before its anniversary, a note is left behind at the local precinct, claiming that the double suicide is in fact a murder – and claiming that the ghosts of Dazai and Nakahara will resurrect for one night to obtain their vengeance.

As they say, two can keep a secret if one of them is dead.

[twitter thread + #BSDLiarAU]
[8.24.2019: this story is now COMPLETE]
[now has a lovely aesthetic/cover page!!! thank you!!]
[now has glorious art!!!! also here!!! thank you!!]
[Translated to Russian!]
i was minding my own business when i heard this song play...
murder mystery AUs and my lack of self control, there's no more iconic combo than that
@__@
twitter thread + #BSDLiarAU
pls pray for my formatting skills thanks ♥
Chapter 1


During the morning shift change at 06:00 AM JST, local police station notices that a laminated note is left behind four steps in front of its front doors.

- The note is printed on a plain, white card, which is then laminated. The laminated note is then glued down to the ground on the four edges. The note appears to be, at first glance, printed out. Upon further inspection, it’s revealed to actually be handwritten using a black fountain pen.

The note says:

- Dazai Osamu and Nakahara Chuuya were murdered. And they will resurrect, for one night only, to get their dues.

Initially, the local police dismisses it as a prank.

However, at 07:00 AM JST, the morning shift officer, Sugimoto, notices that the CCTV feed on the station’s front doors has been tampered with. The CCTV feed is showing a loop starting from 10:00 PM JST, Jul 2, 2019.

The police officers decide to investigate further.


“Eh, another confession?” Dazai yawns as he rubs at the edges of his eyes. He looks bored to tears. There’s an imprint of the book’s hardbound edge against his cheek. “How is it that a chibi like you has so many admirers? Are there that many dogs in this world? How disgusting.”

“Didn’t you just go on a date with Niwa-san yesterday?” Chuuya rolls his eyes as he approaches the stone chess table that Dazai has chosen as his hang-out spot while waiting for him.

It’s in a secluded grove, curtained by willows and oaks, the uneven pebbled path leading to this place lined by wisteria. It’s a few meters away from a mini-lake overrun by an algae infestation; it used to belong to the university’s kayak team, but as the team’s members dwindled, so did the upkeep of the area. Now, it’s merely a place that Dazai has claimed for themselves while everyone else preferred more reasonable places, like the school’s café, the library, or the rose garden at the western end of the sprawling Yokohama University campus.

“Is getting coffee together counted as a date?”

“It does, to her.”

“To the gossipers, you mean?”

“Same difference,” Chuuya says with a flippant shrug as he picks up the book that Dazai’s been drooling on, *Introduction to Witchcraft*, the title says. “Really? You’re finally embracing the fact that you’re a witch?”
“See, it’s useless because I know that you’re praising my beguiling wiles and charming smirks.”

“I absolutely am not,” Chuuya corrects the idiot.

It’s the height of summer, students counting down to the beginning of summer break— that is, while burying themselves in books to prepare for the final exams two weeks from now. It’s just that, Dazai’s brazen enough to not bother with reviewing his course materials; instead, he’s out here, slacking off in the sweltering Yokohama humidity.

“Really?”

“Really,” Chuuya confirms, though he betrays himself quickly afterwards, when he leans down and kisses Dazai, slow and sweet, the two of them hidden in their own world.

+  

JUL 7, 2015. Tuesday.

- [Statement from MORI Ougai, Dazai Osamu’s father by adoption]

“I have no idea who this Nakahara Chuuya-kun is. I have never met him and Dazai-kun has never brought him home nor has he ever talked about him. I believe my son was dating someone, who he was planning to bring to our villa during the summer break. My son… had a troubled childhood, but I had thought that he was better now…”

- [Statement from OZAKI Kouyou, Nakahara Chuuya’s landlady]

“I haven’t seen anyone resembling this Dazai Osamu. Of course, I do not keep such a strict eye on my tenants, as the apartments here, while catering to students, do not have such strict curfews. Of course, that does not mean that I do not keep CCTV on all floors. Once the investigators present a warrant, I will be more than happy to provide those tapes. If I may just say… that lad is… was… brimming with life. I last spoke with him two days before and I believe he had an altercation with his significant other. I am not aware of the specifics, but it seemed to me that he was discreetly seeing someone who would… find it troublesome, should their relationship be revealed. Oh, that is just a hunch. A lady’s intuition, as you will.”

- [Statement from NAKAJIMA Atsushi, Dazai Osamu’s underclassman]

“I don’t believe they were in a relationship… but I guess we’d never know, right? They were always fighting whenever I saw them… Dazai-san never mentioned him during our tutoring sessions. From my impression, the people who might know more about Dazai-san’s… mental health were his friends. He was close with the TA Oda-san and the fourth-year Ango-san. Maybe that could help? I’m sorry, I’m just… still a bit in shock. Oh? About Chuuya-san? No, I rarely spoke with him. He maybe asked me for Dazai-san’s location once or twice? He was a bit scary, so we don’t really talk much…”

-  

[Excerpt from Initial Report]

- Two bodies were found sunk on the Yokohama University’s east-side lake. The lake was overrun with algae growth due to poor maintenance and improper water treatment.
  - The bodies were weighed down with stones wrapped in hemp rope around their arms, legs and torsos.
  - The bodies were discovered at around 03:00 PM JST, during the scheduled clean-up of the
area.

• One of the members of the cleanup committee, Akutagawa Ryuunosuke, had noticed a duffel bag and a book placed on the shore, and had called the attention of the professor-in-charge to it.

• The book’s title was, Introduction to Witchcraft, and it was checked out of the school library by Dazai Osamu on Jul 3, 2014 and has collected multiple late-due fines.

• The duffel bag belongs to Nakahara Chuuya, as identified by the bag tag, as well as three of his classmates.

• There’s a letter on the bottom of the duffel bag, signed by both Nakahara and Dazai. It only has one line: awaiting rebirth
Welcome, dear readers, onlookers, gossipmongers and participants!

Isn’t it a nice day to start sleuthing? Oh, you don’t agree? Oh, you bring up different timezones? Ah, you should ignore those kinds of things! Every time of the day is a good time for sleuthing, because every time of the day is a good time for murder!

Oh, you disagree?

That makes me kind of sad… after all, someone actually dies in such an inconvenient time… You don’t understand what ‘inconvenient’ is? You see, you see, there are certain times of the day that are just so symbolic when it comes to death! A lot of murders happen under the cloak of nighttime for that sweet, sweet alibi that will be provided by someone who’d go and claim, “ah, officer, I could not possibly have done it, because I was in bed with XXX at the time of the murder”!

Oh, you say that murders happen in the night for a different reason?

Well, far be it for me to try to tell others when to kill someone, right?

If it happens, it happens…

Oh, you’re asking why I’m monologuing?

Eh, you want to scroll past if I’m not saying anything of import?

No, don’t go, dear reader! I’m sorry for calling you a gossipmonger earlier! I know that you’re a smart and kind reader who’d like to solve the mystery! Please don’t just scroll down!

Eh? Who am I?

Ah, ah, we’ll get to that in a short while.

For now, let me welcome you to today’s Detective Show~♪

Your quest is easy, so very easy!

All you need to do is find X!

Simple, isn’t it?

Who is X?

Oh, you silly reader, X is of course the murderer!

But nobody has been murdered, you say?

…Oh, dear reader.

I regret to inform you, but—
JUL 4, 2019. Thursday.

During the morning shift change at 06:00 AM JST, local police station notices that a laminated note is left behind four steps in front of its front doors.

- The note is printed on a plain, white card, which is then laminated.
  - The laminated note is then glued down to the ground on the four edges.
  - The note appears to be, at first glance, printed out. Upon further inspection, it’s revealed to actually be handwritten using a black fountain pen.

The note says:

The Witch of Knowledge shall die.

The local police is unable to dismiss it as a prank, as the same as yesterday, the CCTV has been tampered yet again.

The local police reports this to their higher-ups and the Police Inspector Fukuzawa Yukichi promises to send some reinforcements to them within the day.

+ 

DING DONG~☆

Welcome back, dear reader!

Eh, you’re unimpressed? Eh, you’re looking for the promised death?

Eh, eh, what is this, are you starting to feel bloodthirsty? Are you becoming interested in what’s happening?

Ah, you are becoming like me!

I do have a vested interest in this proceedings, after all~

+ 

JUL 4, 2019. Thursday.

05:00 PM JST, Third Year Bioengineering Major Akutagawa Ryuuunosuke submits a report to campus security. The student claims that he’s supposed to have a thesis supervisor application meeting with Molecular Biochemistry Professor and Fellow Shibusawa Tatsuhiko at 04:30 PM JST, in the professor’s laboratory. The professor does not open the door and does not respond to Akutagawa’s calls for his attention. The door to his laboratory is locked and Akutagawa Ryuuunosuke calls campus security upon claiming to smell something strange emanating from the room.

05:07 PM JST, Campus Security arrives and breaks open the door to the locked laboratory.

05:09 PM JST, Campus Security finds the corpse of Shibusawa Tatsuhiko inside his locked laboratory.

Here are some details regarding the victim:
Shibusawa Tatsuhiko had been invited to teach in Yokohama University six years ago. His specialty is in Molecular Biochemistry and he has published several papers in various scientific journals. He had started a project to investigate possible mutations of the algae growing in the abandoned lake four months ago. He had secured funding for his project over the project proposed by fellow professors.

Shibusawa Tatsuhiko had specifically requested for Oda Sakunosuke to be his only TA.

Prior to returning to the Research Center Building at 01:15 PM JST (as evidenced by CCTV Feed at the building entrance; corroborated by the timestamp on the entrance turnstile), Shibusawa Tatsuhiko was last seen having lunch at the university cafeteria with fellow professor Fyodor Dostoevsky.

This cafeteria sighting was confirmed by the following people who were also eating in the cafeteria at the time: Akutagawa Ryuunosuke (3rd Year, Bioengineering Major), Nakajima Atsushi (2nd Year, Business Management), Edogawa Ranpo (Psychology TA), Kunikida Doppo (Business Management TA) and Yosano Akiko (Medical Examiner sent by Police Inspector Fukuzawa).

Autopsy is still ongoing, but initial finding on the cause of death is poisoning. There is a foul, rotting smell in the laboratory where he was found. A bento box filled with four-day old curry was found inside one of the desk drawers. TA Oda Sakunosuke claimed ownership of it, citing that he had made a big batch of curry during the weekend and he had offered to cook some for the professor.

Time of death was estimated to be between 1:30 PM to 4:30 PM JST.

The laboratory was located on the ground floor of the building. The room had two entrances/exits. CCTV feed of the first entrance only shows Shibusawa Tatsuhiko coming in at 01:17 PM JST, and then Akutagawa Ryuunosuke at 04:00 PM JST, followed by Campus Security at 05:07 PM JST. CCTV feed of the second entrance (a back entrance that has direct access to the university’s rose garden) has been tampered with.

The laboratory beside the one occupied by Shibusawa Tatsuhiko belongs to Psychology Professor Edgar Poe and his TAs: John Steinbeck, Lucy Montgomery and Edogawa Ranpo. The laboratory is closed for the day as the professor and his TAs were invited to a seminar by the Dean, Francis Fitzgerald. This was corroborated by his PA, Louisa Alcott.

The rose garden was occupied by a study group from 02:00 PM to 05:00 PM JST. There were five students participating in the study group: Tachihara Michizou, Higuchi Ichiyou, Akutagawa Gin, Tanizaki Junichiro, and Miyazawa Kenji. None of them report any abnormalities. They were occupying the table furthest away from the laboratory door and have limited vantage view of the laboratory door as well.

The police is currently unable to rule out the possibility of (a) disguises, (b) secret entrances or (c) other undisclosed mechanisms. The police is currently unable to rule out the possibility that the culprit has managed to forge a key to the laboratory. Currently, the only owners of the key to the entrances are: Shibusawa Tatsuhiko (Professor) and Oda Sakunosuke (TA).

How is it, dear reader? Is that exciting enough? A locked room murder~♪

Eh, you’re not convinced?

Eh, you’re here for soukoku?

What is soukoku? Oh, you mean Dazai and Nakahara… tsk, tsk, dear reader, you shouldn’t let
shipping goggles blind you, you know?... is what I’d like to say, but ah, the murder above is totally related to those two, you see!

How is it related?

Ah, did I not tell you?

Shibusawa Tatsuhiko is the author of the book, *Introduction to Witchcraft*.

…eh, that’s not juicy enough for you?

Ah… perhaps this one, then…

+  

**JUL 7, 2015. Tuesday.**

- [Statement from Agatha CHRISTIE, Dazai Osamu’s classmate, 4th Year Business Management and Economics Double Major]

“I was not particularly intimate with Dazai-kun, though it is true that we have gone on a number of candlelit dinners together. Mm, mostly because of the close ties between our families. Wealth attracts wealth, in this world. We have had a number of tea sessions as well, though we have not set foot in the university’s café together. Their tea leaves a lot to be desired, after all. Despite our number of dalliances, it would not be suffice to say that I have enough knowledge about Dazai-kun’s psyche. Oh? He has not invited me to his mansion, no, and certainly not to spend time together during the summer break. I was not particularly troubled by his lack of commitment, as I do not see the point to tying myself down even before graduation. Nakahara-kun? No, it is impossible for someone like Dazai-kun to be in an intimate relationship with Nakahara-kun.”

- [Statement from Mark TWAIN, gardener at Dazai Osamu’s residence]

“Yeah, those two, right? I’ve seen them fucking on top of goddamn rose bush, of course they’re in love. They’re also probably crazy dudes, too? Because really? I’m not so thirsty that I’d go at it on top of a rose bush. Them thorns, man. Perhaps the redhead liked the other more, because he was the one whose ass was down with the roses. They took that bed of roses song way too seriously and literally, man. Why do I have so many details… oi, I’m not a pervert! I’m the goddamn gardener in that full-bling house, of course I’m worried that the rose bushes got destroyed!”

- [Statement from Paul VERLAINE, Nakahara Chuuya’s father by adoption]

“My child would not be so foolish and tasteless as to genuinely mingle with Mori Ougai’s spawn. That devil… that devil definitely led my child astray! I shouldn’t have agreed to let him live on his own… My child said that Dazai kept on pestering him, that’s why he thought to string him along, but… no, my child definitely did not have such strange interests, not in witchcraft nor in double suicides! You wish to speak with my husband? Arthur is still in shock, anything you need to know, you can speak with me.”

- [Statement from IZUMI Kyouka, Nakahara Chuuya’s apartment neighbor]

“…Chuuya-san is dead?” [15 minutes of silence] “…He brought me castella cake last night. Said that he went on a date and they bought too many and couldn’t finish it. He… always liked giving me desserts. I usually eat with Atsushi-kun, but Chuuya-san likes to buy things from expensive shops. No, that’s probably not true. His lover likes to buy luxury items, I think, and he ends up buying there
too. I’ve… I’ve never been introduced to Chuuya-san’s lover, but I had always thought it was Professor Dostoevsky. Oh… perhaps I shouldn’t have said it. I think they were keeping it a secret. I’ve seen Professor Dostoevsky and Chuuya-san in the university parking lot last week… I’m not so sure about the exact date. I think it was on a Friday? It was fairly late… probably around 9 in the evening.”

[Statement from Fyodor DOSTOEVSKY, Psychology Professor]

“…Oh dear, this is awkward. No, I was not Chuuya-kun’s lover. I was actually secretly seeing Dazai-kun. He had asked me if I wanted to be introduced to his parents come summer break.”

DING DONG~☆

How about that, dear reader?

Does that interest you now?

It does, doesn’t it?

Readers like it better when there’s juicy romance involved, after all–

Ah… but before you get too excited, let me give you some hints!

**Every single one of the statements had at least one lie in them.**

The human named ‘Shibusawa Tatsuhiko’ was killed by X.

The last person who has seen the human named ‘Dazai Osamu’ alive was the human named ‘Nakahara Chuuya’ last July 07, 2015.

The last person who has seen the human named ‘Nakahara Chuuya’ alive was the human named ‘Dazai Osamu’ last July 07, 2015.

There is only one X, but X does not operate alone.

Ah, dear reader, I hope that helps you!

You think that’s not enough?

Tsk, tsk, dear reader, I cannot be here the whole time to hold your hand, you know?

Just one piece of advice – this is a mystery!

As long as I’m here, I shall help you out in the spirit of fair play!

What is fair play, you ask?

Dear reader, are you familiar with [Knox’s Decalogue](#)?

1. The criminal must be mentioned in the early part of the story, but must not be anyone whose thoughts the reader has been allowed to know.
2. All supernatural or preternatural agencies are ruled out as a matter of course.
3. Not more than one secret room or passage is allowable.
4. No hitherto undiscovered poisons may be used, nor any appliance which will need a long
scientific explanation at the end.
5. No Chinaman must figure in the story.
6. No accident must ever help the detective, nor must he ever have an unaccountable intuition which proves to be right.
7. The detective himself must not commit the crime.
8. The detective is bound to declare any clues which he may discover.
9. The "sidekick" of the detective, the Watson, must not conceal from the reader any thoughts which pass through his mind: his intelligence must be slightly, but very slightly, below that of the average reader.
10. Twin brothers, and doubles generally, must not appear unless we have been duly prepared for them.

…But hey, should you really believe me?

After all, this is a story about liars.

Perhaps that is the biggest clue of all?

X, after all, is the one who lies the most.

…Oh, look at that, it’s time for me to take a rest!

Who am I?

Ah, oh dear, I did promise to get back to that topic, right?

Who do you think I am?

I’ll tell you this now, but I’m not the author, okay? Do you think the author has enough free time for this when there are so many stories that need to be written? Ah, I promise I’m also not X, but am I willing to say that in bold? Fufufu, perhaps that is a discussion for another time.

And so, dear reader, that ends today’s detective work.

Perhaps, if you can comment below with your guess as to who is the most suspicious… perhaps I can be generous, and provide more clues next time?

You’re not sure if you want to read again next time?

Ah, please don’t say that, dear reader!

I have it on good authority that there will be at least two deaths next time, after all–

Fufufu, good bye and see you next time~

Chapter End Notes

+ thanks for reading! ♥

+ as the narrator says, it's time for a guessing game! please comment below or on the twitter thread/#BSDLiarAU tag with your ONE guess of who is the most suspicious amongst the named characters. the top 2 people who gets the most votes will have an
important clue revealed about them in the next segment ♥♥♥

+ if you want to see something similar, but already completed - please see my previous murder mystery fic! please do avoid the twitter thread if you wish to avoid spoilers for it though lol
Ah, dear reader, thank you for checking back in to this story. I am pleased to see that there are a number of brave readers who have put forth their guesses as to who is the most suspicious of them all!

I implore you though, please do your best to catch X! I shall do my best to provide you with clues, but you have to understand, there are things I cannot do if I don’t receive any assistance… The police force, after all…

Ah, but what am I saying?

I should get us started to today’s show, right~?

+ JUL 5, 2019. Friday.

During the morning shift change at 06:00 AM JST, local police station notices that a laminated note is left behind four steps in front of its front doors.

- The note is printed on a plain, white card, which is then laminated.
  - The note appears to be, at first glance, printed out. Upon further inspection, it’s revealed to actually be handwritten using a black fountain pen.
  - As with the previous notes, no fiber marks, fingerprints or stray DNA could be found from the laminated note.

The note says:

Nakahara Chuuya values loyalty, above all.
Above love, above reason, above life and death.

The local policemen discover that the CCTV has been tampered once again, despite there being reinforcements sent. There was a two-man patrol in the surrounding block starting 10:00 PM JST the previous day.

Fukuzawa Yukichi promises to send Katayama Katai, an IT Investigative Specialist, later today.

+ JUL 5, 2019. Friday.

07:12 AM JST, the body of Mark Twain is found dead inside a gardening shed. As per the initial findings of the Medical Examiner Yosano Akiko, the cause of death is poison.

Things of note:
The body was discovered by the butler of the Fitzgerald mansion, Herman Melville. The man had reported cause for concern because Mark Twain had been late to report for duty, which starts at 07:00 AM JST. Melville had said that Twain was especially careful to not be late, as their employer, Francis Fitzgerald requires all of his employees to punch in a timecard and are given salary deductions for tardiness.

The Fitzgerald mansion is located to the west of Yokohama University’s grounds. No signs of forced entry to the grounds or to the gardening shed. The CCTV for the whole grounds was tampered with and only show a looped recording starting from JUL 4, 2019 11:00 PM JST.

Mark Twain had previously been employed as a gardener in Mori Ougai’s residence, but had been dismissed from work there as of July 15, 2015.*

*Cross-referenced with the butler of the Mori residence, Hirotsu Ryuurou.

Mark Twain was found to be the sole breadwinner of his family, which includes two younger brothers that he was putting to school. A statement collected from the brothers, state that they last spoke with Mark Twain at 09:30 PM JST the previous day. They were not able to notice anything different from their brother; the only thing that sticks out to their memory is the fact that their brother had mentioned eating a huge curry dinner with some friends who work at the Yokohama University. Their brother reportedly hates spicy food so they were surprised to learn about that.

Following the knowledge that the CCTV were tampered, Francis Fitzgerald had fired the head of security for his mansion.

There was a huge party held on the Fitzgerald mansion last June 30, 2019, Sunday, that was attended by Yokohama University faculty, students and alumni.

Inside the gardening shed, police was able to find a laminated note of the same appearance as the one that kept on appearing near the local precinct. The note states:

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You, fool my plans? Don’t make me laugh.
My plans are always right.
And so, there’s no escape for you.
How dare you take him away from me?
+

DING DONG~

Ne, isn’t that suitably melodramatic?
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Let me guess what you’re thinking now – you’re thinking that Mark Twain was silenced because he dared to peek on Dazai and Nakahara going at it on the rose bushes, right? Or perhaps you’re thinking, it serves him right because how dare he not take a video of such action?

Fufufu, I know the feeling! Even someone like me, is interested to see that video!

After all, it must be really interesting, right?

Ah, ah, ah, I think you’re missing something though, dear reader.

After all, Nakahara… is he really the type of person who’d be okay with getting shoved into rose bushes?

+

**JUL 5, 2019, Friday.**

**10:19 AM JST, the body of Arthur Rimbaud is found dead inside Yokohama University’s**
**library.** Cause of death is originally ruled as suicide, as the victim’s pants’ pocket had a half-empty bottle of prescription-strength sleeping pills.

**Things of note:**

- Paul Verlaine, his husband, has reported the victim as a missing person as of 09:30 AM JST today, but the report was dismissed due to not being enough time to have elapsed since his last known sighting.
- Arthur Rimbaud had reportedly suffered insomnia over the past four years following the death of his adopted son, Nakahara Chuuya. The man was a retired Literature Professor; he used to hold guest lectures in Yokohama University and other universities overseas. The man had retired as of August 2015 and had simply stayed inside their residence. The last time the man had left their residence was for Nakahara’s funeral.
- Arthur Rimbaud was found in the library section for archived newspapers. He was found collapsed on top of the book, Introduction to Witchcraft. Upon inspection, it’s the same book that was found last July 7, 2015 during the discovery of the bodies of Dazai and Nakahara. The book was on a page that had the following passage highlighted:

> “Even if my body is dead,  
> If this body is consumed,  
> Eventually my body shall reach its destination.”

- Inspection of Arthur Rimbaud’s phone revealed that it had the following messages on his phone:

  [Jul 7, 2015, 00:01 AM] – [Sender: Chuuya-kun] – [Father, I have been ill for a long time, but I finally found the mummy that will cure all of my ailments. Please don’t worry.]
  [Jul 5, 2019, 00:01 AM] – [Sender: Unknown Number] – [Father, soon, I will be reborn.]

- Paul Verlaine insists that his husband would never commit suicide and that his son would never send those kinds of messages. Paul Verlaine has refused to answer any other questions and has requested to be left alone to mourn.

+ DING DONG~♪

How is it, dear reader?

Can you continue?

You must, you know. You’re the only that can help me. Consequently, I’m the only one who can help you. This is like an inescapable relationship, isn’t it? How romantic, how tragic, how comedic!

As long as you don’t manage to stop X, the deaths will just keep on piling up!

Ah, if only I could tell you who X is!

How about this?

I am honestly touched and shocked that one of had commented that they found Arthur Rimbaud suspicious! Is it a good kind of shock, you ask? Any type of shock is good, in my opinion! This is a world that has humans being stuck walking on the ground until their shoulders hunch from all the weight of their sins, anything that could shake up that status quo is welcome!
So, as a present to all of you – here’s a small present!

+  

XX, XX, XX15  

“…What happened, Chuuya-kun?”

Between the two, it’s Arthur who’s at home more often. This despite the fact that Arthur is also the one who gets invited to a lot of universities all over the world. Well, it’s part of how they’ve divided their duties in the household. Arthur will take care of the home front, while Paul will enrich the family business.

Still, it’s surprising to see his son be in the mansion. Chuuya’s wanted to move out for a long time, citing wanting to learn independence as soon as possible.

And now, here Chuuya is, bleeding all over the bathroom.

Chuuya winces. It doesn’t look like he’s wincing because of the injury though. He looks more chagrined about getting caught.

“…Ah, father. Didn’t know you’d be home.”

“I wanted to be home earlier than Paul,” Arthur responds slowly. “What happened?”

“It’s nothing.” Chuuya uses a handheld showerhead to wash off blood from his torso. “I just got stabbed by a shitty mackerel.”

Arthur’s eyes narrow. “…Dazai-kun did?”

“It’s fine,” Chuuya says, shrugging. His carefree attitude is in stark contrast to the fact that the shower floor is bright red with blood. “I made sure to pay the idiot back.”

+  

DING DONG~♪

Welcome back, welcome back~

How is it? Now, you can’t tell me that Arthur Rimbaud didn’t have enough screentime!

…Eh, that’s not what you wanted to know? You wanted to see Rimbaud and Verlaine be a happy family with Nakahara? Dear reader, are you sure you’re following the right story? This is a story filled with lies and liars, after all! A happy, fluffy, wholesome story? No, no, no, this is not that!

…Eh, now you want to see Nakahara and Dazai be lovey-dovey?

Ahh… dear reader…

Are you sure you really want to see that?

Those two…

Those two are monsters, you know.
To think that those two would be capable of love, much less towards each other, is—

—the funniest lie of all.

+  

JUL 5, 2019. Friday.

Some things of note:

- 12:00 PM JST – Yosano Akiko sends a text message to Fukuzawa Yukichi asking him to consider reopening the double suicide case from four years ago.
- 12:10 PM JST – Psychology Professor Edgar Poe books a one-way ticket to Maldives for Edogawa Ranpo.
- 12:20 PM JST – Fukuzawa Yukichi arrives at Mori Corporation Headquarters, ostensibly for lunch. He was asked to wait as the company CEO and President is on a meeting. Fukuzawa leaves Mori Corporation at 12:25 PM JST.
- 12:30 PM JST – Mori Ougai leaves Mori Corporation for lunch.
- 01:15 PM JST – Bioengineering PhD student Akutagawa Ryunosuke receives an unintelligible text message, followed by panicked phone call from Business Management TA Nakajima Atsushi, as his friend, 4th Year Japanese Literature Student Izumi Kyouka has apparently left him a message claiming that she is going into hiding.
- 01:22 PM JST – Ozaki Kouyou submits a missing person’s report for Izumi Kyouka.
- 01:25 PM JST – Ozaki Kouyou and Nakajima Atsushi receive a text message from Izumi Kyouka.*

*[Jul 5, 2019, 01:25 PM] – [Sender: Kyouka-chan] – [If my hunch is right, then they’re coming for me, that’s why I’m leaving. Please don’t worry about me.]

*Last note cell location for Izumi Kyouka is from the Yokohama University’s Rose Garden.
- 02:00 PM JST – Medical Examiner Yosano Akiko and Chemical Specialist Motojirou Kajii hold a police briefing. The following findings of importance:
  - Cause of death for Shibusawa Tatsuhiko, Mark Twain and Arthur Rimbaud is poison.
  - This particular poison compound is not present in any of the scientific databases and is suspected to be synthesized by the killer themselves.
  - The curry found inside Shibusawa Tatsuhiko’s laboratory is found to have traces of poison in it.
  - A warrant of arrest has been issued for TA Oda Sakunosuke.
  - Fukuzawa Yukichi vetoes the request to reopen the investigation on Dazai Osamu and Nakahara Chuuya’s double suicide.

+  

JUL 5, 2019. Friday.

[Statement from ODA Sakunosuke, Molecular Biochemistry TA]

“It wouldn’t be surprising if Tatsuhiko-san is indeed developing poison… he does get very excited when it comes to testing his work, maybe he drank it himself? If he had problems with the taste of my curry, it also wouldn’t be surprising if he tried to add flavor to it… Oh, that’s not what you asked? Hmm, I’ve always liked cooking for people. I used to, when Dazai-kun was still alive. That boy did not know or want to take care of his body and health properly… Ah, but he had Chuuya-kun. Hmm, not in that sense. Well, maybe in that sense too. Chuuya-kun was a great cook, from what I heard from Ango, Akutagawa and Tachihara. Dazai-kun would never have admitted it, but he also wanted to eat Chuuya-kun’s… Oh, that’s not what you asked? Ah, about Tatsuhiko-san, then…
I didn’t mind, being his sole assistant. He was great to work with. I do… did, admire him. I was there on the first day he arrived in this University, yes… it wouldn’t be surprising if someone hired an assassin to take him out. Why? Because he was dealing with important knowledge, that’s why. Me? No, I would never kill him using poison. That would be too much like pointing a spotlight on me, wouldn’t it? And getting imprisoned over it would just stress Ango out.”

+  

DING DONG~

Ah, Friday is such a busy day, isn’t it?

There will be a lot more excitement to come, dear reader! So make sure you get lots of rest, because you’ll need your energy for the next set of events!

Oh, you say I’m forgetting something?

Ah, you’re right!

I did ask you to participate in a game last time!

The following people got votes as the ones who are most suspicious: Oda Sakunosuke, Mori Ougai (2 votes), Arthur Rimbaud, Chuuya’s hat (LOL), Dazai Osamu, Akutagawa Ryuunosuke, Fyodor Dostoevsky.

Ah, what to do… Strictly speaking, this would mean that only one person (Mori Ougai) won… but tomorrow is Saturday and if you can’t stop X by then, we are going to be soooooo close to a Bad End!

What’s a Bad End?

Well, I did tell you that I am invested in this particular story, right?

A Bad End with X not getting stopped is the absolute worst for me!

So please help me out, dear readers! I shall do my best to help you out as well!

Let me see~

Ah, how about this!

**Statements in bold mean that they’re the absolute truth!** Statements in underline, on the other hand… mean something else.

These apply to past, present and future statements!

That said, let’s get this started:

- **Arthur Rimbaud gave Nakahara Chuuya a hat as a gift for getting into Yokohama University.**
- **As of Jul 7, 2015, the hat is missing from the mansion. The hat is also not found on the corpses or the surrounding area.**
- According to Akutagawa Ryuunosuke, “My life does not have meaning if I do not get acknowledgement from Dazai-san,.”
- “**The person I hate the most in this world is Nakahara Chuuya,**” Dazai Osamu once said.
“I hate him so much that I dream of killing him with my own hands.”

Interesting, right?

Well, don’t worry, there’s more!

As thanks to the first dear reader who had submitted their guess, I promised to give you three important clues regarding Oda Sakunosuke!

- **Oda Sakunosuke’s favorite food is curry.**
- **On the evening of July 6, 2015, Oda Sakunosuke and Dazai Osamu had an argument regarding Nakahara Chuuya’s existence.**
- **If X’s schemes are not stopped by today—July 5, 2019—Oda Sakunosuke will die before July 7, 2019.**

Does that motivate you, dear reader?

The clock is winding down on Oda Sakunosuke’s life, you know?

Ah, there are two more people that I need to give clues on, right?

- **On July 3, 2015, at 11:30 PM JST, Fyodor Dostoevsky and Nakahara Chuuya were spotted on the security camera of the Yokohama University parking lot.**

Lastly:

- **Mori Ougai is the one who introduced Dazai Osamu and Nakahara Chuuya to each other.**
- **On January 2015, Mori Ougai hired Fyodor Dostoevsky to be Dazai Osamu’s psychologist.**

…Ah, that is a lot of information to deal with, isn’t it, dear reader?

But please don’t give up!

**As long as you find X, everything will be alright!**

Now, I have a request for you, dear reader!

Please tell me your thoughts as to who needs to be offered protective custody! Whoever gets chosen will be assured to not die on Saturday, July 6, 2019! However, since the local police station only has so many personnel, you can only choose one, so please choose wisely!

If nobody gets chosen or if the votes are in a tie, then the police will just make a random choice!

Ah, I never claimed the police to be very wise, did I?

See you soon, dear reader~

Just like X, I will count down the minutes until I see you again~!

Chapter End Notes
*thanks for tuning in again ♥

*as the narrator says, it’s time for another game! please comment on who you want to give protection detail to for the entire day of Jul 6, 2019! you may submit your guesses via: AO3 comment, on the twitter thread, on the twitter hashtag, #BSDLiarAU or on my curiouscat!

*happy sleuthing~♪

*medicine mummy & consumed body are from IRL Shibusawa’s Book, “The Travels of Prince Takaoka”
Chapter Notes

thanks for checking back in!!! ♥♥♥
i would just like to say - i'm very thankful for all the analysis you guys put forth! i am
dying of happiness!!! i just can't reply with long comments back, because i might spill
something asdfas;ldhsds but please know ilu all ♥♥♥

now, on to the show!
question. do you trust the narrator?

See the end of the chapter for more notes

+ …Ah.
You’re back, aren’t you, dear reader?
Pardon me for feeling a bit… off.
I am in despair!
I am inconsolable!
My day is ruined!
I’ve seen the votes… ah… so you want to protect Izumi Kyouka, huh…
Izumi Kyouka got the most number of votes, huh…
Edogawa Ranpo had the next number of votes, you know?
And then there were some who voted for Akutagawa Ryuunosuke, Nakajima Atsushi and Oda
Sakunosuke…
…But Izumi Kyouka, huh…
The police will do their best to find her so they could stay with her for the entirety of Jul 6, 2019.
But I can make no promises, okay, dear reader?
Ahhhhh…
Why Izumi Kyouka…?
Why her?
After all—
+
One Friday, on July 3, 2015, at 11:32 PM JST, Izumi Kyouka hides behind a car, three cars away from where Nakahara Chuuya and Fyodor Dostoevsky are. Despite the distance, it provides her with a very clear view. **Kyouka can see the Psychology Professor with his face on Nakahara’s neck.** She can’t see what exactly the professor is doing, but judging from the way that his hands are clutching the other man’s hips tightly—well, she doubts that Professor Dostoevsky is crying his heart out or something like that. She can’t hear any sounds of conversation. She can’t hear anything obscene, thankfully.

She can see Nakahara’s face.

He looks bored as he’s being necked against Professor Dostoevsky’s car.

And it’s possible that it’s that sight that causes her to stay rooted in place. She just doesn’t understand.

Yokohama University is an elevator school, so during her high school, she’s seen Nakahara participate in the university’s kayak team, before it got disbanded. Well, Nakahara has basically joined every sports club in the University, either on loan or as a guest player. He’s very athletic, after all.

…Anyway, she’s seen him on the kayak team.

Therefore, she’s seen him interact with Dazai.

So, the sight in front of her—she doesn’t understand.

As she’s busy with her thoughts, she almost doesn’t notice Nakahara approach her.

**At 11:35 PM JST, July 3, 2015, the parking lot security camera shows Nakahara Chuuya talking to Izumi Kyouka.**

“It’s kinda late, Kyouka-chan.” Nakahara says. “Want to go home together?”

“Chuuya-san, I…”

Nakahara ignores the bag Kyouka is clutching close to her chest. “Do you want some crepes?” Nakahara doesn’t wait for an answer and hands Kyouka a paper-bag with the logo of an expensive dessert shop in the area.

“Kyouka-chan,” Nakahara says as soon as she accepts the paper bag. “Can you help keep that a secret?”

“A secret?”

“Yes.” Nakahara rubs his neck, as though he’s trying to scrub the impression of Professor Dostoevsky’s face away. “That guy… will definitely overreact if he somehow gets wind of you seeing us.”

“…I didn’t see anything.”

“Right?” Nakahara grins. “It’s for your own good.”
…And then, Izumi Kyouka ends up telling someone else about that encounter.

Isn’t it naughty of her?

That’s why, dear reader, I am very disappointed!

In my humble opinion, there is only one person who deserves a protection detail!

Who is it, you ask me?

Of course, it’s Fyodor Dostoevsky!

He’s being framed, I tell you!

He’s just an innocent man caught in-between two monsters, I tell you!

…You don’t believe me?

Fyodor Dostoevsky would never be X!

You don’t believe that as well…?

How about this?

**Fyodor Dostoevsky looks good in handcuffs.**

…Eh, you disagree?

Eh, you say I’m biased?

Eh, you say that means that he deserves to be in jail?!

Dear Reader, don’t be like this!

The absolute, no-good, ultimate worst type of Bad End is Fyodor Dostoevsky getting caught as X!

Ah… this is so depressing…

Why won’t you believe me…?

When all I’ve been doing is helping you?

You have to help me, dear reader! It’s just fair, isn’t it? In return for me helping you…

Oh, you think I haven’t helped you enough?

You drive a hard bargain, don’t you?

Aren’t you just bullying me?

…But fine, if you promise to help me protect Fyodor Dostoevsky, then I will do my best!

+  

JUL 5, 2019. Friday.
- 03:00 PM JST – due to public outcry (and comments on Twitter, the official police website, and Yokohama University’s forums), Fukuzawa Yukichi agrees to reopen the Dazai Osamu-Nakahara Chuuya Double Suicide Case.
- 03:05 PM JST – additional details were released in a police debrief following Fukuzawa Yukichi’s announcement.
- Francis Fitzgerald’s previous Head of Security was Oguri Mushitarou. He was replaced by Howard Lovecraft two hours later.
  - Tanizaki Naomi and Tanizaki Junichiro were the ones who discovered Arthur Rimbaud’s body.
  - Further examinations on the poison reveal the possibility that it was synthesized from toxins found in harmful algal blooms.
  - There is growing speculation that Dazai Osamu and Nakahara Chuuya were used as the test subjects for the initial version of the poison that was used to kill Shibusawa Tatsuhiko, Mark Twain and Arthur Rimbaud.
  - The police force makes a formal request to Mori Ougai and Paul Verlaine to allow them to exhume the corpses of Dazai Osamu and Nakahara Chuuya. The two are unable to be contacted.
- 03:10 PM JST – Fukuzawa Yukichi leaves the headquarters and promises to secure the two’s approval for the exhumation.
- 03:15 PM JST – the following people were asked to go to the local precinct so they could provide statements: Tanizaki Naomi, Tanizaki Junichiro, Edogawa Ranpo, Akutagawa Ryuunosuke, and Nakajima Atsushi.

+ JUL 5, 2019. Friday.

- [Statement from Tanizaki Naomi, 2nd Year Computer Science Student]
  “Yeah, we stumbled upon Rimbaud-san… What were we doing there so early? Hey, isn’t this discrimination? It’s a well-known fact that the library is where couples have their early morning rendezvous! Just because we’re not a gay couple, you’re singling us out? Me and Nii-sama have the right to be lovey-dovey too, you know? The school’s BL couples don’t have a monopoly on having secret trysts in-between bookshelves! Just earlier today, I’ve seen Edogawa-san and Poe-sensei there! And of course, the regulars! Like Atsushi-kun and Akutagawa-san! Higuchi won’t shut up about getting all the feels from seeing Akutagawa-san act all sweet… Ango-san and Oda-san, too… Ango-san acts all prim and proper about ‘Libraries are for studying!’, while shining his glasses at us, but in the mornings… Talk about repressed, really! So, yes, I’m sure it wasn’t just us who were in the library at way too early hours! We only went to newspaper archive section because we wanted to try something new! So please, stop singling us out, okay? Oh, you’re problem is because we’re siblings? Isn’t it so much better that way? Ahh, nii-sama~♥”

- [Statement from Tanizaki Junichiro, 4th Year Computer Science Student]
  “…Um, please ignore whatever Naomi said, she’s… a handful, sometimes. It’d be embarrassing if her words become permanent police record… I don’t remember seeing anything unusual. Aside from the fact that there’s a dead body there. I remember bumping into Gin-san and Higuchi-san after reporting the corpse to Campus Security. They were looking for Akutagawa-san, I think? Why were there? Well, it’s what Naomi wanted.”

- [Statement from Nakajima Atsushi, Business Management TA]
“Is it true that you’ve found Kyouka-chan?! …Oh, I thought that’s why you wanted to speak to me… I see… um, no, I don’t have any idea as to where she is or why she’s sent that message… but if you’re offering protection details, then please find her instead! Or protect Akutagawa! He’s been pretty shaken up by finding that corpse… And then there’s that time when he found Dazai-san and Nakahara-san… If you could protect Kyouka-chan or Akutagawa, that would be best, so please!”

- [Statement from Akutagawa Ryuunosuke, Bioengineering PhD student]

“…I have no need for protection. Do not waste your time with me. I am strong enough to protect myself. If I am wrong with my assessment, then that is simply my fate. …Dazai-san would never come back as a ghost. He had long wanted to cease existing in this world. He was strong enough to predict the future and because of that, he could feel anxiety for the future. It would be best if he could simply rest. …At least, that was what Chuuya-san once told me.”

- [Statement from Edogawa Ranpo, Psychology TA]

“I have nothing to say. You don’t have a warrant for me, do you? Do you even have plausible evidence to detain me? Fufufu, then I have nothing to say. …Wait, I do have one thing. If you think that those two are doing this… you’re wasting your time. After all, they’ve already achieved their dream. Why would they bother to come back?”

++

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Dazai’s hands can almost be considered loving in their gentleness and reverence. They’re oh-so-gentle as they wrap around a slim neck. Curly red hair fans out underwater, as Chuuya struggles to not struggle.

Eventually, Chuuya’s instincts win out and he gasps and kicks out, floating back to the surface.

Dazai helps tuck in the wet curls behind Chuuya’s earlobes, fingers caressing the other’s face in the process.

“Drowning looks beautiful on you,” Dazai says dreamily, as he sits on the edge of the kayak that he’s taken out in the name of practice. Nobody else is in the area though, given the time and place. “What do you think, chibi?”

Chuuya’s blue eyes sparkle, bluer and more vibrant than the lake’s water. “You’re such a fucking piece of shit if you’re actually horny from that.”

“Mm.”

“So? How is it?”

“I’m hard.”

“Not that, fucktard.” Chuuya continues floating just beside the kayak, just as he continues to allow Dazai to caress his face. “Do you think…?”

Dazai shakes his head. “Still a long way until we can master this.”

“Is that so? Sure it’s not because you want to keep on trying to drown me?”
Dazai grins down at Chuuya. “Ah.”

“You’re such an asshole,” Chuuya says, before grabbing Dazai’s arms so he can drag him down to the lake as well.

+ …Ehhhhh, isn’t that sweet of them.

Well, dear reader, that’s all I have for now!

You can continue voting for who you want to have the protection detail assigned for the entirety of —oops. I forgot one thing.

+ 

JUL 5, 2019. Friday.

• 04:53 PM JST, Fukuzawa Yukichi and Mori Ougai are sent to Yokohama Hospital’s Emergency Room. The two were discovered bleeding from stab wounds inside Mori Ougai’s mansion. The butler, Hirotsu Ryuurou, was the one who had called for an ambulance. Initial reports indicate a burglary gone wrong, as Mori Ougai’s study (where a huge vault was located) was ransacked and there were various signs of struggle. Both Fukuzawa and Mori are currently unconscious.

+ …Ah, and that’s all I have for now!

Really!

I promise!

You can continue voting for who you want to have the protection detail assigned for the entirety of Saturday—oops, I forgot one more thing.

Ah, I’m sorry, dear reader, I’m not feeling so well…

+ 

JUL 5, 2019. Friday.

• 05:00 PM JST, an anonymous message is sent to the Yokohama University’s Online Forum. It says:

> All of you have killed us,
> And so, the two of us will kill all of you in return.

+ …Okay, that’s really it!

I promise!

You can continue voting for who you want to have the protection detail assigned for the entirety of
Saturday, July 6, 2019! The protection detail will start at 12 midnight and end 12 midnight the following day!

Of course, that is, assuming that the police is able to find the person you wish to protect.

Ah, you think that’s a cop-out?

How about this, Dear Reader?

If you’re able to guess my job title, then I might just get extra-motivated! Enough that I’ll be able to help find even the people who are very hard to find!

Eh, you think I’m jobless?

You’re bullying me, aren’t you?

You don’t care about my job?!

You haven’t thought about my job?

You want a clue?

I’m getting bullied so much…

But since I’m really, really, really invested…

Here’s the clue!

    Let’s play!
    Even without love,
    Even without sympathetic characters,
    1836O, 1842R
    I am honored that Fyodor Dostoevsky spent his April with me!

I’ll see you soon, Dear Reader!

I hope that I am still alive to help you by the next time we meet!

Chapter End Notes

*as the narrator says, the vote for protection detail is still ongoing!
*as the narrator says, please also add your guess about his Job Title. as long as at least one reader manages to get this right, the narrator will be extra motivated to give us clues places to put your votes on:

- twitter thread
- twitter hashtag, #BSDLiARAU
- on my curiouscat!

thanks as always~~~♥

edit: additional clue requested!
Chapter Notes

thanks for tuning back in!

+ in 1836, IRL Gogol said to IRL Alexander Pushkin, “bro hmu w/your headcanons about how much our government sucks”, then IRL Pushkin said, “i gotchu bro”, and thus IRL Gogol’s muse got fed and “The Inspector General” was born. It’s Originally written in 1836 and was Revised in 1842. The story was a huge hit to the critics because of how unique it was in lacking a romantic subplot and sympathetic characters. A play version of it ran in April 1860, where IRL Fyodor was one of the actors. [you could get this information if you Gogol Google Gogol’s name, then click his wiki page~♥]

a number of readers got this right, yay~♥♥♥

on to the show!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

+ 

JUL 5, 2019. Friday.

- 05:30 PM JST, Fukuzawa Yukichi and Mori Ougai fall into a coma. Their stab wounds are found to have traces of an unknown poison.
- 05:35 PM JST, Inspector General Nikolai Gogol is assigned to replace Fukuzawa Yukichi as the Head of the Yokohama University Serial Murder Task Force. This is amidst rising concerns that the Inspector General is not a neutral party in the investigation. There have been leaks in internet with pictures taken from his vacation last April with a man identified to be Psychology Professor and Yokohama University Psychologist Fyodor Dostoevsky. There are also growing complaints about how the investigations have been mishandled, with certain evidences being lost in transit and some CCTV footages being lost.

Gogol has declined to address these concerns during a press conference, and has instead released the following information:

- July 5, 2019 CCTV Footage of the Mori Mansion Front Door reveals that:
  - Fukuzawa Yukichi arrives at the Mori Mansion at 04:10 PM.
  - Paul Verlaine arrives at the Mori Mansion at 04:34 PM.
  - Mori Mansion butler Hirotusu Ryuurou denies seeing the two guests and claims that he’s been asked to tend to important matters on the outhouse near the mansion’s rose garden.

+ 

XX, XX, 201X

“You, fool my plans?” Dazai asks mockingly. He has his hands on his hips, eyebrow raised. “Don’t make me laugh.”
“Whatever, bastard.” Chuuya makes shooing motions at him, tone irritated. “Let’s see who will have the last laugh!”

“Fufufu, my plans are always right,” Dazai wags a finger at the other man.

“‘Atsushi, Akutagawa,’” Chuuya calls out to the two teenagers caught in the middle of the bickering. “Let’s go and shut this mackerel asshole up!”

“Um…” Atsushi sweats a bit, looking very much like a child caught between divorced parents. He looks between Dazai and Chuuya, as though torn on who to support.

Akutagawa looks five seconds away from dragging Atsushi by the ear. “Jinko, we’re leaving you behind.”

“Um, sorry, Dazai-san!” Atsushi then bows to his assigned tutor. “If we defeat you, please don’t give me lots of homework to do!”

“Fufufu, Atsushi-kun, there is no escape for you!” Dazai crows at him. “…Well, you don’t have to worry. There’s no way that chibi can defeat me.”

“Keep talking shit!” Chuuya calls out, already busy checking his team’s equipment.

Yokohama University’s kayak team didn’t use to be this lively, truth be told. Ever since Dazai Osamu and Nakahara Chuuya joined the team – as part of their infamous rivalry – though, things have changed drastically. Now, there’s even a group of students (mostly female) from both the university and the high school division who camp out by the lakeside, ready to cheer the lake water on in splashing against their idols. Especially since Chuuya is prone to wearing light-colored shirts that become translucent when wet.

A lot of people join the club, which causes a lot of buzz, which causes a lot of students to see what the hell is up with the club, which causes people to gawk at the number of handsome men in the club, which becomes a cycle.

All in all, Yokohama University’s lake has become a well-known hangout place for students, despite the relatively rocky path to go there.

“I hope we can win,” Tachihara says, nervously fiddling with the hem of his shirt as he watches Chuuya. “Chuuya-san is really strong, after all.”

“You’ve received additional training from him, right?” One of the kayak club officers, Kunikida, pats his shoulder. “You’ve shown a lot of improvement even though you’ve only recently joined. Have confidence in yourself.”

“Ehhhh~♪” Dazai’s singsong is very flat, a tone more apt for somber funeral songs. “So is that why the chibi has been disappearing for the past two weeks?”

Tachihara balks and shoots Kunikida a panicked look. Kunikida, for his part, doesn’t seem to notice Tachihara’s panic. “Dazai, I did ask you to help teach Tachihara, but you didn’t show up! Be thankful that Nakahara picked up your slack!”

“Ehhhh~ So did Tachihara-kun learn a lot from having one-on-one tutor sessions with a chibi~?” Dazai approaches Tachihara purposefully. “Did he teach you, hands-on? Did he—?”

“Oh, he’s going to kill you, Tachihara,” Ranpo chortles from the side, his words
mangled by the fact that he’s more invested in dismantling his stash of junk food. He’s the fourth member of Dazai’s ‘team’ in today’s mock-competition, but he’s already long predicted that this will be a showdown between Dazai and Chuuya anyway, so there’s no point in trying too hard. After all, he’s only here because Edgar is pushing him to try new things—well, he did try, and now he’s staying because the drama is pretty hilarious.

“Oh, you think I’ll do it, Ranpo-san?” Dazai turns to Ranpo. “In front of so many witnesses?”

Ranpo doesn’t even waste time considering it. “I won’t put it past you, Dazai-kun.”

“Ano… senpai, please don’t discuss killing me so blatantly out in the open.”

“I’ll have you know, Tachihara-kun,” Dazai turns back to the younger man, but the way he’s looking down at him makes it appear like he’s looking down at something vile. “I had plans for the chibi, okay? I had arranged so many pranks for him, but he didn’t fall for them. I thought he actually grew a brain!”

“Humans can’t grow a brain—” Kunikida starts, looking distressed.

“But it turns out!” Dazai gesticulates wildly. “He was just busy acting like a good senpai! How dare you take him away from me and my pranks?!”

Kunikida facepalms. “Dazai, please stop bullying your kouhai.”

“Ku-ni-ki-da-kun~! You sound like a mom!” Dazai doesn’t bother addressing his senpai properly. “Or, you sound like you have a crush on Tachihara-kun and want to act like his knight in shining armor!”

“Which part of that—?” Kunikida rubs at his temples. “Just because I’m being a decent person doesn’t mean I have romantic inclinations towards Tachihara-kun!”

“Oh, so you’re saying that Tachihara-kun here deserves to be unloved?”

“I didn’t say that!”

While Dazai is busy causing Kunikida to go into conniptions, Tachihara takes the chance to slink away from them and start checking on his gear instead.

“Aww, Tachibaka, that’s why you were late for our computer science group project?” Higuchi looks more thrilled about the gossip than being left behind to toil in coding, in the name of love. “You can never judge me again for following Akutagawa-senpai!”

“I actually have a valid reason,” Tachihara insists, but practically everyone in his class knows that he only joined the kayak team because of his… admiration for Nakahara Chuuya.

“Stop following nii-san,” Gin says quietly to Higuchi, before, “Tachihara, you should prepare your last will if you’re willingly going against Dazai-san.”

“I’m not going against anyone,” Tachihara insists.

But then, there’s a commotion behind him, Dazai wildly waving his paddle seemingly in an effort to keep both Kunikida and Chuuya away. He’s apparently said or done
something that had earned the two’s ire, like always, and the two are chasing him down. Dazai is wildly waving his paddle, but because he’s never been the most physically fit or best coordinated person, his foot catches on something and he ends up accidentally hitting Tachihara on the face with one end of his paddle.

JUL 5, 2019. Friday.

- 05:40 PM JST, Edogawa Ranpo is spotted leaving the Yokohama University parking lot with Edgar Poe.
- 05:45 PM JST, Nikolai Gogol’s press conference is still ongoing. The following information were revealed:
  - Analysis of the book found with Arthur Rimbaud’s corpse show that it is the same book that was found during the Dazai Osamu and Nakahara Chuuya double suicide case. Investigation is still ongoing as to what kind of tampering was done, if any, on the book.
- **As of Jul 7, 2015, 04:00 PM JST, the human named ‘Dazai Osamu’ and the human named ‘Nakahara Chuuya’ have been reported as ‘Deceased’**. The victims were identified by comparing their dental and DNA records to the information in the police database. The deaths were eventually ruled as a murder suicide due to: lack of struggle in the victims’ bodies, Dazai Osamu’s psychologist’s report about the man’s mental health, a diary found in Nakahara Chuuya’s apartment detailing about his lack of interest in the world, the absence of a murder weapon and the lack of a means and motive.
  - Dazai Osamu was a Business Management-Economics double major. Nakahara Chuuya was taking up Economics with a minor on Computer Systems.
  - Paul Verlaine’s whereabouts are currently unknown.
  - Paul Verlaine is found to have opened an IT Securities company not publicly linked to his name.

JUL 6, 2015. Wednesday.

“Isn’t it unfair, OdaSaku?” Dazai asks, an edge to his voice. “Aren’t you being unfair to me?”

“Even you have to admit that Chuuya-kun… isn’t the best for you.” Oda says his words as calmly as possible, well-aware that Dazai is getting more and more prone to outbursts recently. He’s always been a little childish, in ways that contrast his almost world-weary wisdom at times. Getting Chuuya involved is a surefire way of getting Dazai to act irrationally, so he has to proceed slowly.

“You willingly associate with Shibusawa-sensei,” Dazai points out unkindly. “Plus, didn’t you use to say that spending time with the chibi is good for me? Or is it that you’re starting to like him too?”

“I have no romantic interest in Chuuya-kun.” Oda raises both of his hands to show his harmlessness. Dazai doesn’t seem to notice that though. “Dazai-kun, I won’t deny that spending time with Chuuya-kun did help you. But it also…”

“…It’s funny.” Dazai says without humor in his voice. “I think, in another world, I’d have believed you one hundred percent, because you’re a friend of mine. But you don’t understand me, do you? You’re actually scared of me, aren’t you?”
Oda considers his next set of words carefully. “Whatever you and Chuuya-kun are planning… please do think about it carefully.”

“You agree, don’t you? That there’s a monster inside him. And that there’s a monster inside me. Maybe, maybe if I was fully hollow, maybe I would have believed you, because I had nothing else to believe?” Dazai then closes his eyes, before smiling brightly. “Don’t worry, OdaSaku. We won’t ever come for you.”

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**JUL 5, 2019. Friday.**

- 06:00 PM JST. Nikolai Gogol’s press conference ends with this proclamation:

“We have reason to suspect that X currently has Izumi Kyouka in their grasp. The Yokohama University Serial Murder Task Force will do their utmost best to track you down and bring you to justice. Even if it means me personally going out to meet you, X.”

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…everything’s going wrong, they’re asking so many questions, who leaked my vacation photos with Dos-kun, now everyone will see how cute he looks in Speedos, I cannot believe this… is X trying to force me out of the police force? Is X trying to force me to meet them?

If I’m not here then—

Dos-kun says that X will never harm him, but I don’t believe it!

I believe Dos-kun, but I don’t believe X!

If I reveal X’s identity…

Should I?

But there’s no evidence…

X will just be cleared of suspicion…

And then Dos-kun will be in greater trouble, that way, won’t he?

X is going to frame both Oda Sakunosuke and Dos-kun, in the end…?

Can I take X out in a one-on-one battle?

I think I can…?

But Dos-kun would not want it.
I’m not sure why Dos-kun wants me to stay out of the way.
Surely, it’s not because he wants me unharmed?
That’s too sweet and romantic and certainly not like Dos-kun…
Should I follow Edogawa Ranpo and torture him to reveal what he knows?
No, what if—
Is X the one behind the attack on Fukuzawa and Mori?
Or is it X and X’s helper?
To be able to wound both Fukuzawa and Mori quickly…
Will Izumi Kyouka reappear after I’ve made that announcement…?
Dos-kun… Dos-kun, why won’t you answer my calls…?
You’re safe, right?
If X comes after you, I’d—
…wait, is this why Dos-kun approached me, back then?
Did he…
Did he want to use me like this?
No, that can’t be.
Dos-kun is the one who understands me.
I’ve agreed to follow whatever Dos-kun wants.
Even if it means getting a limb severed.
Even if it means getting sawn in half.
Even if it means—
I look at the book on my desk. Introduction to Witchcraft. I don’t have time to decode the entire book right now. I’m running out of time.
I don’t mind dying, Dos-kun, but at least—
I want to make sure that your plans will win, before I do.
…ne, Dear Reader, what should I do?
1. Find Izumi Kyouka—and risk a one-on-one confrontation with X.
2. Investigate the Mori Mansion Vault—and risk a one-on-? confrontation with the person/(s) responsible for Fukuzawa and Mori.
3. Find Edogawa Ranpo and prevent him from leaving the country—and risk ?
4. Stay in the police precinct to guard Oda Sakunosuke—and risk ?
At the rate things are going…

**If X and X’s plans are not stopped, everyone will die in less than a week.**

…will I die before I see Dos-kun again?

Will I die before I can see you again, Dear Reader?

Ah, but don’t worry.

If I die, then someone else will take my place as the Narrator…

….Ah.

Maybe you should worry, Dear Reader.

After all, I can’t guarantee that X will not use that chance to usurp the narrative and use it for nefarious means.

Till next time, Dear Reader!

I hope we’ll meet in more beautiful circumstances~

Chapter End Notes

*with this, we've reached the halfway mark of the story! thank you for joining the ride so far!*

*votes for who gets to have a 24-hour protection detail is still ongoing!*

*votes to choose your own gogol adventure is open! if there is no clear winner, gogol will be forced to choose on his own and we all know how his life choices go @___@*

*author's tip: there is one line in the story that, upon squinting, should directly lead to X's identity, so ganbatte! or at least, so the author believes lol*

*author's tip #2: some of IRL Gogol’s greatest hits: The Inspector General [a satire about how corrupt & incompetent the government is], The Overcoat [a story where MC dies and revives – for the sake of the accessory/overcoat that was taken from him], A Terrible Vengeance [“There is no worse punishment to Man, than to want to avenge and not being able to.”], The Viy [~”The Demon King”; a horror story], Diary of a Madman [a story where MC descends into madness, jumpstarted by his unhappiness with society + public vs private personas]. IRL Gogol is also very, very, very fond of Unreliable Narrators. Anyway, my point is, Gogol being the narrator is the perfect foreshadowing & i couldn’t resist ♥*

*to give time for braincells to recover, next update will be on the weekend/very early next week~♥ see you~~~ and thanks as always~~~♫*

*(ps: "dazai" & "chuuya" will "revive" next chapter~)*
Chapter 6

longest chapter so far! strap in for a long, wild ride, minna-san! thanks as always for joining in! ♥

See the end of the chapter for more notes

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XX, XX, 20XX

“Dazai-kun, this is Nakahara Chuuya-kun.”

Mori Ougai introduces the two of them under the twinkling lights of a truly extravagant crystal chandelier. All around them are businessmen wearing suits as their armor and briefcases as their weapon. Tonight’s party is ostensibly for some sort of charity, hosted by Paul Verlaine. *Noblesse oblige* in the modern era, in a way. By Paul’s side is his husband, foregoing his usual earmuffs in an effort to look less averse to conversation.

Last time around, it’s the Fitzgerald Mansion that hosted this event. The time before that, the Mori Mansion. Before that, the Christie Mansion. The world of the rich and powerful is very small, after all.

“Chuuya-kun, this is my son, Dazai-kun.”

The two teenagers being introduced to one another stare at each other with barely veiled distaste and distrust.

“But both of you will be going to Yokohama University,” Mori doesn’t seem to mind that the two of them are not taking the bait to speak to each other. “It will be nice if the two of you can get along well, ne?”

With those words, Mori leaves the two of them to socialize – or if not, at least try not to kill each other in public. It would be an embarrassment, after all.

Curious despite it all, Chuuya stares at the person in front of him. He takes in the sight of a lanky teenager covered in too much bandages. Too much, because his somber-looking suit isn’t enough to contain a few strips of bandages from peeking out past a collar, past the sleeves. There’s even a bandage over the person’s right eye, though Chuuya has a feeling that it’s got a lot less to do with medical reasons.

The party is bustling, but since the two of them are standing near the exit to the grand ballroom of Paul’s mansion, they’re not disturbed by anyone. Nobody would be so gauche as to leave mere minutes after food was served, after all.
Chuuya raises a gloved hand and offers it as a limp handshake to the other. Chuuya’s obviously here not out of his own will, but he’s not interested in making that much trouble for his parents. But that also doesn’t mean he’s going to fake enthusiasm in making nice with someone who looks bored out of his wits.

Dazai Osamu raises an eyebrow, before claspng Chuuya’s hand.

Not for a handshake, though.

Dazai curls a hand over Chuuya’s wrist, before dragging it up to his face, in a mockery of a gentleman’s kiss. A mockery, because Dazai doesn’t even bother to attempt to bow down, and more importantly, Chuuya is the furthest thing from a lady.

And then, Dazai whispers against the leather gloves: “Would you like to do a double suicide with me?”

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JUL 5, 2019. Friday.

- Some additional notes:
  - 01:00 PM JST. Nakajima Atsushi receives a text message from Izumi Kyouka’s number.*
  - 04:30 PM JST. Tanizaki Naomi, Tanizaki Junichiro, Edogawa Ranpo, Akutagawa Ryuunosuke and Nakajima Atsushi were released from local precinct after their statements were taken.
  - 06:15 PM JST. Internal Memo for the Yokohama University Serial Murder Task Force states that a protection detail would be assigned to Edogawa Ranpo.
  - 06:25 PM JST. Nikolai Gogol and Katayama Katai were seen leaving the police precinct together.
  - 06:30 PM JST. An anonymous tip was left on the police line regarding the whereabouts of Izumi Kyouka. The phone call was traced in one of the five public phone booths available near Yokohama University. The tip states that they have last seen Izumi Kyouka near the Student Apartments owned by Ozaki Kouyou.
  - 06:35 PM JST. Police reaches Narita International Airport. Edogawa Ranpo is blocked from boarding a 2-stop flight to Maldives and is escorted back to Yokohama for a Witness Protection Detail. Edogawa Ranpo refuses to answer questions. Edgar Allan Poe returns to Yokohama with him.
  - 06:41 PM JST. Nakajima Atsushi returns to the police precinct and files a report about citing Izumi Kyouka. Nakajima is on the phone with Akutagawa Ryuunosuke, who claims that he’s with an unconscious Izumi Kyouka near the Yokohama University Lake.
“Don’t think that I didn’t know you did it on purpose,” is how Chuuya greets Dazai, the moment the two of them meet inside the Yokohama University Library.

At five floors and tens of thousands of books, it is very renowned for being a good spot for a lovers’ rendezvous first, and a quiet place for studying second. Most of the school staff turn a blind eye to the more illicit activities; in return, the students get to manage their stress levels without getting involved in various publicized scandals.

The section that houses the archived newspapers is widely considered to be the quietest and creepiest part of the library. At present, when computers have rendered newspapers obsolete, nobody really has a reason to peruse things from this area. All of the archived newspapers’ contents are already scanned and transferred to electronic databases, after all. There’s been one too many ghost stories set in this section. It’s only worsened by the fact that there is no CCTV in this area. Some people blame rats for chewing up wiring; some people blame bad feng shui.

Whatever it is, it makes for a good place to meet away from prying eyes.

Dazai has commandeered the only table available in this section. He’s dragged it from the middle of the room and placed it flush against one of the towering wall shelves, effectively putting it on the blind spot once one opens the door to enter the area. He’s lazily swiping on his phone.

“Did what?” Dazai asks sleepily, yawning when Chuuya approaches and flicks him on the forehead. “Chibi, you know that I can’t speak dog, right? I know I’m smart, but you can’t always expect me to—”

“I know you hit Tachihara on purpose,” Chuuya cuts Dazai off before he can wax poetic about how his brain cells are too good to be wasted on predicting Chuuya’s thoughts. It’s all full of shit, anyway.

“Oh?” Dazai slumps further into the table. He doesn’t resist when Chuuya takes the phone out of his hands and carelessly ends his game. He’s on the verge of a high score, but it’s not like that really matters. Chuuya hates the game because of its gacha rates, which means Dazai doesn’t have a lot of incentive to play it too well. “Such accusations… Fufufu, do you have proof to arrest me, officer?”

“You’d probably enjoy being arrested,” Chuuya says with a roll of his eyes. Despite his words, he slinks inside the nonexistent space between Dazai and the table, effectively sitting on top of the table and Dazai rearranging his limbs so that his upper body is sprawled on top of Chuuya’s thighs. “You’d just end up traumatizing the poor policemen.”

“I think you’d look amazing in cuffs,” Dazai hums as he rubs his cheek against Chuuya’s thigh. It’s a lot softer compared to the wooden table, despite it being quite firm and muscular. Dazai can smell Chuuya’s laundry detergent; he nuzzles further in and mentally debates the pros and cons of dragging Chuuya’s zipper down using his teeth. It will probably taste weird, so maybe not. “If you keep on slandering my good name, I’d have no choice but to report you instead, Chuuya.”

“As if.” Chuuya runs his fingers over Dazai’s hair. Dazai lets out a whine, so Chuuya sighs and removes his gloves before resuming to pet Dazai’s head. “Paul will crush the
media immediately.”

“Fufufu. Must be really nice to have such loving parents, hmm?”

“You know all about it too,” Chuuya leans sideways so that his temple is resting against the shelves beside the table.

A few moments pass like this. Dazai simply breathing against Chuuya’s thigh and Chuuya simply inhaling the smell of aged paper.

And then, Dazai breaks it, sounding very dangerous, as he says, “…Hey, I have an idea.”

Chuuya lets out a long-suffering sigh.

“I haven’t even said anything!” Dazai tilts his head so he can assault Chuuya with the full force of his pout. Given that they’ve already known each other for years, Chuuya simply pinches Dazai’s nose, unimpressed.

“Is it more harebrained than your previous idea?”

“Wow, harebrained… Chuuya knows such complex words, congrats, chibi.”

Chuuya pinches tighter. “My literature score is higher than yours, motherfucker.”

“Mm, but that’s because you’re a chuuni.” Dazai says, nasal voice making him sound more irritating. “You’re such a kid, even though you’re already in university.”

“You’re the brat,” Chuuya huffs. “May I remind you, you’re the one who hit Tachihara with a goddamned paddle because you were too childish to admit your jealousy?”

“Nope, I hit him because he’s ugly.”

“You’re such a child,” Chuuya sighs, but he also starts to rub Dazai’s nose to ease the redness away. “This is also your idea, remember?”

“It’s our idea.” Dazai says, just before he licks a stripe against Chuuya’s palm. “Don’t shirk responsibility, chibi.”

Chuuya sighs again. Tellingly, he doesn’t refute it.

After all, it is true.

He did agree to compete with Dazai.

Unlike most people, their competitions are not bound to certain aspects though.

“I’m not.” Chuuya wipes the saliva from his hand against Dazai’s cheek. That will teach him. Dazai retaliates by blowing a raspberry against Chuuya’s thigh. “But it means that you can’t act like a jealous asshole, okay? I did not run you over with my bike when I saw you sharing an ice cream cone with Atsushi, after all.”

“Mm, that’s true.” Dazai considers that for a moment, before, “But I’m not acting.”

“Ah, really?”
“Really.”

“Hmm.”

A few beats, before, “So? Your idea?”

“What do you say to doing something wild enough to cause our dear, loving parents to get a couple of white hairs?”

“Something like…?”

Dazai smiles as he tugs Chuuya down by the neck, and whispers the rest of his idea against his lips.

JUL 5, 2019. Friday.

06:50 PM JST. Nikolai Gogol and Katayama Katai arrive at the Mori Mansion. Their arrival is captured at the CCTV located at the front door. They are greeted at the front door by the butler, Hirotsu Ryuurou. As they arrive, Crime Scene Investigators have just finished processing the scene and are about to leave.

Some things of note:

- The first-floor study, where the bodies of Fukuzawa Yukichi and Mori Ougai were found, was ransacked, leading the police to believe that it was a burglary gone wrong. The following damages were reported: three (out of eight) bookshelves toppled over; the computer screen on the office table is cracked; the attached CPU has tea poured on it.

- Hirotsu has also filed for an insurance claim for a pair of antique katana that was displayed above the study fireplace. The pair of swords have been reported as missing.

- The fireplace has a couple of folders’ worth of paperwork thrown over it, Most of the paperwork have been rendered ineligible, but a surviving scrap was reconstructed and the partial contents were matched to the scientific paper that Shibusawa Tatsuhiko published before he was invited to Yokohama University.*

- The scientific paper was published in Zoological Science by Shibusawa Tatsuhiko. The study was on Turritopsis dohrnii (also known as the ‘immortal jellyfish’) and their ability to rejuvenate, effectively achieving immortality. The jellyfish inhabited several bodies of water in Japan. Shibusawa then published another paper that, in an attempt to replicate the jellyfishes’ ability to rejuvenate on human organs. That experiment was widely considered to be unsuccessful.

- The vault sustained damages, but was unopened. There were deep grooves into its door, as though someone had attempted to slice it open.

06:55 PM JST. Nikolai Gogol instructs Katayama Katai to open the vault and recover the CPU’s hard drive contents. Hirotsu Ryuurou offers them tea as they work on the scene. Nikolai Gogol offers protection to Hirotsu Ryuurou if he agrees to answer his questions and cooperate with the investigation.
“Still nothing, huh?” Dazai exaggerates his disappointment as he shakes his head ruefully. “Ah, is this what I get for trusting a dog to do its job properly?”

“You shut your stinking mouth,” Chuuya shoves Dazai’s face away from his neck using one hand. His other hand remains on the keyboard of his laptop as he tries to hack into several databases at the same time. “If you’re so good, then why not do this job, huh?”

“Ehhhh, but that’s not part of our partnership!”

“Partnership?! This is a one-way slavery!”

Dazai being Dazai, clings to Chuuya’s arm like the way a jellyfish entangles its prey. “Then why does Chuuya not call me ‘Master’?”

“Not to be dramatic, but I’d rather eat shit than call you that.”

“Never say never~” Dazai singsongs, sliding his arms so he can wrap them around Chuuya’s waist. “But seriously, what’s the hold-up?”

“That guy is not in any records,” Chuuya says eventually, annoyed beyond belief. “It’s like he’s a ghost!”

“Ohoh?”

Chuuya ponders it. He’s the best in class when it comes to computers, something that Dazai’s claimed to be because he’s spent a great part of his childhood as a ‘gamer nerd’. Chuuya thinks it’s a bunch of bullshit; he’s just more industrious when it comes to studying, to the point that he even attends as many seminars as he can. Just last week, he attended a talk-demonstration by one of the computer geniuses of the generation, Katayama Katai.

“Is he some sort of super assassin or something?”

“Spoken like a true chuuni.”

“Seriously.”

Dazai slips his hand against Chuuya’s pants’ pocket and drags out a pen-knife from it. He flicks it open and teases the sharp edge of the blade against Chuuya’s liver, over his shirt.

“Seriously,” Chuuya repeats. “If you ruin my shirt one more time, I’m going to dunk your head against a toilet bowl.”

“Silly chibi,” Dazai says dreamily, and murmurs the rest of his words against Chuuya’s neck. He caresses Chuuya with the blade in gentle motions, because really. Chuuya doesn’t even use the knife. Doesn’t even need the knife. The only reason why he packs it on his pocket is for Dazai to use it against him. Such a silly chibi he is.

“Then? Our next step?”

“Maybe I should seduce him for information,” Dazai muses, but he doesn’t even
manage to say the rest of his sentence before Chuuya stops him from speaking altogether.

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JUL 5, 2019. Friday.

- **07:01 PM JST. Akutagawa Ryuunosuke is found alone by the lakeside of Yokohama University Lake.** He is clutching a rabbit mobile phone charm that belongs to Izumi Kyouka. He is found to be very pale and very shaken. He is brought into Yokohama Hospital via an ambulance. EMT responders assessed him to be in shock and is unable to answer questions. He only keeps on repeating, “They’ve returned”, even when he’s spoken to by the doctors.

- **07:10 PM JST. Nakajima Atsushi and Akutagawa Gin arrive at the Yokohama Hospital.** They go to visit Akutagawa Ryuunosuke’s room. Akutagawa Ryuunosuke embraced his sister and then his lover, before passing out.

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JUN 30, 2019. Saturday.

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[Date: June 30, 2019]  
[Location: Francis Fitzgerald’s Mansion]  
[Attendees:  
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Nathaniel Hawthorne  
Margaret Mitchell  
Shibusawa Tatsuhiko [had to leave early]  
Oda Sakunosuke  
[error loading file]  
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Edogawa Ranpo [had to leave early]  
Edgar Allan Poe [had to leave early]  
John Steinbeck  
Louisa May Alcott [had to leave early]  
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Fyodor Dostoevsky  
Mori Ougai  
Paul Verlaine  
Arthur Rimbaud [declined to attend]  
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XX, XX, 20XX

“I think this is good for you,” Chuuya says as he dips his feet into the water. From a couple of meters away, a group of girls shriek as they exclaim about dainty toes. Chuuya doesn’t seem to hear them, though. “You’ve been coughing less.”

Akutagawa coughs at that. “It is... a passable way to spend my time.”

“Whoa, careful there, the enthusiasm is killing me,” Chuuya teases with a laugh.

From a couple of meters away, Dazai makes a commotion about wanting to jump after Chuuya and the two-person kayak he’s sharing with Akutagawa. Atsushi is stuck trying to placate him by saying that Akutagawa’s too prickly for someone like Chuuya.

Dazai and Chuuya usually pair up during these kinds of free practice for the club, but Kunikida’s a little more stressed today and has insisted on separating the two. Nobody wants a replay of Chuuya punching Dazai off the kayak, Dazai forgetting how to swim, then Chuuya losing his mind rescuing him. To be more specific, Kunikida doesn’t want a replay of it. His eardrums haven’t quite recovered from the CPR that Chuuya had to give Dazai, and the onlookers’ reactions to it. And oh, they reacted alright. Yokohama University’s forums died a thousand times over from server overload. Kunikida’s eardrums and sanity died ten thousand times more.

He just wants a respite from it all today, damn it.

Akutagawa watches Dazai and Atsushi on the shore.

“...You two get along well,” Chuuya says lightly.

Akutagawa side-eyes his senpai. “Not as well as you and Dazai-san do, certainly.”

Chuuya’s nose is slightly red, but that’s probably because today’s hotter than usual. “That guy? Pfft, I’m not so sad a man that I’ll willingly tie myself down to someone who wants to die at every opportunity.”

Akutagawa keeps quiet, knowing that there’s more coming.

“That bastard... he keeps on predicting morbid things for the future and then he wonders why he’s not feeling any motivation to live? Honestly…” Chuuya is possibly oblivious to the way that his eyes darken as his tone softens, despite his words. “Really. It’d be best if he just rests forever. That way, he won’t give me anymore headaches!”

“I was simply teasing you, Chuuya-san, you did not need to give me a dissertation.”

Chuuya looks at him, mouth agape, before doubling over in laughter.

“Oh my fucking god, Atsushi’s sass is rubbing off you, huh?”
“That jinko is rubbing nothing on me.”

“Oh my god, stop making me laugh, Dazai will hate you forever.”

Despite his words, Chuuya’s laughter continues to ring on the lake.

On the shore, Kunikida facepalms. Separating the two idiots is apparently the wrong choice, because now, Dazai has truly become part of the horde of people screaming for Chuuya. Of course, for the sake of his sanity, Kunikida is ignoring the fact that Dazai is screaming death threats at Chuuya for ‘daring to laugh so cutely with someone else’.

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JUL 5, 2019. Friday.

- 07:45 PM JST. Edogawa Ranpo arrives back at Yokohama. He, accompanied by Edgar Poe, is sent back to the local precinct for the witness protection detail arrangement. Edogawa Ranpo asks to speak with Nikolai Gogol. Edogawa Ranpo is visibly surprised when he’s informed that Nikolai Gogol has left the precinct.

Edogawa Ranpo agrees to make a small statement to the police officer on duty, Sugimoto. He claims that, “Dazai and Nakahara had a very selfish love. Their love could only understand each other’s. They wanted to leave this world behind and they did not care for who they would leave behind, or who they would hurt to make sure their desires got granted. In a way, they could be considered monsters.”

Edogawa Ranpo then states, “X says that Dazai and Chuuya will resurrect, for one night only, to get their dues. And yet, the worst case scenario for X is for those two to actually resurrect.”

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XX, XX, 20XX

“…What are your intentions with Chuuya-kun?”

Dazai’s hands pause briefly in carding through Chuuya’s sweat-mangled hair. Chuuya’s finally asleep, though there’s still some twinges of restlessness that are apparent in the frame of his body. Dazai’s voice is quiet as he says, “How mean, Ane-san. Aren’t you the one who asked me to go here?”

“Only because the lad requested it.”

“Chuuya did?” Dazai’s face is mostly faced down, his entire being focused on the man sleeping over his lap and in his arms. Still, his surprise is obvious. “…Hm. Somehow, I doubt the chibi actually did that.”

Kouyou’s voice is equally quiet. “He did.”

They both don’t want to wake Chuuya up, after all.

“He’s probably just more stressed than usual,” Dazai offers lightly. As though Chuuya’s
sudden violent mood swings can be explained with something as ‘light’ as ‘mere stress’.

“Is that so?” Kouyou asks, unconvinced.

“Still,” Dazai says, finally meeting Kouyou’s gaze. “It’s awfully nice that a landlady cares so much for her tenants. The chibi is lucky.”

A moment passes, before Kouyou takes a step back, crossing the threshold to Chuuya’s rented bedroom. The room is thrashed, but nothing looks unsalvageable. Tomorrow will probably be pretty lively. Dazai will stay over and he’ll be there for the morning-after. And he’ll simply watch Chuuya clean things up.

“Take care of him, Dazai-kun.”

“Of course,” Dazai says, but it feels like a lie.

JUL 5, 2019. Friday.

- 08:00 PM JST. The local precinct attempts to contact Nikolai Gogol and Katayama Katai, but are unable to reach them. Their last known location is the Mori Mansion. Nikolai Gogol, prior to leaving the local precinct, had made arrangements to be tracked and traced should he not report back two hours after he left.

- 08:06 PM JST. The phone call to Nikolai Gogol finally connects, but all that could be heard was the sound of Für Elise playing. Police officers were deployed to go to the Mori Mansion to track Nikolai Gogol down.

- 08:22 PM JST. Two bodies were discovered inside the Mori Mansion first-floor study.

  - The first body belongs to Katayama Katai. He is found dead while seated on the office desk in the middle of the study. Katai’s computer, the computer and hard drive belonging to the study, were all drenched in tea.
  - The second body is found to be beheaded. The head is nowhere to be found, but based on the clothes and fingerprints, the second corpse is identified to belong to Nikolai Gogol.

  - Things of note:
    - Katayama’s face had a look of surprise as he was killed.
    - A tea set was found on top of the office desk. The tea set’s cups’ handles and tea were found to have traces of unknown poison.
    - Hirotsu Ryuurou was nowhere to be found.
    - The rest of the house is empty.
    - The CCTV for the entire mansion and grounds was found to be deactivated as of 07:00 PM JST.
    - Katayama’s phone was used to play Für Elise on a loop.

Further inspection of Gogol’s corpse found a recording pen on his pocket. The pen is slightly damaged and the first part of the recording is unable to be played at the moment. The last recorded part has the following:

“—how—! Dos-kun, I—!”
[crisp, slicing sound]
[a thud]
“…done.”

- Initial assessment shows that the beheading was done swiftly and cleanly, in one slice, using one of the antique katana that was reported missing earlier today.

DING DONG~★

Aw, isn’t that very, very sad?

A lot of things happened, ne? Isn’t this such a nice brain exercise? Fufufu, in the end, that is quite nice, hmm?

A beheading…

Quite barbaric~! Quite violent~! Quite overdramatic~!

Now, as we prepare ourselves for the next part of the story, I would just like to bring something up!

As of July 2019, Akutagawa Ryuunosuke is a Bioengineering PhD student!
As of July 2019, Nakajima Atsushi is a Business Management TA!

Really… if one of the concerned netizens did not bring this up, then the rest of the readers might have been fooled!

I would like to blame the poor sod who is working at the police precinct for typing things up incorrectly on Chapter 2’s July 4th report! How very irresponsible of them!

Isn’t that sad too?

Ah, but is it really time for mourning?

I would suggest not to waste time being sad right now!

After all, this is just the beginning of a very exciting weekend~!

…Oh, you’re sad for Gogol?

Don’t be, don’t be~

I’m pretty sure that soon, his ‘beloved Dos-kun’ will accompany him in hell~ maybe they can have more disgustingly domestic dates there~?

Eh, why I’m being callous about his death?

Tsk, tsk, have you seen the vacation photos?

Those two in Speedos…

This type of hatred is very mild, I assure you!

Eh… what is this, you’re dissatisfied?
Fufufu, oh no, what do I do?
If you’re dissatisfied, then~
How about this?
Let me redo my introduction~!
Ahem, ahem.
+
DING DONG~★
Welcome to today’s Murder Mystery~!
Are you familiar with Knox’s Decalogue?

1. The criminal must be mentioned in the early part of the story, but must not be anyone whose thoughts the reader has been allowed to know.
2. All supernatural or preternatural agencies are ruled out as a matter of course.
3. Not more than one secret room or passage is allowable.
4. No hitherto undiscovered poisons may be used, nor any appliance which will need a long scientific explanation at the end.
5. No Chinaman must figure in the story.
6. No accident must ever help the detective, nor must he ever have an unaccountable intuition which proves to be right.
7. The detective himself must not commit the crime.
8. The detective is bound to declare any clues which he may discover.
9. The "sidekick" of the detective, the Watson, must not conceal from the reader any thoughts which pass through his mind: his intelligence must be slightly, but very slightly, below that of the average reader.
10. Twin brothers, and doubles generally, must not appear unless we have been duly prepared for them.

…Fufufu, that sounds well and good, but—!!!

Why are we following the rules made up by some long-dead priest from 1929?
I don’t get it!
Also, Chinaman? Not being politically correct is so out of vogue!

Also, also!

How can we have a ‘Watson’ if there is no detective in the story to begin with?!
Is this really a murder mystery if there’s no detective?!

Oh no, oh no, what do I do?

Ah!

Don’t look at me like that, I have a solution!

I shall just be that Detective!
Hmm, hmm, since I do have a weapon with me, perhaps you can even call me an Armed Detective!

If you join me, we can become an Armed Detective Agency~♪

Isn’t that nice~?

Fufufu, now what complaints do you have?

Eh, you actually have one?

Eh, you don’t trust me?!

How mean, after I’ve redone my introduction and all… oh, I see it now.

I didn’t complete my introduction, did I?

Fufufu, let’s redo this.

Hello and Happy Hunting~!

I am your host, the eXcellent, the eXtraordinary, the eXtravagant, XXX-treat!

My name is Dazai Osamu, an Armed Detective, at your service!

Chapter End Notes

*thanks for reading till the end!

*the study re: immortal jellyfish is real, but obviously it wasn’t Shibu who published it
*next chapter will (probably) be late next week, as i’ll be on a business trip until thursday! happy sleuthing! ♥♥♥

edit 1: there is only 1 timeline where gogol survives

edit 2: i typo’d on the timezone on some lines, as of ch6 everything must be in JST can’t promise it won’t change in future chaps tho fufufu
Chapter 7

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

+ …Hey.

I’m getting kinda hungry.

Think you can cook something for me? Something delicious and aromatic! I’m kinda itching for something salted… maybe a cured and salted fish? A cured and salted herring?

Fufufu, now, that’s not very nice-smelling, is it?

Are you calling me ‘stinky’? Isn’t that kind of harsh? After all, someone such as me definitely deserves the very best~♪

Fufufu, you’re glaring at me?

Ah, don’t do that.

I’m definitely going to get very hungry.

…Ah, you don’t care about that?

How about this?

Do you know what tropes are?

Eh, why aren’t you responding?

…Ah, you want me to recite its meaning?

Fufufu, that can be arranged.

A ‘trope’ is a storytelling device or convention—eh, why are you glaring at me even more? Oh, you say that I’m merely copy-pasting it from the internet? Ah, you’re such a spoilsport! But, you’re also correct, wow~ The definition did come from the internet, fufufu~

…Hmm, how about this?

Do you know what a ‘red herring’ is?

A naturally-occurring ‘red herring’ does not exist! It’s simply a herring that’s been cured via strong brine, or via heavy smoking. It results in a fish that’s so pungent, and its flesh turned red.

Fufufu~

But that’s not the red herring that I’m telling you about, is it?

Simply put, a ‘red herring’ is a clue that leads to the wrong direction. Oh, you don’t believe me? Here, you can check it yourself! I do know how to say the truth every once in a while, after all~
Eh, you don’t believe me?

How harsh, how harsh~

How about this?

Do you know what a ‘Chekhov’s Gun’ is?

It’s another trope, just like the ‘red herring’! A writer once said that if something isn’t essential, then it must not be included in a story. Conversely, it means that everything that is included in the story is essential, hmm?

Fufufu, now you’re glaring at me again.

Maybe you never stopped?

Ah, but isn’t that nice?

That just means that you’ve never stopped looking at me, the entire time, ne?

Ah, that makes me feel—

+  

XX, XX, 20XX

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Hands stack, cut and shuffle a stash of index cards much like how a gambler would shuffle cards. Unlike how gamblers would do such a thing, the pair of hands that shuffle the cards belong to two different people. But perhaps, like this, they aren’t so different. After all, they are perfectly synchronized in their motions, no words exchanged between them as to how they’ll be shuffling the deck.

Dazai’s left arm is wrapped around a lithe waist, his fingertips scratching lightly at the space just-above Chuuya’s belt. Chuuya’s right hand is busy balancing a small notebook over Dazai’s left knee, scribbling a few lines here and there. The two of them are huddled together in the middle of a very spacious bed, exchanging kisses every few moments, all the while shuffling cards with their free hands.

It’s not a standard deck.

They’re merely index cards.

If one sees it from afar, it would even look like flash cards, or study notes.

Their hands simultaneously stop shuffling.

“Ready?” Dazai asks, breathing his question directly against Chuuya’s earlobe.

Chuuya lets out a bored yawn, but the two of them concurrently pull a card from the stash with gusto. Chuuya then slaps the card right in front of Dazai’s nose; Dazai flicks the card that he picked to Chuuya’s mouth.
Slightly cross-eyed, Chuuya reads the card’s contents.

A pause, before, “…Oi, you’re doing this on purpose, aren’t you?”

“Hmm? Are you accusing me of cheating? Me?!”

“Yes.”

Dazai chuckles at that resolute response. “Conviction is all well and good, but do you have any proof, dear officer?”

“I don’t need one,” Chuuya says haughtily. “This has your stinky smell written all over it!”

“Really,” Dazai murmurs, shifting so that he’s leaning heavily over Chuuya, pushing him to lie on his back. “And how do I smell?”

“Like some stinking fish,” Chuuya responds, before tugging Dazai close to him, erasing any gap between their bodies.

The cards are then forgotten in the meantime, simply splayed out in the mattress along with their owners.

One of the cards still has an imprint of light moisture on them, from Chuuya’s lips.

Just like most of the cards in the stash, it has a name on it.

This card in particular says, ‘Tachihara Michizou’.

+ 

**JUL 7, 2015. Tuesday.**

Yokohama University Forums.
Front Page Marquee – [Breaking News] Dazai Osamu, Nakahara Chuuya, Double Suicide?!

[top comment] – those motherfuckers finally went and did it, huh
[top comment] – whoa, does this mean that i can stop getting NTR’d by my gf
[top comment] – heard it’s akutagawa who found the bodies? hmu with the deets, pls
[top comment] – SHUT UP SHUT UP SHUT UP SHU
[top comment] – man, could they not have picked a better date to fuck things up? been looking forward to the Tanabata Festival to de-stress before the exams!

Yokohama University Forums.
Application for New Forum.
Application Approved.
Set to Private.
Set to Password Protected.
Set to Invite Only.

Forum Owner Set.
Forum Moderator Set.
Forum Moderator Set.
Forum Moderator Set.
Forum Moderator Set.
Invitations Sent.
Invitations Sent.
Invitations Sent.
Invitations Sent.
Invitations Sent.
Invitations Sent.

Forum Name Set.
Private Forum, 5158 Now Open.

[01] …
[02] …
[03] …
[04] how is he?
[05] pretty shaken up
[06] guess i can’t blame him
[07] oho? did i get invited to a mourning club?
[08] shut the fuck up if you’re gonna be an asshole
[09] how bout him?
[10] he fainted
[11] … guess can’t blame him either
[12] Sakaguchi-san, thanks for approving the forum quickly.
[13] +1
[14] +1
[15] +1
[16] It’s no problem. Tsujimura-kun alerted me right away.
[17] are they really pushing for the festival?
[18] isn’t that kinda insensitive?!
[19] not just ‘kinda’, it’s really insensitive!
[20] School Faculty insists. We’ll just have to relocate and use the Track Field instead.
[21] must be pretty busy
[22] It is. I will not be able to… help out much, my apologies.
[23] Sakaguchi-san, Kunikida-san is looking for you!
[24] Is that so? I’ll log off then.
[25] Bye
[26] See ya
[27] Before I leave, just one last thing. Did any of you know if Chuuya-kun was wearing his hat yesterday?
[28] …
[29] …
[30] he’s always worn it, right?
[31] or brought it
[32] or hid it in his locker
[33] I heard that his hat was missing, but… it probably just got lost in the lake.
[34] can we drain the lake to search for it?
[35] … probably not
[36] why?!! It’s for chuuyasan’s sake!

+ 

JUL 8, 2015. Wednesday.

Yokohama University Forums.
Dazai looks up the window as soon as he spots a tiny shadow fall on it. He doesn’t open it from the inside though; he simply tilts his head and enjoys the show.

Electronic lock that’s made with the same technology that they use in the FBI. It’s Fitzgerald who managed to buy the technology, but of course, since the rich and powerful share a fairly incestuous and cannibalistic relationship, Fitzgerald has so generously sold a part of it to its highest bidder. Mori’s barely inched past Verlaine to buy it.

But it doesn’t seem to matter.

Dazai’s desk is pressed flush against the wall. Just above it, is a set of bulletproof glass windows. It’s tinted, but Dazai can easily spot every single twitch in Chuuya’s body as he scales down the window and starts to decode the electronic lock. Chuuya’s dressed in all black, his red hair tucked out of the way in a braided ponytail, his blue eyes veiled by wraparound sunglasses. He looks good enough to eat. Dazai licks his lips with exaggerated motions, laughing inwardly when Chuuya stiffens in front of him.
They’re separated by inches of glass, but Dazai can just hear the grinding of the chibi’s teeth.

And then, as though Dazai’s lasciviousness is all the incentive Chuuya needs, there’s a dull beeping sound, and the windows slide down.

“Congratulations, chibi cockroach,” Dazai coos, but a fist gets shoved against his face and a steel-toed boot is placed on his crotch as a warning.

*Warning?*

Fufufu, it’s an invitation.

Dazai grins as Chuuya digs his heel over the papers on his desk like it’s his right. He shifts, arches up his body so that his shoulders are flat against the back of his chair. He splay’s his legs further apart, so that Chuuya’s shoe can press harder against the tent forming on his pants.

“You said it was an emergency,” Chuuya says flatly.

Dazai tilts his head. “Did you actually believe me?”

With a snort, “Of course not.”

“It is an emergency,” Dazai drawls, grin widening as Chuuya presses hard enough for it to hurt. “I’ve been really, really thirsty.”

In fluid movements, Chuuya sinks to a half-squat on top of Dazai’s desk, keeps one foot on Dazai’s crotch as he considers the man in front of him. “I’m not your personal delivery boy.”

“Even if I pay an exorbitant delivery fee?”

“You can’t afford me,” Chuuya says with a shake of his head, lips twisting.

Dazai sighs in mock ruefulness. “Maybe you should give me a sampler first.”

“What’s the point?” Chuuya wonders, even as he inches closer anyway. “It’s not as if you’re gonna pay for it.”

“Being this close and smelling your doggy smell is bad enough,” Dazai simpers and drinks directly from Chuuya’s mouth, gathers every bit of liquid he can find by sweeping his tongue all over inside. Chuuya pulls away after nearly fifteen minutes of swapping spit with him, remarkably not looking the least strained despite the strange position.

“So?”

“There’s no use in paying you, hmm?” Dazai makes a move to tuck a stray lock of hair against Chuuya’s ear, but lets his fingers slide past and gets the sunglasses instead.

“…Oi.”

“It really is an emergency,” Dazai insists.

Chuuya’s bright blue eyes are bloodshot and there are heavy, circles under his eyes. He
looks like he haven’t slept in weeks. His complexion is a bit wan, disguised slightly by the nighttime darkness and the dim bedroom light. Still, it’s obvious that he’s very tired.

“I’m almost done,” Chuuya says with a sigh as he breaks eye-contact. He then slinks forward so that he’s kneeling on Dazai’s thighs, letting the other carry his entire weight. “Paul was adamant this gets done quickly. You?”

“Mori-san has no choice but wait for me,” Dazai remarks self-importantly. “Since you’re not around to distract me, I’ve had great progress.”

Two very different people, with very similar circumstances.

“Is that so?” Chuuya asks, without really waiting for an answer. “Is that why you called me here? To delay my work?”

Dazai grins. “To resolve my thirst emergency.”

After all, Chuuya wouldn’t have tried hard enough to escape from home if he didn’t think Dazai had an emergency. According to Dazai’s calculations, Chuuya has not had more than twenty minutes of rest in the past seventy-two hours. Chuuya has an apartment, but being the good child that he is, he does come home whenever he’s needed by his parents.

And lately, they’ve been needing him a lot.

…A brain-dead chibikko is not as fun to deal with.

Chuuya looks at him like he understands every single one of Dazai’s plans anyway. “Is that so?”

“That is so.”

+ +

**JUN 15, 2019. Saturday.**

Yokohama University Forums.
Front Page Marquee – [Breaking News] PROF FYODOR IN SPEEDOS!!!!!!!!!!

[top comment] – OMFG MY EYES
[top comment] – OMFG MY EYES ♥♥♥ thanks for the food
[top comment] – does this mean he isn’t single anymore?!

[top comment] – I heard he actually was seeing one of the kids who died 4 years ago
[top comment] – sure it’s not because he’s technically “seeing” people for counselling
[top comment] – heard he got frisky with one of them in the parking lots

[top comment] – I BET IT WAS DAZAI. THEY BOTH HAD THE FUCKBOI LOOK
[top comment] – lmao if it was dazai, nakahara would have killed him—oh oops
[top comment] – low blow man. *seeking the moderator for ban hammer*
[top comment] – if it was Nakahara they probably shopped for tacky hats together lol
[top comment] – fuck you mods, you banned me for the tacky hat comment?!
“One of these days, I’d really love to get my hands on a scalpel and then dissect Mori-san apart.”

Chuuya stops mid-yawn. “…Good morning to you too, mackerel bastard.”

“Mm, morning.” Dazai continues doodling his name on Chuuya’s skin. “Did you sleep well?”

Chuuya rolls his eyes as he wiggles his toes against the comforter. There’s just the right amount of contrast between the chilled January morning air and the combination of their body warmth. Faint sunlight streams inside Dazai’s bedroom from the glass window. “You fucking drugged me, you tell me.”

“I think you slept very well,” Dazai murmurs in satisfaction. Chuuya’s body is incredibly gifted in many ways – his quick metabolism helps keep his body lithe and his muscles toned, but it also means that most drugs won’t have their desired effect on him. “You didn’t even twitch when I started writing my name.”

Chuuya shifts and looks down on his bare stomach. And sighs. “…At least you didn’t ruin my shirt.”

“Fufufu, you’re learning to appreciate the little things in life,” Dazai teases, as he worries the skin over Chuuya’s abs. The strokes for ‘Dazai Osamu’ are done very finely and lightly, that they’ve barely broken skin and barely caused any blood to rise up. And that’s fine. It’s not like Dazai wants to bleed Chuuya out. Especially not on his bed. He’s just finished changing the sheets, after all.

“So? Why the sudden murderous longing?”

“Chuuya, I’m hurt! I’m always feeling murderous!”

“Uh-huh.” Chuuya makes a face when Dazai presses a kiss against the very thin cuts on his torso. “Did Hirotsu-san come up and see me?”

“Small as you are, Mori-san still saw you.”

Chuuya lets out a considering hum. “I slept through that?”

“You’ve been a very exhausted chibi.”

“The ‘chibi’ is fucking unnecessary.”

“Aw, stop being hard on yourself,” Dazai teases, before dragging one of Chuuya’s hands to the waistband of his boxers. “Be hard here instead.”

Chuuya throws him an incredibly dirty look. “I just woke up and you want me to throw up, is that it?”

“You’ll throw up more once you hear my news, so keep it bottled up,” Dazai advises, before, “Mori-san wants me to see a psychologist.”
“He wants that like, all the time.” Chuuya points out. “Ever since you got adopted, probably.”

“…Eh, point.” Dazai then intertwines their fingers together – mostly so Chuuya can’t pinch off his dick due to his next words. “This time, he’s booked Fyodor Dostoevsky.”

“That shady rat guy?”

Dazai nods. “That shady rat guy.”

“Pfft, you’ll probably have a field day. Maybe the two of you can speak in alien gibberish?”

“Hmm, I dunno.” Dazai smirks as he crawls up Chuuya’s body. “Fyodor-kun looks smart. Maybe he’s even as smart as me?”

Without letting Chuuya get a word edgewise, Dazai continues murmuring, “Fufufu, since he’s going to be my psychologist, maybe I’ll share to him my deepest, darkest thoughts? Maybe he’ll understand me completely? Maybe he’ll be the only person who can ever understand my plans? Maybe—”

A few moments pass.

By the time they’ve finished kissing—or in Chuuya’s case, devouring him alive—Chuuya’s mouth is blood-red. He licks his lips and makes a face at the taste of Dazai’s blood. Dazai’s mouth is an even brighter red; his eyes are the brightest with an almost manic twinkle in them.

“Fufufu, you’re jealous.” Dazai declares. “That’s good, Chuuya. Think only of me, see only me, hate me as much as I hate you.”

“I already hate you with every inch of my being,” Chuuya tells him. Instead of rage, hatred or disgust, there’s only affection in Chuuya’s gaze.

“Ah, that’s not enough.” Dazai’s eyes are filled with the same affection. “You’re very short, after all.”

+  

JUN 15, 2019. Saturday.

Private Forum, 5158 Now Open.

[xxxx3] where are we meeting for the study group?  
[xxxx4] the café if there’s space  
[xxxx5] lmao tough luck since it’s weekend  
[xxxx6] ive been wanting to try their crepes ever since kyouka-chan rec’d it!  
[xxxx7] must be good, otherwise not everyone would brave the queues  
[xxxx8] think it’s just because they have free wifi  
[xxxx9] my classmates go there because Kunikida-san apparently likes to eat there  
[xxxx10] …ah, I see.  
[xxxx11] the eyeglasses bring all the girls to the yard, huh?  
[xxxx12] I don’t see admirers lining up for Sakaguchi-san or Ranpo-san  
[xxxx13] ango-san is so obviously in pining hell  
[xxxx14] ranpo-san is too… ranpo-san
JUL 5, 2019. Friday.

- **07:55 PM JST. Sakaguchi Ango and Kunikida Doppo arrive at the local precinct.** They visit ostensibly to check up on Edogawa Ranpo and Oda Sakunosuke. Sakaguchi brings curry for Oda; Kunikida brings snacks for Edogawa. When they arrive, they witness Edogawa Ranpo insisting that the police find Nikolai Gogol immediately, claiming that Gogol’s life is in danger.

- **08:40 PM JST. Kunikida Doppo provides the local precinct with the [map of Yokohama University](https://www.yokohama-university.ac.jp) and its surrounding buildings:**
• **08:45 PM JST.** Edgar Poe, Sakaguchi Ango and Kunikida Doppo leave the local precinct. The three have offered to stay overnight with their friends, but have been asked to leave by the policemen.

• **09:00 PM JST.** Gogol’s recording pen’s contents were partially restored. The following snippet of the conversation between Nikolai Gogol (NG) and Hirotsu Ryuurou (HR) was restored:

HR: Boss did everything for the sake of Elise-chan, and then of the Mori Corporation. In a way, he
was also protecting Yokohama’s interests.
NG: Somehow I don’t buy that ‘Mori Ougai is an actual angel’ spiel.

HR: Think what you will. But Boss had good intentions. Better than yours, if I may be so bold to say.
NG: Fufufu, no offense taken. So you’re saying, Mori might be an asshole, but there are much bigger assholes out there?

HR: Nothing so crude. Though I suppose you are familiar with that kind of greater evil.
NG: Fufufu, careful there. I’m fine with getting insulted, but don’t bring Dos-kun into this, mmkay?

HR: It pains me to think of how you’re able to do your job, being so… emotional.
NG: Aren’t you familiar with being biased too, Hirotsu Ryuurou-san?

HR: Hmm.
NG: And I suppose you’re saying that Fukuzawa knows about Mori’s intentions?

HR: Well. They did adopt Elise-chan together.
NG: Fufufu. And then? Once she died, so did their lovelife?

HR: …a crude assessment, but essentially yes.

- **10:00 PM JST. Police discovers a burner phone left behind in Nikolai Gogol’s overcoat.**
  Nikolai Gogol did not bring his overcoat with him when he left for the Mori Mansion. The following messages are sent there from Nikolai Gogol’s phone number:

  **Tayama Katai used to work for Francis Fitzgerald. Paul Verlaine bought him out of his original contract and have given him a new identity, Katayama Katai, as of January 2013.**
  **Paul Verlaine’s IT Securities Company was opened in January 2013.**
  **Shibusawa Tatsuhiko’s latest project regarding the algal bloom mutations were funded by several anonymous donors and shell companies. Amongst the donors were Paul Verlaine, Mori Ougai and Francis Fitzgerald. The project was supposed to study the mutations to determine if they could be induced in human organs to induce regeneration.**
  **Dazai Osamu and Nakahara Chuuya were working to steal Shibusawa Tatsuhiko’s research under the behest of their respective families.**

- Fyodor Dostoevsky is not and will never be X.
- Oda Sakunosuke is danger——

+ XX, XX, 20XX

“I finally found some info!”

“Thanks to my lovely self,” Dazai says self-importantly. He dodges a punch from Chuuya by rolling around the bed.
“You did absolutely nothing, you waste of breathing space,” Chuuya says as caustically as he can. But because he’s Chuuya and because he’s dealing with Dazai, it sounds very sweet anyway. “You were just eating popcorn! On my bed! Fuck you very much if I get ants on my bed!”

“What position?”

“Urgh,” Chuuya groans empathically, before rolling towards Dazai as well. “I’m so tired.”

“Getting fucked might relax you,” Dazai offers, trailing his fingers like tracing spider-trails all over Chuuya’s cheeks.

“Getting killed might shut you up forever,” Chuuya bites back, but rolls over Dazai so he’s using Dazai as a mattress. “The Christie Family is way ahead of us, I didn’t expect that.”

“They’re hiring foreign hands,” Dazai murmurs thoughtfully. “Those with very clean backgrounds too.”

“So clean it’s suspicious.”

“And our suspicions bore fruit.”

“Hmm.”

Chuuya feels his eyelids drifting close. He really is tired.

“Do you think someone will look back on us, in the future,” Dazai muses idly, “and wonder about our relationship?”

“What’s up with that?”

“Will someone do a background check on us too?”

“They’ll find out that you’re a massive asshole ever since birth,” Chuuya points out meanly. “They’ll find that I’m the same.”

“No way,” Dazai says with a laugh. “I’m definitely taller than you, no way you’re the same as me.”

“I’m gonna fucking gut you.”

“I don’t mind.” Dazai wraps his hands around Chuuya’s neck, not tight enough to restrict airflow, but not loose enough that it can be ignored. “I hate pain, but if it’s Chuuya… you can kill me quickly, right?”

“No way.” Chuuya responds with a laugh of his own. “If I’m killing you, I’m going to torture the hell out of you first.”

“Ah, kinky.”

“It’s not supposed to be!”

“It will be,” Dazai says with conviction. “But in the end, dying in a double suicide is still the most romantic, ne? We can look deeply into each other’s eyes as we die.”
Chuuya raises an eyebrow.

“…Aw, your dying moments will be spent with you on your tiptoes, how sad~” Dazai teases, and sticks his tongue out. Chuuya doesn’t need further invitation.

After a few moments, Dazai then follows it up with a breathless, “Fufufu, that or a neck cramp. Maybe a double suicide on a body of water will be best then.”

“Sounds like you’ve got it all planned out.”

“Mm, we could do it on July 7 for the Tanabata symbolism!”

“You’re so full of shit.”

“Think of it this way,” Dazai cajoles. “You can be Orihime, too busy weaving computer viruses for your father. And then, once you meet me, Hikoboshi, you stop being a workaholic who wants to please your family!”

Chuuya snorts. “So, you’re saying that you influenced me to be a slacker like you?”

“We fall in love at first sight,” Dazai continues loftily, “and our parents thought that they could use us against each other, underestimating the power of our love.”

“No, no, no, I wanted to punch you at first sight,” Chuuya corrects the very inaccurate retelling. “In fact, I did punch you at first sight!”

“Chuuya’s such a weirdo, punching his crush, huh?”

“No, I punched an annoying asshole.” Chuuya rolls his eyes as he lands a light punch on Dazai’s forehead.

“And then, our parents did their best to separate us,” Dazai adds. “And then we become star-crossed lovers, like Romeo and Juliet! And then, we’ll prove our love by doing a romantic double suicide!”

“…There’s no double suicide in the Tanabata legend, you asshole!”

“Eh, we’ll be owning our version.”

“You just really want the double suicide, huh…”

“It’d be great, ne?” Dazai asks dreamily. “I hate you so much and I’d hate for you to die on another person’s hands.”

“Pfft. If you let yourself be killed,” Chuuya promises, “I’d resurrect you just so I could kill you over again.”

“Wouldn’t that be the best? If we can die and resurrect, so we can kill each other again?”

“You’re such an idiot, I don’t know why I even bother with you,” Chuuya says despondently, but he kisses Dazai anyway.

JUL 5, 2019. Friday.
• 11:59 PM JST. Protection detail has been assigned on Edogawa Ranpo. Edogawa Ranpo agrees to stay on the local precinct.

JUL 6, 2019. Saturday.

• 02:27 AM JST. Yokohama Hospital’s power goes out. The last thing captured on the CCTV on the front desk is the sight of two foreign-looking people arriving together. One is a tall man with pale silver hair. He is accompanied by a woman whose head is level with the man’s chest. The woman is wearing a fancy dress and has a frilly umbrella. By the time the CCTV cuts out, the man is pressing something on the phone and the woman is pulling out a katana from the umbrella’s handle.

DING DONG~★

Ahh… I’m so demotivated…

So boring, so boring!

This chapter is so boring!

Who even wants all these flashbacks?!

I want to see murder, murder!

Something that can make my heart race!

…ah, but my heart did race a couple of times… hmm, but I still want murder!

How about you make my heart race even more, instead?

Come here—

Oh.

You don’t want to?

Why not?

…Ah, are you shy?

Fufufu, you’re shy!

Oh, is it because we have someone peeking on us?

…Ah, there is someone peeking on us.

A Reader?

Fufufu, there is a Reader peeking!

How cute, how cute~

How about this then, Reader?
Please do submit your votes in the comments section of Yokohama University Forums below, as to who you think is one of X’s accomplices! If you want to curse out the incompetence of the policemen, feel free to do so! I believe the official hashtag is #BSDLiarAU? Yokohama University Forums apparently also has an anonymous messaging option called CuriousCat?

In any case, do submit your guesses!

And if I’m feeling up for it, then I shall spend Saturday hunting down your suspect! Who knows, I may also want to cut them down?

For now though… please stop peeking, I want to show my darling just how much I love them so~♪

Chapter End Notes

ahhh... my work is murdering me... next chapter... this weekend, probably? ^^-;

for now, a guessing game from our new narrator-kun!

please comment on the usual places (below/twitter/curiouscat) as to who you think is one of X’s accomplices ♥ depending on who wins, new narrator-kun promises to hunt them down for you!
Chapter 8

Chapter Summary

Dazai Osamu and Nakahara Chuuya have returned back to life!

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

+ …Oh.
You’re here, Reader?

Can you do me a solid and try to stay as quiet as possible? I promise I’m not off to do anything too nefarious~ It’s just that, you’ve caught me at a bad time? No, that’s not really true. No time I spend with my darling can be considered as a ‘bad time’, after all.

It’s just that, my darling has just fallen asleep. He’s very exhausted recently, but especially so today.

I know… I know that making him experience fatigue now isn’t the best of things, but… It can’t be helped.

After all…

If one pays up a loss upfront – a profit that’s a hundred times greater can be made…

Isn’t that right?

Ah, but I’m digressing, aren’t I?

All I ask is that you keep quiet, Reader.

My darling finds it hard to fall asleep, so it’d be great if he can keep on sleeping a little while longer.

…Me?

Fufufu, I sleep the sleep of the innocent lambs.

As much as I’d like to stare at my darling the entire time, there are things I must do, hmm?

Ah, let me just tiptoe out of our bed…

Ah, the computers are quiet.

It’s shaping up to be a quiet night, isn’t it?

Ah, but it’s early Saturday morning already…

I’ll just bring a laptop to the desk right outside of the bedroom. That way, I can watch over my
darling’s sleep even as I check on things.
A win-win, isn’t it?
Fufufu, that’s my favorite kind of ending.

JUL 6, 2019. Saturday.

- 02:38 AM JST. Power returns to Yokohama Hospital. Antidotes to the unknown poison that had caused Fukuzawa Yukichi and Mori Ougai to fall into a chemical coma have been found on their respective hospital beds.

On the rose garden of the Mori Mansion, one of the reportedly-missing katana was found. Analysis on the katana indicates that this katana had fingerprints from Fukuzawa Yukichi. It strongly suggests that Fukuzawa Yukichi had wielded this katana recently. It can be presumed that he did it in a confrontation that resulted in the ransacked state of the Mori Mansion Study. The blade had a slight chip on it; it suggests that the blade went up against a very strong surface.

Ah.

Those two are going to wake up in a couple of hours.

Wouldn’t it be interesting to see what they’d do after?

And speaking of what to do afterwards…

Let me check on your answers from the Forum!

Last time, I asked you for your votes as to who I will hunt down, correct?

Ah, oops, I asked you for who X’s accomplice is, my bad, my bad.

The votes… hmm.

The following had one vote each: Fukuzawa Yukichi, Akutagawa Gin, Yosano Akiko, Edogawa Ranpo, Paul Verlaine, and Fyodor Dostoevsky.

And the one who had the most votes—

Oda Sakunosuke.

…

…

…

…

Fufufu—fufuhahahaha—hahahahaha!
This is great, this is great!

Ahahahaha, Readers, I am going to thank you for this! To be honest, while the thought of Oda Sakunosuke getting picked has always been in the cards, I did not actually expect that he’d win the vote! This is great, ah, this is perfect! Thank you very much for having the courage to vote, even though I know the hits on this private thread has dropped a lot recently. I know a lot of you are afraid that you’d end up voting for someone to die! So, I am grateful! I am thankful!

Fuhahahahaha—!

Isn’t it great—?

Thank you for allowing my darling’s wish to come to fruition!

Oh.

You’re awake?

Forgive me for waking you up, but I have some good news to share!

Have you seen the votes?

Fufufufu, it’s a cause for celebration~!

Let’s dance, my dearest, let’s dance the night away~!

Ah, you don’t understand why I’m giddy with happiness?

Fufufu, don’t lie to me, dearest, I know you understand me very well.

This is the perfect excuse, isn’t it? The perfect opportunity!

Fufufu, with the way things are going, Edogawa Ranpo will surely want to eventually go out with his protection detail! He’ll leave the police precinct! And then, Oda Sakunosuke will be left with minimal supervision.

Fufufufufufufu, isn’t it great?

No, no, don’t pout, you don’t have a reason to be jealous! My excitement isn’t because I’ll see another person! My excitement is because I know that you’ve longed for this moment for a long time, haven’t you?

Darling, we can go there and lop off his head~♥!

…Ah.

My darling is feeling irritable.

He looks so cute like that, but it’s not like you’d know, hmm?

It’s better that way, don’t you think?

Anyone who’s seen him—

Fufufu, anyone who’s seen him all end up captivated by him.

And if you, Reader, end up getting captivated too…
I’m not as proficient with the sword, but I can certainly lop off your head too, you know?

+ 


Dazai grins as he digs the ballpoint pen against his ‘diary’. He keeps his teeth bared as he stares at his psychologist.

“I heard from a little birdie that you’re seeing a student, Professor,” Dazai says with ill-concealed poison. “Isn’t that a little too illegal?”

“I am,” Dostoevsky admits with a serene smile. “I am seeing you regularly, right? Every two Tuesdays.”

“Oh, is that so?” Dazai tilts his head to the right and exposes the line of his neck. He’s carefully chosen a thinner shirt today, unbuttoned at the collar. Plausible deniability about the muggy weather. Chuuya tells him that he looks like a massive asshole, but he says that every day anyway. “Our relationship is so serious, should I introduce you to my parents?”

Dostoevsky’s smile doesn’t falter, but Dazai isn’t done. “Oh, my bad, that’s not necessary, is it? After all, you’re working for Mori-san to begin with.”

+ 

Ah…

What to do?

I’m still giddy.

My darling is all wrapped up in blankets, like a very tasty sushi roll!

I’ll join him in a short while, but I just need to—

Ah, ah, ah, not too fast, Reader, I’m not about to reveal all my secrets yet!

“A secret makes a woman, woman”, after all~

…Eh? You say that I plagiarized that line from an anime character? You’re wrong! I shamelessly copied it from an anime character, there’s a difference!

…Eh? You say that I’m not a woman at all?

Fufufu, that is true.

But I’m still so giddy in anticipation for what tomorrow shall bring!

Ah, how about I reward you, Reader?

Oda Sakunosuke is not one of X’s accomplices!

And yet, I shall happily hunt him down!

Fufufufufufuhahahaha~♪♪♪
What else, what else?

Ah, how about this!

After the Kayak Club’s disbandment, most of its members ended up joining the Kendo Club!

The Kendo Club… it’s one of Yokohama University’s most prestigious clubs, after all. Amongst its alumni include Fukuzawa Yukichi, Ozaki Kouyou and Mori Ougai! Even Paul Verlaine once graced its club’s halls as a guest instructor! Most of the kayak club members joined, but the ones who remained there for years are Izumi Kyouka, Tachihara Michizou, Higuchi Ichiyou and Akutagawa Gin. For the club membership surge, they even had to ask another professor to co-supervise the club!

…Ah, you’re wondering about the club?

Since Yokohama University is an escalator-type of school, they allow students from all levels to join the same club! Of course, the club’s activities divide them into their respective levels, but it’s not unheard of for students of different levels mingling with each other during club activities!

…Oh, you’re wondering how about Dazai Osamu and Nakahara Chuuya?

Why would they join the Kendo Club after the Kayak Club’s disbandment?

They’ve already been part of the Kendo Club before?

Also, as the culprits behind the Kayak Club’s disbandment, those two were banned from joining or creating any clubs, fufufu~

Oh, you’re interested in news about them?

…Hmm.

How about this?

**X’s motive is Nakahara Chuuya’s existence.**

Without Nakahara Chuuya, there’d be no X.

…Fufufu, and isn’t it sad, X? Because even without X, Nakahara Chuuya existed. Even without X, Nakahara Chuuya ceased to exist.

Ah, but I can’t make fun of X too much.

It’s a sentiment I agree with all too clearly.

But I know what you’re after, Reader.

I don’t believe it will help you, but:

**Dazai Osamu and Nakahara Chuuya have returned back to life!**

…Eh?

Where’s my applause?

Is that not exciting enough?
Maybe you’d be more excited to know about the packages I’m working on?

Oh, you don’t know I’m working on packages?

Fufufufufufu, don’t blame me for not foreshadowing my movements enough, I’ve been doing the packaging during my flashbacks!

I’m packing very important gifts, you see.

One to Yokohama Hospital, a get-well-soon gift to Mori Ougai.

One to the undisclosed address where Fyodor Dostoevsky is hiding at the moment.

They’re very, very important gifts.

Think of them as… oversized bowling balls. With more holes? Fufufufu.

I wonder how Mori and Dostoevsky would react upon seeing my gifts to them?

I can’t wait, I can’t wait!

Ah, there you go again, Reader, looking at me weirdly.

I know, I know, you prefer Gogol-kun’s enthusiasm!

He really was enthusiastic, wasn’t he?

He was pretty honest too. Very helpful too. If not for his unfortunate affliction of being in love with Fyodor Dostoevsky and therefore, biased, about him, he would have been the perfect narrator, even.

Alas, he was a flawed human being.

But you shouldn’t waste his words, you know?

He already gave you ample clues to X’s identity, you know?

Did you really listen to his words?

Fufufu, even the author left a lot of notes for you, you know?

But don’t worry too much.

Finding X at this point would not really change a lot of things, you see?

X is already too far-gone at this point. X’s plans are already too far-gone.

…plans?

Did X even have them?

Fufufu, X is a pretty simple one, isn’t he?

Of course, that’s compared to the wonderful me!

Of course, everyone compared to me would be very simple!

Ah.
You’re unimpressed, Reader?
I’ll be blunt, I don’t really care~
I only have my darling in my eyes, after all~
…Eh?
You’re awake?
Eh?!
You’re unimpressed too?!
Nooo, don’t be like that, being that stingy means you have such a tiny heart!
You should praise me, I did a lot of work!
Yes, yes, our gifts are all packed up!
No, no, nothing will leak out of the packaging box, don’t worry, don’t worry~
Ah.
You’re getting shy again?
Okay, let me chase the Reader off, then I can accompany you in bed?
…Ah, so you heard that.
I think I’ve given you enough already, but if you really insist on staying to watch me and my darling
until I give you a clue… ah, I can’t bear someone looking at my darling… make sure you listen to
me really well, okay?
The cards left behind on the crime scenes, the messages from X – they all point to X’s identity!

**Statements in bold mean that they’re the absolute truth!** Of course, whether an absolute truth
exists… **Statements in bold mean they’re the absolute truth to the best of the speaker’s ability!**

With that said: Shibusawa Tatsuhiko wrote the book ‘Introduction to Witchcraft’ as a coded
version of his recipe for the medicine-turned-poison he was researching!

…Ah, I’d love to chat more, but my darling is looking so lonely and beautiful in a big bed… I can’t
leave him for too long, really.

So I’ll have to go—

Ah.

One last thing:

The humans named ‘Nathaniel Hawthorne’ and ‘Margaret Mitchell’ are already dead before
July 6, 2019!

Now, Reader, it’s time for the last voting game!
Submit your complete guesses for the identity of X and the two accomplices!

After that—

Well, you can sit back and watch as how everyone’s choices unfold.

As for me?

My choice is always to be with my darling, in life or in death.

Chapter End Notes

*as new narrator-kun says, it's time for the final votes! after that, there won't be further guessing games, as we'll move to the final stages of the story :D♥ (of course, you can still change guesses/etc after that, but there won't be 'crossroads' anymore lol)

*voting will be open until JUL 27, 2019, 11PM JST. you may leave your comments below/in twitter/in #BSDLiarAU/curiouscat, as always ♥♥♥

*thank you so much for joining this ride - we're reaching the end (and therefore, the explanations to the mystery) soon! ♥
Chapter 9

Chapter Summary

a series of unfortunate (?) events that happen in the past...

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

+  

JUN 30, 2013. Saturday.

This year’s party, like the previous years that have passed and the future years that will come to pass, is held in one of the four mansions belonging to Yokohama’s top elite. It won’t be an exaggeration to call this a melting pot of the entire country, no, even the entire continent’s richest folk. Just like always, on the surface, this is a party performed under societal expectations of a modern-day noblesse oblige.

This year’s charity beneficiary is a new program to benefit poor, woeful children who are suffering from diseases that have no found cures yet. Supposedly to help raise funds for further research. Despite the party being hosted by the Christie family, Mori Ougai takes center-stage as he tearfully recounts the ill fate of his beloved daughter. Those in the know alternate between watching Mori’s performance and Fukuzawa Yukichi’s tight-lipped expression.

The Christie Mansion rises above its manicured grounds with its Gothic architecture, looking very much like a medieval European castle that has been plucked out of the Continent and set on Japanese soil. Yokohama, being a very important port city, is very welcoming of foreign influences compared to the rest of the country, so this kind of unrestrainedly-foreign design is looked upon with calculating gazes rather than outright disdain. Even though the Fitzgerald and Verlaine families also have foreign roots, it seems that this year’s Christie Family wanted to flex their muscles by inviting more foreign businessmen to join the party.

…It’s all boring to him.

Dazai doesn’t bother suppressing a yawn as he halfheartedly pokes at the baked lobster on his plate.

Dazai’s grown tired of trying to track down today’s guest of honor, a scientist with Rapunzel-like long hair, silver and braided in parts. He has a pair of bodyguards with him – but as required on this year’s party, the bodyguards are wearing black masks to separate them from the actual guests. All Dazai can see is that the two bodyguards look sturdy; one of them has tufts of red hair sticking out of the mask, while the other’s long pale-gray hair slips out in a ponytail at the back of his mask. There are gun holsters on their pants, but as is part of this party’s rules, no weapons can be brought inside the Christie Mansion.

…How boring.

Dazai doesn’t suppress another yawn.

This time, he gets a sharp kick under the table for his efforts.
Dazai raises an eyebrow at the person opposite him. Under the lights of the chandeliers decorating the huge banquet hall, Chuuya’s eyes shine like sapphires. There’s a red ribbon woven around the asymmetrically-long lock of hair over his shoulder. Dazai has the sudden urge to pluck the ribbon loose, mess up Chuuya’s looks. Chuuya, as though sensing his less than charitable thoughts, kicks him again.

“Amazing,” Dazai says flatly. “Chuuya’s short legs can actually reach mine? This is breaking news!”

“I’ll break your leg,” Chuuya punctuates his threat with a cutting glare.

It’s just a shame, really, that Dazai is quite enamored with the color blue, so all it brings Dazai is a sense of excitement. Dazai’s lips stretch into the type of smirk that’s been specially curated for the sole purpose of pissing Chuuya off.

Thankfully for the two of them and their antics, they’ve been seated on the end of the long table they’re in. The only onlooker they have to bother with is Agatha on Dazai’s left; she doesn’t roll her eyes, but she does sharply rise from her seat the moment the two of them start playing footsie with each other.

Raising his own leg after slipping off his shoe, Dazai wiggles his toes against the seam of Chuuya’s pants, smirk widening when Chuuya practically saws off the steak and the plate it’s on, their eye contact maintained throughout it all.

The floor-length tablecloth helps disguise their actions, but it’s really unnecessary. Because most of the guests are here with their own agenda; nobody else can be bothered to pay attention to these two youngsters, prized additions they might be to their respective families. After all, those in the know are aware of the rumors that these two are not... quite right.

Chuuya eventually asks, with the air of someone who’s biting his tongue as he does small-talk, “Have you finished your part in the group project?”

“What’s the point?” It’s a rhetorical question. Their paths to stay and coast in Yokohama University is set in stone, even without their abilities. “How about yours?”

“What’s the point?” Chuuya volleys his question back to him.

The two of them exchange flat smiles, before continuing to eat on the surface, while their feet alternate between kicking each other and trying to drag their zippers down underneath.

An hour passes like that, until the number of guests start to thin.

It’s time for the real party.

Dazai sighs as he tucks his foot back into his shoe; Chuuya similarly straightens his posture as he stands up. Both of them have no trace of dishevelment or excitement – limpid calm washes over their expressions as they walk with squared shoulders, using different routes, using two different doors tucked on opposite sides of the grand spiral staircase that serves as the centerpoint of the huge banquet hall.

It’s pretty much done for the sake of symbolism, because the two of them end up meeting in the same large conference room that looks like it’s lifted out of a sci-fi movie, absolutely jarring inside a medieval mansion design.

A conference room isn’t complete without a huge table in the middle. Giving off the impression that it’s a meeting of the Knights of the Round Table, or something equally dramatic, the major invitees
take their places with a solemn air.

Agatha Christie accompanies her parents at the head of the table. She then gives a graceful curtsy to the guest of honor, Shibusawa Tatsuhiko, as he takes his place on the right-hand seat of the Christie Family Head. Shibusawa’s bodyguards are not allowed from entering the conference room—a show of forced trust and goodwill. There is nothing that will harm him here, so he does not need arms.

Dazai yawns again, but more discreetly this time. He’s seated by Mori’s left, but at a chair that’s pushed back a little bit in a display of hierarchy. Hirotsu-san takes the seat on Mori’s right-hand side. Dazai’s position is mirrored on the opposite side by Chuuya, so he takes care to lick his lips and mimic biting off the other’s mouth. For his part, Chuuya rolls his eyes and slowly slides his index finger against the bob of his Adam’s apple, a promise to hurt Dazai clear in the decisiveness of his gesture.

Paul Verlaine sits at the exact opposite of Mori, his right-hand side occupied by his husband, Arthur. Right across the Christie Family Head is Francis Fitzgerald along with his sick wife—completing the occupancy of the four cardinal directions of the conference table. The seats in-between these four family heads are occupied by various local and foreign businessmen and high-level government officials.

Dazai zones out during the perfunctory introduction phase; everyone knows everyone prior to this meeting anyway. If there’s someone who’s here who didn’t do proper research… then, they don’t deserve to be here. The hardware used in this conference room is top-of-the-line technology, the closest that Dazai has seen to holographic technology to be used as functional computer touchscreen displays. He rests his cheek on his upturned palm, not bothering to open his computer display.

Why should he?

He already knows what they’re talking about.

Plus, the display would get in the way of him staring at Chuuya.

Chuuya, who’s also not using the computer display provided by the Christie Family. But he isn’t staring at Dazai back. His gaze is half-lidded, looking particularly eye-catching, but he’s clearly focusing on a device on his lap. Dazai smoothes a laugh; like everyone else, Verlaine is using this meeting to get ahead of everyone. He probably ordered Chuuya to show off the new gadget that they’ve developed.

Some high-value deals have been made between several businessmen that would never admit to having close ties with each other in public. Some surveillance equipment and fuel for some nuclear tests are traded; money changes hands in untraceable transactions. Shell companies are traded and signed away for so-and-so amounts.

Dazai tries to smother another yawn.

And then—

“—congratulations on your work on the immortal jellyfish.”

Shibusawa Tatsuhiko, this year’s guest of honor, inclines his head, eyes looking very much like a dead fish. Dazai can understand. This meeting has been very boring after all.

“It was a boring study,” Shibusawa then says, his elbows on the tabletop as he folds his fingers together. “While I was able to extract several pertinent enzymes, it was not feasible to replicate its effects on human organs.”
“Not feasible,” Mori says. “But not completely impossible, if given enough resources.”

“Maybe not on whole human organs, but perhaps on a smaller scale at first,” Verlaine then adds.

“Will you provide me with research material?” Shibusawa asks, straightforward. “As I’m sure you’ve already analyzed my research paper, you’re all aware of the one thing I lack the most.”

Fitzgerald claps his hand briskly. “I’m sure that the Languishing Children Charity that Christie had invited for this year would be very helpful on that front.”

Christie ignores the erroneous charity name. “We look forward to Natsume-san’s cooperation this year too.”

“The project will take years as I perfect the formula,” Shibusawa tells them, with the air of someone who’s sure they’d bend to his wills anyway. It’s justified, because which rich egomaniac hasn’t dreamt of immortality?

Dazai drums his fingers lightly over the tabletop. All the people in this room are eyeing Shibusawa’s research greedily. It wouldn’t be surprising if people get killed over in their race to find the answer to eternal life. Eternal rejuvenation—fufufu, what a silly pipedream. They wish to ignore the safeguards that nature has provided over human cells that prevent them from replenishing itself over and over. No, they wish to induce something like a cancerous propagation of cells, but in a controlled manner. They wish to play god.

It’s all so boring.

He senses Chuuya’s gaze on him, so he gives the other a wink.

Chuuuya rolls his eyes and Dazai feels the slightest bit interested in living until next week at least, so he can see just displeased Chuuya is with him.

+  

**JUL 1, 2013. Sunday.**

“Dazai-kun, I have an assignment for you.”

Dazai skewers the cherry tomatoes in his plate in a gruesome manner, letting the juices spurt out to the neighboring vegetables. He makes a barely-audible sound of assent.

“I trust you have the skills to seduce the monster child of Verlaine.” Mori says placidly as though he isn’t instructing his son to do despicable things. He takes a sip of his coffee leisurely, before, “That child might be a monster, but when he’s lucid, he’s very capable, just like you, Dazai-kun.”

“I’m taller than him,” is what Dazai offers in return.

After all, this isn’t a surprising turn of events.

Ever since they’ve been introduced, Dazai’s already expecting this kind of instructions. To be honest, he’s actually known all along that Mori’s only introduced him to Chuuya for the sole purpose of Dazai seducing him—and using him as a means to get insider information on Verlaine’s businesses.

“And should Chuuya-kun not be capable of getting his hands on Shibusawa-kun’s research,” Mori continues, re-confirming Dazai’s idea that Shibusawa’s research isn’t *as much* of a failure as he had
disclosed to the public, “then Verlaine will certainly offer him up as a research subject. After all, nobody’s been able to diagnose him properly and what better way to test for a panacea than brain damage?”

Dazai doesn’t falter in playing with his food, even as he gets a confirmation of what they plan to do with Chuuya. He eyes Mori thoughtfully. After all, he’s in the same boat as Chuuya. All the psychologists that have—discreetly, that is—tried to diagnose him have failed spectacularly. Mori wouldn’t offer him up for illegal clinical tests, not until he’s at least sure of a good chance of it working.

So it’s definitely Chuuya on the chopping block first.

…Hmm.

Wonder what Chuuya would think once he learns just how much he’s worth to his parents’ eyes—not just them, but to the eyes of the world?

Of course, there are countless, clueless children that will also be used as possible test subjects, but Dazai doesn’t personally know them so he doesn’t bother wasting time trying to wonder about their reactions.

…Ah.

Is this how it feels to—

“It will make for a good story,” Mori adds after a few more moments of them calmly continuing to eat their breakfasts. “Something like Romeo and Juliet, perhaps. And in the end, you will also get a poison in your hands.”

Oh?

“Is that so? Will Mori-san finally give me the poison that he’s promised me?”

The only reason why Dazai allowed himself to be adopted into the Mori Family is because, on that fateful day, Mori had promised to give him a sure-kill poison that will take him out of this boring, stifling world. Of course, Mori’s shady antics made him renege on his promise multiple times, but this is the first time in years that he’s actually brought up the poison on his own.

“Get your hands on Shibusawa-kun’s complete research,” Mori promises with an utterly calm smile. “And that poison is yours.”

+ 


“…why the fuck am I ‘Juliet’?!”

Dazai chortles as he avoids Chuuya’s punches, backpedalling until his back is resting against the weeping willow’s trunk. Chuuya corners him and digs his hands against his ribs, his stomach.

Summertime songs of the cicadas punctuate the silence that surround them. Usually, there’s a lot of people in the area, mostly teenage girls who blatantly cheer for various kayak club members to get drenched. However, exams are coming up, resulting in this secluded grove becoming quiet for a little while longer.
Chuuya’s eyes are blazing once he pulls back, retreating from his tiptoe because Dazai so does enjoy making things difficult for the chibi. Especially because he knows that despite Chuuya’s complaints, he’d still willingly kiss him anyway.

“It’d be illogical for Mori-san to consider me the ‘Juliet’ in this scenario.”

“Why must there be a ‘Juliet’, anyway?!?” Chuuya continues griping, truly focusing on the wrong thing. “It’s already 2013, for fuck’s sake!”

“Pfft, you’re so silly.”

“You’re even stupider,” Chuuya tells him very sincerely. “Why bother telling me these things? I knew all along that you kept on stalking me because you had a hidden agenda.”

Dazai blinks, and then, “Ano ne, Chuuya. Maybe you should volunteer to be a test subject. Your brain has clearly shriveled up and died from all your tacky hats. I, Dazai Osamu, have never stalked you! Why would I do such a wasteful thing? Ahh, you’re so irritating!”

“Don’t bring my hats into this,” Chuuya says and hikes his knee up against Dazai’s groin. “You throw a hissy fit when I don’t respond to you after five fucking minutes! You keep on asking various people to tail me and report to you what I’m doing!”

Dazai rests his hands on Chuuya’s ass, thrusting Chuuya forward so that he ends up kneeling him harder. “Are you projecting yourself on me? Fufufu, chibi, I know I’m irresistible and taller, but there’s no need to do so! It’s impossible for you to be as extravagant, extraordinary or excellent as me! Better quit while you’re ahead!”

“You too,” Chuuya says with a wicked smirk. “Better quit talking or I’ll shove my fist down your throat.”

Dazai takes a deep breath, before letting out a shuddering, “Ah.”

“You’re absolutely disgusting,” Chuuya tells him with great gravitas. “Also, I never stalked you. I’d never be so wasteful of my time!”

“Fufufu, I know that you’ve already hacked into this school’s CCTV circuits.” Dazai says this so plainly, as he starts to slide down on the tree trunk. He’d prefer to have Chuuya climb him up like a tree, but he… doesn’t want to strain his legs, okay. Chuuya, despite being a chibikko, despite being an airhead, is quite heavy for his size. Must be all of stupid muscles. It wouldn’t surprise Dazai if Chuuya’s bones are actually made of metal. “If I open your laptop, I’m sure that I’ll find a folder reserved for screenshot of my face~♪”

“Fuck you! Why the fuck would I do such a disgusting thing?!”

As soon as his backside meets the ground, Dazai stretches out his legs so that Chuuya can sit on his lap. Dazai then moves one of his hands so he can pat Chuuya’s head and unceremoniously flick his hat somewhere far away. “Don’t worry, chibi, I already have a full hard drive with screenshots of you drooling or chewing your pen, like a dog.”

It’s Chuuya’s turn to blink. “You hacked my computer?!”

“Mou, why would you accuse me of that?” Dazai tilts his head and smiles when Chuuya also tilts his head—so he can bite Dazai’s wrist. Truly an unruly dog. “I could have hacked into the university’s cameras too!”
“Why would you bother to do that when you can be a lazyass and just hack into mine,” Chuuya asks flatly.

Dazai’s smile widens. “So you admit that you stalk me?”

Chuuya harrumphs and asks, “So you admit that you stalk me?”

The two of them are locked in a stalemate, before Chuuya licks the reddened skin he just bit. Against Dazai’s wrist, he murmurs, “Stop telling Akutagawa and Gin to tail me.”

“If you stop telling your lackeys to tail me,” Dazai counters, pouting. “It’s so not fair, Akutagawa-kun and Gin-chan are supposed to be my children, but why do they like you better, why do I have such stupid children?!”

“Stop calling them children!”

“How?” Dazai lets his fingers walk spider-trails so that he’s exploring Chuuya’s face, like he’s done so many times before. “Does it excite you, the thought of getting me pregnant?”

“I am very horrified for the world,” Chuuya corrects him. “Whoever would be your kids… pfft. I can’t even imagine it. It’s too horrible.”

“If I’d have horrible kids, it’s because their mother has ugly genes.” Dazai smiles beatifically, knocking at Chuuya’s forehead. “It’s very disheartening to discover that I’m destined to have ugly kids then. Ah, why did their mother have to be such an airhead, stupid, ugly person with a taste for tacky hats?”

Chuuya’s face is flushed – a combination of the summertime humidity, embarrassment, his usual anger for Dazai. Or maybe because Dazai’s other hand has remained on Chuuya’s ass the entire time they were talking, controlling the undulations of Chuuya’s hips over his.

“This topic is so disgusting, I want to bleach my brain.”

“And yet you’re hard.”

“You’re hard too!”

“I’m not the one complaining about the topic, Juliet.”

“Urgh, shut up.” Chuuya wrings his neck. “I ought to just strangle you to shut you up.”

“Oh, that reminds me, you’ve promised to let me drown you! Let’s do it during exam week?”

“What.”

“You’re so testy,” Dazai says with a snigger. “Are you annoyed that you can’t fuck me to silence?”

Chuuya gives him a very flat glare. “I’m annoyed by everything about you.”

“Oh, I can understand. The person I hate the most in this world is Chuuya, after all.” Dazai dreamily says. “So much, that I dream of killing you with my own hands.”

“Me too,” Chuuya whispers. “I hate you the most too, Dazai.”

“That’s why, until we can kill each other,” Dazai promises, eyes bright, “we must absolutely survive, okay, Chuuya? I would never allow you to die by someone else’s hands.”
“Anyone who wants to kill you…” Chuuya trails off, before he ends his promise against Dazai’s mouth, “…will perish by my hands. No matter who they are.”

“No matter who?”

“No matter who.”

XX, XX, 2013

“Oh? You’re not with your other half?”

“He’s trying to win over our kids.” Dazai hums as he watches Ranpo sit beside him. “Where’s Poe-sensei?”

Ranpo’s glasses glint under the sun. “Buying condoms, so we won’t ever have kids.”

“Fufufu, is that so, Ranpo-san?”

Ranpo pauses for a moment, seemingly hesitant. It’s very strange for him, especially since he’s always a guy who’s confident with his own skin and his own thoughts.

Dazai considers it, before, “Ranpo-san, do you have any ideas for a successful elopement?”

“A marriage under the radar?”

“I’m thinking… lake or ocean.”

“The mountain is better.”

“But there’s no romance.”

“Stars?”

“Bridge of stars.”

“Sounds to me like your mind is made up,” Ranpo tells him.

“I’m still thinking of a plan to secure the bride.”

Ranpo snorts. “The bride running away is the least of your worries.”

“Oh, Ranpo-san, my Juliet can be very fickle.”

“Is that why the two of you are going through the campus’ list?”

“My heart is set on sweet, sweet death,” Dazai proclaims. “A dog in heat just releases so much pheromones so my bride ends up with a lot of goldfish shit.”

“Don’t be so hard on yourself, Dazai-kun. You’re at least a goldfish, not just goldfish shit.”

Dazai asks wonderingly, “Fufufu, Ranpo-san, not afraid that I’ll kill you for your words?”

“Consider it payment for asking me for ideas.”

“Can’t I just give you ramune like usual?”
Ranpo raises an eyebrow. “Isn’t it Fancy Hat who pays for the *ramune*?”

Dazai waves a hand as though to shoo the idea away. “What’s his is mine.”

“Aren’t you guys plenty married already?”

“No way, we still have to do an overly melodramatic Romeo and Juliet play!”

“I don’t think Romeo and Juliet had adopted kids in the picture.”

Dazai strokes his chin as he considers it, “Oh, surely we can adopt more if the ones we have aren’t good enough.”

Ranpo lets out an uncharacteristic sigh, before he stands up.

“Dazai-kun. There are a number of methods available for you. There’s no need to choose the flashiest one.”

Dazai watches the back of one of the most intelligent people he’s ever faced, as Ranpo leaves him be. The rose garden is filled with the scent of roses, as expected. He slumps over one of the tables as he waits for Atsushi to arrive for their tutoring session.

While waiting Dazai keeps an eye on the building just beside the rose garden.

Inside it is a fountain of knowledge—but there’s no need to break into a dragon’s room to get its wealth if he can just use other things.

+  

**DEC 24, 2013**

“Why did you drag me here?” Chuuya side-eyes the looming Yokohama University Library as he’s dragged towards it by a stinky mackerel with sticky hands. “I was looking forward to a day spent in bed!”

Snow surrounds the grounds around them. Winter break has just started, but the university remains open for studious students anyway. Not that Dazai or Chuuya can be considered ‘studious’. In fact, it wouldn’t be surprising if Dazai dragged him here because he wants to try doing it against every possible bookcase in the mostly-empty library.

“Christmas Eve is supposedly spent with family or lovers,” Dazai says cheerfully. “And I’m spending it with a dog, instead!”

“I really will kill you!”

“Come on, chibi, I made an interesting discovery~!”

Chuuya sighs deeply. “If it’s about the mole on your ass, I already know.”

“I have a mole on my ass?!”

“It’s in the shape of a middle finger,” Chuuya says sagely, demonstrating said middle finger to Dazai. Dazai lets out a noise of mock-dismay, swooning into the snow and dragging Chuuya on top of him.

Chuuya, because he’s stronger than the two of them, doesn’t budge and simply steps over the fallen Dazai. Dazai, because he’s long predicted Chuuya’s actions, cling to Chuuya’s legs so that the two
of them end up acting like a snow-plowing machine, with Chuuya resolutely marching towards the warmer library, and Dazai getting the sleigh treatment.

Dazai, of course, doesn’t miss the opportunity of having his hands around Chuuya’s legs. He inches his hands higher so that he ends up groping Chuuya over his pants right in public, causing Chuuya to shriek and attempt to futilely beat him up.

After spending fifteen minutes playing around, Dazai then announces, “I’ve found a book that Shibusawa wrote before!”

Chuuya snorts derisively. “You actually read books?”

“I think there’s code inside.”

“You haven’t deciphered it yet?” Chuuya is more interested now. After all, if Dazai, with his stupidly smart genius isn’t able to figure it out yet... the book definitely contains some important information.

That... or the book is just that, a book.

“It’s a story about a Prince’s journey to the West,” Dazai says, as though that explains everything. To Chuuya, it actually does. “Since you’re around anyway, why don’t you, my dearest prince, read it for me?”

Recently, Dazai’s been really fond of calling Chuuya ‘his prince’, if only because he casts himself as Snow White, then claims that he’s already eaten an apple and will sleep and slack off while Chuuya does all the work. Really. Watching a movie remake of Snow White with their kouhai is the worst idea, because Dazai just gets all these ideas.

...Though, it’s been pretty fun to see Dazai dress up as Snow White...

Chuuya clears his throat. “So you mean you’re too lazy to read on your own and want me to read it to you?”

“I skimmed it,” Dazai says with a tone that’s not exactly defensive. “The prince meets a mummy there!”

“Ah, so you think it’s a story about us?”

“Silly chibi, it’s not even a love story and the prince dies!”

“Ah, silly me, you’re jealous that the prince dies and the mummy ends up living.”

Chuuya rolls his eyes as he lets Dazai smack the snow out of his coat once they reach the library’s entrance. Of course, since he’s not the one who rolled around in the snow a lot, there’s not much that stuck to his coat. But one wouldn’t know it with the way Dazai’s hands linger.

Dazai’s hands are openly groping Chuuya’s back over his clothes by the time Chuuya stops him.

“The library has the book?”

“I already reserved a copy.”

“Wow, good work,” Chuuya sarcastically praises him. “You actually prepared, well done.”

“I also stuck in condoms at each chapter end, so you know what to do~♪” Dazai chirps with a self-
satisfied grin.

“…Disgusting.”

Chuuya is smiling anyway.

+

XX, XX, 2014

“You think I actually like your stupid ass?” Chuuya’s voice rings out clearly over the lake. “The only reason I even bother with you is because my parents asked me to make nice with you!”

“How about you? You think I actually like you?” Dazai’s voice is very rarely raised—so the spectators are all stunned by its volume. “I would never lower myself to be interested in a mongrel like you.”

Chuuya’s eyes flash, and then, there’s something that glints off the sunlight in his hands, something that he drives into Dazai, amidst the panicked shouts of the kayak club members and the usual set of spectators.

— [XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX] —
— [a conversation beyond the limits of the narrators] —

XX, XX, XXXX

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“According to information I recently found, Nakahara Chuuya had been fed with experimental medicine for years. I believe his mental state had degraded even more, at an exponential rate. It didn’t help that he was being coerced into an unhealthy relationship by an equally mentally unsound Dazai Osamu.”

X
X
X
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X
X
X

“You also believe that this can be considered murder?”

X
X
“We have no reason to work together.”

“I’ve been reading a lot recently. A rational path towards a proper alliance... Advance payment is the essence of an alliance. One pays up a loss up front, and a profit is made a hundred times greater.”

“…It’s a pleasure to work with you… what should I call you, from now on?”

“From now on… You can call me X.”

Chapter End Notes

* thank you so much again for tuning in! ♥♥♥

*the guessing game for X+X’s accomplices is still ongoing! i will accept the final votes, so if you have any changes to your votes, please feel free to do so~~~♪♪♪

*for that reason, i won't reply/comment on the guesses yet from the previous chapter - the moment i reply, that's when i've tallied the final guess :D
Chapter 10

Chapter Summary

+ nakahara chuuya enters the chat

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

+ 

JUL 6, 2019. Saturday.

During the morning shift change at 06:00 AM JST, the local police station conducts its routine review of the CCTV.

There is no tampering found for the night’s feed.

- 06:30 AM JST. Faced with mounting pressure from the public and from the organization of businessmen operating in Yokohama, Police Superintendent Natsume Souseki announces during a press conference that he will take charge as the interim head of the Yokohama University Serial Murder Task Force.
- 06:45 AM JST. Edgar Allan Poe returns to the police precinct. Inspection of his bag includes his pet raccoon, along with breakfast for Edogawa Ranpo. Edgar Allan Poe attempts to convince the police to allow Edogawa Ranpo to leave the precinct and stay more comfortably at their shared apartment.
- 07:00 AM JST. Sakaguchi Ango arrives at the police precinct. Inspection of his bag includes a laptop, along with some curry-bread as breakfast for Oda Sakunosuke. Sakaguchi tries to get Oda to protest this treatment, arguing that there is no hard evidence of Oda’s involvement and he shouldn’t be detained. Oda tells Sakaguchi that he doesn’t mind staying in the precinct and that he predicts that there will be someone who’ll escort him out soon.
- 07:30 AM JST. Natsume Souseki calls the local precinct and relays information about foreign detectives joining the task force as reinforcements. These foreign detectives are rumored to have ties with the Fitzgerald Family and Christie Family.

+ 

DING DONG~★

Good morning to you, my darling~♪

And because I’m in a great mood, good morning too to our Readers~♪

And a good morning too, to the seventeen brave souls who have pitched forward their guesses as to who X and X’s accomplices are!

The sun is shining, the birds are chirping, my darling is yawning so cutely~!

Isn’t it such a great way to start the day?
…Ah, you want me to stop playing around?

Ah, you hurt me so! I’m always this sweet to you, aren’t I?

…Ah, you disagree?

Fufufu, if you keep on saying those things, then I’d be forced to do this and that to you to prove my sweetness, you see? Is that what you want? Oh, is this a ploy for me to press you back down on bed?

…Ah, there you have it, Readers, please give me a few minutes to kiss my darling awake~

+ JUL 3, 2015. Friday.

Izumi Kyouka follows her target with all of the stealth that she possesses. She’s always been a quiet and light-footed person, but her time in the kendo club has honed her characteristics even further. She’s never thought it’d have its uses aside from helping Atsushi sneak up on his crush, but it’s very helpful now.

…It’s not like she’s doing anything bad, right?

She’s just doing this to earn pocket money. It’s a job posted on the Yokohama University Forums. It wouldn’t be there if it’s illegal, right? It pays very well and she doesn’t have to do too much. She’s just supposed to follow a certain person, after-school hours. She’s quiet and she’s petite, she can slink in spaces that are going to be too small for others.

…Plus, she doesn’t mind following Chuuya-san.

She likes him, even if sometimes, she feels strange looking at him. Like that time when the kayak club got disbanded… She almost couldn’t recognize Chuuya-san, then. But then he returned to being the usual Chuuya-san. Even if he hasn’t been sighted with Dazai-san as much as before. That makes sense, right? Because they ended up fighting? So of course they wouldn’t spend so much time together.

And maybe that’s why Dazai-san’s father wants Chuuya-san tailed. It makes sense, right? To check if the person who hurt his son is planning on hurting him again? Even if to be honest, she doesn’t really think Mori-san cares that much for Dazai-san…

In any case, this is a good opportunity.

She doesn’t mind following Chuuya-san.

She’s not required to take pictures, but she does so as well.

She doesn’t mind following Chuuya-san.

Even if it results in an awkward situation, such as finding Chuuya-san being cornered by Professor Dostoevsky in a parking lot.

She’s always thought that Chuuya-san and Dazai-san were the type who’d stay together forever, but then that incident happened. Still, she didn’t expect that Chuuya-san would go for someone like Professor Dostoevsky…

…still, if it makes Chuuya-san happy…
She clutches the bag that she’s brought to hide her camera in.

At 11:35 PM JST, July 3, 2015, the parking lot security camera shows Nakahara Chuuya talking to Izumi Kyouka.

“It’s kinda late, Kyouka-chan.” Chuuya-san says. “Want to go home together?”

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JUL 6, 2019. Saturday.

- 07:42 AM JST. Nineteen members of faculty and three students arrive at the Yokohama University Clinic, reporting severe vomiting, nausea, vertigo, diarrhea and abdominal pain.

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JUL 7, 2015. Tuesday.

Mark Twain sighs as he leans heavily against the chair. He’s kind of regretting going to this café, since it has very pricy drinks, but it’s the closest one to the police precinct. With the way the summer is bearing down on the streets of Yokohama, he’s not about to wait for a car while standing like some idiot in the sidewalk, okay?

Having to provide statements to the police, then reporting back to his employer… this day just won’t end.

He sends a long-ass email that’s requested by Fitzgerald, taking the time to edit and use proper grammar and punctuation, even though Fitzgerald has a tendency to just reply with ‘k, marc’ even though he keeps on telling him that his Mark is with a ‘k’ not a ‘c’, urgh. That, or an order of ‘just give them money’, whenever he reports running into a roadblock. Like not having the means to open the safe hidden in the Mori Mansion’s study. How the fuck can he solve it using money? Was he supposed to pelt coins at the safe until it collapses? Rich capitalist assholes, urgh.

Plus, does Fitzgerald even know that gardeners have zero business getting lost in a study? It can only get so old when he suggests to the butler Hirotsu that he also water the plants inside the mansion. Especially since there are only fake plants inside the mansion. Given how cold the mansion’s occupants are, he wouldn’t be surprised if every single living organism nearby just keels over.

…Hey, does that mean he’s doing a banging job at being a gardener even though it’s just his cover?

Man, isn’t he amazing?

In any case, now there’s only Mori Ougai and Hirotsu living in that mansion. And maybe even that doll that he sometimes sees eating with Mori. And he uses the word ‘doll’ because it looks like a (realistically-proportioned) kiddie-Barbie. He’s not being paid to judge his targets, but he’s doing it anyway, free of charge.

At least that Dazai isn’t so frigid…?

Wait, no.
He sighs again as he takes a tiny sip of his very expensive cup of coffee. If this cup of coffee is going to cost his lunch and dinner, he’s going to make sure it lasts against dinner, okay?

“No, that guy is fucking crazy…” Yes, he isn’t so frigid, because he’s very, very insane! “Why the hell would you stab your boyfriend against a rose bush? That just hurts…”

Of course, due to his NDA with his fake employer (Mori Ougai) and his actual employer (good ol’ Fitz), he can’t exactly admit that to the police, can he?

Especially since they’d just ask him why the fuck did he not report a stabbing incident? What the hell is he supposed to say, then? Sorry, too busy trying to stealthily break into the study of my (fake) employer so I can steal things from his safe? Sorry, I think you shouldn’t kinkshame if people are into knifeplay?

Because to be honest, even the redhead just looked like he was enjoying himself bleeding all over the bushes.

Crazy fuckers, that’s what they are.

Oops, were.

Since they supposedly thought Romeo and Juliet was supposed to be a good role model for a healthy romance. Did they not read Shakespeare’s Spark Notes version of it? It was supposed to be a satire on teenage hormones and impulsiveness!

He continues muttering to himself, resolving to make sure that his siblings read the Spark Notes version so they won’t grow up to be crazy fuckers.

Busy as he is, he doesn’t notice the man beside him, until it’s too late.

Until said man taps his shoulder.

He looks up and sees someone who looks like a vampire.

And really, there’s no other word for it.

He looks like a haggard man who hasn’t slept in centuries, face drawn and gaunt, bloodless and pale. The only splash of color on his person is the purple of his eyes so dark they look like coal.

“Excuse me,” the man says. “I couldn’t help but overhearing your words…”

“Uh,” Twain hedges. He has a tendency to mutter to himself and he hopes against hope this guy didn’t overhear him muttering about Fitzgerald’s payments to his bank account, because he’s not supposed to tell anyone about that!

“I’m writing a story,” the man continues, expression dull. “Can you elaborate further about that rose bush? It feels like a setting for an interesting love story…”

Twain thinks that this guy looks familiar, like he’s seen him recently before. But then, the guy is buying him another cup of exorbitantly-priced coffee, and Twain decides that hey, it’s not like it will kill him to divulge a part of that crazy story…
JUL 6, 2019. Saturday.

- **08:44 AM JST.** Eight members of the Yokohama University Faculty arrive at the Yokohama Hospital, reporting severe vomiting, nausea, vertigo, diarrhea and abdominal pain.
- **09:00 AM JST.** A press conference is held jointly by Natsume Souseki and the Yokohama Hospital Staff. It’s to address the possibility that there’s a mass food poisoning that’s affecting Yokohama University faculty and students. They currently are unable to confirm nor deny if this is the same poison that’s used by X.

+  

XX, XX, 2014

“Pfft. If you let yourself be killed,” Chuuya promises, “I’d resurrect you just so I could kill you over again.”

“Wouldn’t that be the best? If we can die and resurrect, so we can kill each other again?”

“You’re such an idiot, I don’t know why I even bother with you,” Chuuya says despondently, but he kisses Dazai anyway.

The two of them part after a few minutes.

“So?” Chuuya asks eventually, raising an eyebrow. “What the next step in our plan then, partner?”

“I’ll continue being friends with OdaSaku,” Dazai says, not even bothering to wipe the spit from his lips and on his chin. “It’s kind of fun to watch Ango pine for him while he’s all busy with Shibusawa.”

Chuuya doesn’t comment on Dazai’s strange tastes in hobbies. Nor does he comment on Glasses Nerd’s unfortunate crush on someone who acts so normal, but is actually an assassin-slash-bodyguard, what the hell. “How about his partner?”

“Eh, Chuuya, haven’t you searched for him yet? Why are you slacking off?”

“Me?! Slacking off?!” Chuuya sputters and just tries to condense his rage at being called a slacker by the biggest slacker in the whole world. “Why the hell are you so fucking lazy, you fucktard?!”

“Ehhhhh, but Chuuya’s so great at hacking already,” Dazai whines while trying to butter Chuuya up. “And at hacking too!”

“Did you just—” Helpless in the force of Dazai’s shamelessness, Chuuya can only sigh deeply and let Dazai go after three slaps to the chest. “Fine, shitty mackerel. I’ll track his partner too, happy now?”

“How can I be? The only time I’ll be happy is when we’re finally dead, chibi.”

Chuuya rolls his eyes. “Okay, you can continue to languish there then.”

“So mean, you’re supposed to comfort me using your body!”
In response, Chuuya then pats Dazai’s head, with enough force to dislocate it.

JUL 6, 2019. Saturday.

- 09:04 AM JST. Akutagawa Ryuunosuke wakes up and is promptly questioned by a representative from the Yokohama University Serial Murder Task Force. His visitors, Nakajima Atsushi and Akutagawa Gin, have stayed over the entire night. These visitors protest about Akutagawa Ryuunosuke being suspected as X. Nakajima Atsushi claims that he can provide alibis for Akutagawa Ryuunosuke as the two of them are always together recently.

JUL 6, 2015. Tuesday.

Chuuya types up a message with great care.

[Father, I have been ill for a long time, but I finally found the mummy that will cure all of my ailments. Please don’t worry.]

There’s hardly any light in the surroundings, aside from the moon and stars above, the backlight of his phone, the glow of Dazai’s eyes as he twirls around like some princess frolicking in the fields.

…He really does look like a princess.

Chuuya tries not to let affection seep into his voice as he asks, “Are you really going to insist on wearing that?”

The dress that Dazai is wearing has a lot of frills and is meant to reach the floor, but given that Dazai has unfairly long limbs, it only reaches an awkward length on him.

…Or maybe it’s because Dazai isn’t wearing a lot of bandages right now, that it looks awkward? Chuuya isn’t so used to seeing Dazai’s legs be this bare outside of an enclosed room.

“Oh, I’m just test-wearing this,” Dazai says airily. “Since you’re the one who’s supposed to wear this!”

“Oh, I never agreed to that!”

“You did not?” Dazai blinks owlishly. He tilts his head and adopts a thinking pose so exaggerated he just looks like an idiot. “Just a few hours ago, I could have sworn you said, and I quote, ‘yes, fuck yes, please’—”

“Oh my god, shut the fuck up!”

“You also said, ‘oh god’, even though you’re talking to me.” Dazai laughs like a madman as he avoids Chuuya strangling him, only because it’s fun to see a chibi try to stand on his tiptoes while looking so angry. “I got all hot and bothered.”

“You’re always so horny, what the hell are you even saying?”
Dazai blinks again. “Oh? You finally noticed?”

“Notice?” Chuuya shrieks as he finally climbs up Dazai. Of course, because Dazai’s physical aspects leave much to be desired, Dazai just ends up crumpling under their combined weight. His dress fans out over the grass on the lakeside bank, the smell of summer surrounding them. There’s also the scent that feels like a mixture of decay and petrichor, from the nearby algal bloom. “I’ve been suffering from it for years!”

Dazai sounds slightly breathless, both from the fall and from Chuuya sitting on top of his lungs. “Fufufu, so you’re saying… that you’ve been… Chuuffering?”

“Why won’t you ever shut up?” Chuuya wonders despairingly, but his feelings are betrayed by the fact that his hands are busy going through Dazai’s hair, as though to make sure that he looks the proper mix of dishevelment and debonair.

“…How about Chuuya?” Dazai tilts his head slightly to give Chuuya easier access to his hair. “Why are you leaving a clue for Rimbaud-san?”

Chuuya’s fingers falter slightly, before he clears his throat. “Father… might be too heartbroken. So I wanted to…”

“You want to leave him a clue about your intentions,” Dazai starts, eyes glinting. “But aren’t you too cruel? Chuuya, your clue can only be deciphered if they can decipher the book.”

Chuuya shrugs. “I want to leave a clue, not point a neon sign to our plans.”

“Fufufu, so you won’t betray me and leave me to die alone?”

It’s asked haughtily, teasingly, but Chuuya isn’t stupid enough to miss the flicker of self-doubt there.

Chuuya leans down and bends over Dazai, kissing him slowly and thoroughly, as though to invite him to inspect all of his insides and intentions.

“We’ll die together and be reborn together,” Chuuya promises with the gentlest of tones.

Dazai blinks at him rapidly for a few moments, before clearing his throat, sounding the slightest bit shy and happy. It’s such an innocent look on him, that it tickles Chuuya’s heart.

Of course, that only lasts until Dazai opens his mouth and says, “Well, that’s good. The idea I got from Ranpo-san will not work with only one person.”

“Ah, so I’m just here to fulfill the player count, is that it?” Chuuya asks with a laugh.

“…Ne, Chuuya.” Dazai has stars reflected in his eyes. “Let’s stay together for the rest of our life, okay? No matter what.”

Chuuya whispers, “I can’t believe you only ask me that now”, and kisses Dazai again.

Under the stars, it might even look romantic, if not for the fact that there are two corpses there with them, basking under the moonlight as well.
JUL 6, 2019. Saturday.

- **09:30 AM JST. A package arrives for Mori Ougai at the Yokohama Hospital Reception Area.** As the recipient is not yet awake after being administered the antidote, the receptionist signs to receive the package. The sender’s name is marked as TSUSHIMA SHUUJI and the sender’s address is marked as the Mori Mansion’s address. The recipient notices a strange smell from the package and has asked for it to be inspected by the hospital’s security personnel.

The package is found to be a clean skull that appears to have been exhumed, resting on a decayed red dress with some maggots crawling on it.

- **09:35 AM JST. Andre Gide arrives at the local precinct.** He arrives there to post bail for Oda Sakunosuke, but just as he’s processing the papers to have Oda get out of prison, Oda collapses after vomiting and experiencing severe vertigo.

+  

JUL 8, 2015. Wednesday.

Akutagawa Ryuunosuke approaches the non-restricted part of the lakeside bank with slow, faltering steps. There’s a sickening smell all around them, as the lake is being turned over, the pumping machines having a difficult time trying to siphon the water out, as there’s all sorts of outgrowth contaminating the lake.

He’s heard that this is expensive and difficult work, but apparently the investigators and the university has received a lot of funds to make this possible. From the other end of the lake, he can spot Chuuya-san’s parents. He’s never personally spoken to them, but he’s seen them sometimes. Rimbaud-san is kneeling by the lakeside, head bowed down. Akutagawa can’t see his expression clearly, but he supposes that he’s distraught, just like the rest of them.

Just like the person that he’s here to see.

Nakajima Atsushi is by the lakeside too. Not exactly kneeling, because his legs are folded at an angle that looks uncomfortable, like he’s simply collapsed without care for how he fell.

Akutagawa swallows.

Yesterday, Tachihara Michizou nearly fell to the lake, fainted as soon as he’s seen the corpses of Dazai-san and Chuuya-san be fished out of the water. Akutagawa’s asked his sister to keep an eye on him, not because he cares in particular for the other man, but because…

Akutagawa clenches his fist as he approaches Nakajima.

“…Jinko,” he says, and then blanks out. It’s strange, because he’s never really spoken to the other man without Dazai-san or Chuuya-san refereeing their interactions. This man, who gets to be tutored by Dazai-san, who gets to shamelessly be one of the first people to taste Chuuya-san’s cooking as he’s volunteered to be a taste-tester.

“I didn’t know, that…” Nakajima says, haltingly. His voice is rough, like he’s screamed for the past day. “He’s… Chuuya-san… Dazai-san… He’s…”
Akutagawa takes a deep breath and sits down a few centimeters away from Nakajima’s gracelessly sprawled limbs.

“He started calling me ‘jinko’,” Nakajima’s brokenhearted recollection settles around them like the summer’s oppressive humidity. “Because I… was pushed to this lake by some mean senpai… and when he dragged me out, I had a tail of plants on me.”

“…Isn’t it because you were wearing a tiger-designed hoodie that day?” Akutagawa interrupts. He clearly remembers that.

Nakajima sniffs. “…Oh. I… thought…”

“I don’t have tissues with me,” Akutagawa snaps. And shoves a handkerchief towards Nakajima’s direction. “If you fill my handkerchief with snot, I will shove you to the lake, jinko.”

Nakajima then takes it as an invitation to snivel pathetically into the piece of clothing.

Akutagawa’s fists shake. Perhaps coming here was a mistake.

“If… if… if they’re happy together, then I—”

“I know,” Akutagawa snaps again. “I… know.”

Nakajima looks at him through reddened eyes. “…You too?”

Akutagawa averts his gaze, ends up looking at the other end of the lake again, where Chuuya-san’s parents are joined by Dazai-san’s father, along with a tall, silver-haired man wearing a yukata. On the other side of the lake, there’s a vigil of students, some gossipmongers, but mostly mourners about the tragedy. There are some staff too, like Professor Dostoevsky and Professor Shibusawa, and some others that Akutagawa’s fairly sure aren’t sharing classes or clubs with Dazai-san or Chuuya-san.

Perhaps it’s really that, a testament to just how many people are like Nakajima and Tachihara, like all of the people in this area.

…And him.

“It’s useless to think about it now,” Akutagawa says. Because it is.

They’re gone.

And for Akutagawa, the person who’d tease him, who’d remind him to visit the infirmary, who’d claim that he gets along well with Nakajima, when all he’s ever wanted was to grow strong enough so he could make Dazai-san acknowledge that he’s a better fit—

Chuuya-san is gone.

And Akutagawa can’t even wish for things such as reincarnation or rebirth, because there’s no such thing as magic or miracles in this world.

Akutagawa stands up, moves to leave. He’s not even sure why he went here.

And then Nakajima sniffs again and shuffles close, eyes pleading as he clutches at his leg.
“Please,” Nakajima says, looking up at him, “don’t leave me too.”

Perhaps—

Chuuya-san’s always commented about how well they get along with each other.

Perhaps—

Akutagawa breathes in, and pulls Nakajima up to his arms.

Perhaps this way, Akutagawa can keep a part of Chuuya-san alive.

+ DING DONG~★

…Oh, Readers, you’re still here?

Fufufu, I wouldn’t bother apologizing for the tardiness, because have you seen my darling? One kiss can’t stop at just one! Of course, I have to eat him alive!

But it’s time for us to start moving, ne?

Ahem, ahem, let me restart this, then~

+ DING DONG~★

Welcome, Readers, to the Detective’s Deduction Party!

I am your host, the eXcellent, the eXtraordinary, the eXtravagant, XXX-treat!

My name is Dazai Osamu, an Armed Detective, at your service!

Ahem, ahem, since I’m currently acting as a Detective, let me pick a cool nickname too!

How about Sherlock Holmes?

Yes, I shall be Sherlock Holmes for this duration~!

Why Holmes?

Of course, it’s so I can say, ‘Fufufu, it’s elementary, dear Watson’~!

Oh, but in this case, shouldn’t it be, ‘Fufufu, you’re as tiny as an elementary school kid, dear Watson~’?

…

…

…

Ow, ow, ow, you punched me, I’m so sad!

Why did you punch me now? Why use your fists on me now? You could have fisted me earlier!
“I would apologize for the shitty mackerel’s behavior, but I know he’s actually well-behaved right now, so I’ll save apologies for when it’s truly needed.”

Uwaa, my darling said I’m well-behaved! How cute! But wait, why am I ‘shitty mackerel’? I’m so loving and call you ‘darling’ and you reciprocate like this?

“I could call you a ‘piece of shit that deserves to be ground to dust under my heel’, but that’s a mouthful.”

Oh, *do go on!* Doesn’t this just mean you’re going to step on me?

“…”

Ah, you’re in serious mode, boo, not fun!

“Seems like we won’t need to fight Soda, since X has done a great job poisoning him already.”

Ehhhhh, I’ve been looking forward to having you fight him! Especially since Gide-kun is here! It’ll be a splendid 2v1 match!

“You’re planning to just watch, is that it.”

Of course! Would you let me fight?

“…Che, you’re a liability.”

I believe you can fight them both off though!

“…So, if not Soda, are we visiting Fyodor?”

Hmph, hmph, only because I want to see that person’s face when he realizes that the person he’s been pining for is the one who’s slicing him apart!

“Why the hell are you acting jealous for?”

Uwaaa, so embarrassing! Is this your way of saying that I have no reason to be jealous? Because I’m so extraordinary that you only have eyes for me?!

“…I only have eyes for you, Dazai.”

…Actually, you know what, do we need to solve this? We can just stay in bed and be lovey-dovey!

“No, we’re going to get to work, you fucker.”

…Boo, I’m in despair, I’m inconsolable, my day is ruined, boo…

“Once we finish our part, we can go back to our honeymoon.”

…Ah!

That’s true!
Uwaa, I wasn’t expecting you to have smart ideas!

…

…

…

…Fufufu, I got punched again, but I’m just more motivated now!

Oh, wait, it’s rude, isn’t it?

To not even introduce my darling!

My elementary-school-child-sized Watson, Nakahara Chuuya is here to join in on the fun~♪

And our next stop?

We’re going to exterminate a filthy, filthy rat~!

+

JUL 6, 2019. Saturday.

- **09:40 AM JST.** Yosano Akiko and Motojirou Kajii submit a report regarding the poison that X used. It’s considered to be a slow-acting poison that can be incubated within the human body for a maximum of one week. With this, the police is investigating the possibility that X had poisoned their targets during the party at the Fitzgerald Mansion last June 30.

- **09:44 AM JST.** A beheaded corpse is found inside of the Verlaine Mansion. Initial findings identify the corpse to belong to Paul Verlaine. The corpse is glued to the front door by the clothes, arranged in a kneeling position while the corpse is cradling Paul Verlaine’s severed head, stuck in an expression of shock.

Chapter End Notes

Sorry for the delay, I was a bit surprised at the result of the voting hahahaha it did not go according to keikaku ;)))

With the reveals of this chapter, now I’m curious as to whether your guesses for X/accomplices have changed? ♥

Chapter count has been updated as well, this will all end in 2 more chapters! :D
Chapter 11

Chapter Summary

+ penultimate chapter! thank you for joining this ride! see you in the upcoming finale next week~♪♥♥♥

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

XX, XX, 20XX

Nakajima Atsushi doesn’t remember the date, not really.

All he knows is that he’s minding his own business, trying to take in the expansive campus and breathe everything in. He’s just moved to the dorms and he’s just come from the Main Administration Building, after accepting the very generous scholarship that’s been granted to him. Like this, he’s taken the first step to overcome the orphanage.

…But maybe not completely, because on his first day at this entirely new place, he catches the attention of some ill-tempered senpai, who all but spit at him for his poor, naïve countryboy self somehow tainting the prestige of this place.

They taunt him about inadequacies, and they don’t even need to know him that deeply for them to sense his shortcomings.

It all happens quickly, getting shoved to a lake that feels freezing and heavy, the water pushing him down to a world of coldness.

And then—

It all happens quickly.

A hand, warm amidst all the coldness, wraps around him and drags him above-water.

He can barely open his eyes, heavy-lidded as they are, but he’s glad that he made the effort.

The world is suddenly so bright.

There’s light, there’s the wind, there’s something that seems to have come directly from his dreams.

He sputters, water escaping his mouth, just before his savior is about to touch lips with him.

His savior blinks, then grins at him.

“You okay?”

He tries to croak out a response, but only coughs escape him.
“You’re not here to commit suicide, are you?” His savior asks candidly, before cutting his blue, blue gaze to the side. “Because I won’t believe that there are other people with the same shit taste as that shitty mackerel.”

He can’t form proper words, buoyed by a strange, confusing feeling.

“Pfft, chibi, I told you, doing a lovely suicide on such a lovely lake is going to be popular!” A voice sneaks in, before a wet hand rests on top of his savior’s dripping wet locks. “And now, the poor kid can’t even speak! He’s probably struck speechless by how ugly you are, you wet dog.”

“Haaa—?!” His savior’s face cracks from its painting-like beauty, volcanic rage bubbling to the surface. “Call me a dog one more time and—”

“Scary Chihuahua is barking at me!”

“I’m going to kill you!” His savior yells to the bandaged man standing beside him, but doesn’t actually do anything to indicate planned murder, seemingly forgetting about Atsushi’s presence entirely. More like, his savior even raises a hand so that his palm is pressed over the other’s hand that stays on top of his head.

Atsushi can only stare up at them—at the dripping wet figure of his savior, at the light of the sun above, at the wind that rustles the leaves of the trees around them, at his savior himself—and feels his life change before his very eyes.

+  

**JUL 6, 2019. Saturday.**

- 10:00 AM JST. Akutagawa Ryunosuke agrees to be detained in the local precinct. His visitors, Nakajima Atsushi and Akutagawa Gin, are asked to leave the Yokohama Hospital as well. Before Akutagawa Ryunosuke is sent away with a police escort, he takes a moment to hug his sister and then Nakajima Atsushi.

- 10:30 AM JST. Upon arriving at the local precinct, Akutagawa Ryunosuke agrees to be questioned. At the start of the interrogation, Akutagawa Ryunosuke says, “I am the X that you’re looking for.”

Akutagawa Ryunosuke then claims that he’s the one who wrote the messages from X. He claims that one of his hobbies is calligraphy writing, so he owns a lot of writing supplies. He then surrenders the fountain pen that was used to write the messages, and offers to reproduce the messages so the police can perform a handwriting analysis. The handwriting is a 100% match to the messages left behind by X.

When questioned further about his motives, Akutagawa Ryunosuke claims that he’s punishing those that have caused the deaths of Nakahara Chuuya and Dazai Osamu. Akutagawa Ryunosuke also insists that he’s working alone.

+  

**JUN 15, 2019. Saturday.**

*Yokohama University Forums.  
Front Page Marquee – [Breaking News] PROF FYODOR IN SPEEDOS!!!!!!!!!*
He clenches his fist as he reads the slander about Chuuya-san. It’s been four years, but the wound still festers inside him. Therapy hasn’t really helped, even if he’s been going back to Professor Dostoevsky regularly, way past the counselling mandated by the University after that day.

_Private Forum, 5158 Now Open._

[fxxx32] f cant come to study group later, g2g buy smth to wear for fitzgerald-san’s party

He bites his lip as he watches the messages on the private forum.

They’ve also forgotten that this forum is for the sake of Chuuya-san.

They’ve started moving on.

Now, they’re using the forum to talk about things such as meeting up for study sessions, discussing about Poe-sensei and Ranpo-san, about buying clothes for some party.

It’s just been four years but they’ve already moved on from Chuuya-san.

He considers closing this forum that he’s opened for the sake of Chuuya-san, but then, if he closes this, then that would mean that he’s losing a part of Chuuya-san, and that’s something that he can’t fathom at the moment.

[fxxx36] wait, what is this about Chuuya-san
[fxxx37] …I think it’s true.
[fxxx38] Kyouka?
[fxxx39] I saw them together, before. I should have told someone then. I think—

…What?

Chuuya-san… with Professor Dostoevsky?

Chuuya-san would never——!

Chuuya-san would never allow himself to belong to anyone——!

Chuuya-san would never do something so distasteful——!

Chuuya-san would never——!

Chuuya-san would never lie to him——!

Chuuya-san is the only person who would never lie, so surely it means that it’s everyone else who’s lying, doesn’t it?
With an uneven gait, he half-runs out of his room, intent on getting to the bottom of this.

+  

**JUL 6, 2019. Saturday. 11:00 AM JST.**

A couple slowly strolls along the streets of Yokohama.

They look like a foreigner couple intent on sightseeing, since they stop by a number of shops every few minutes or so, taking the time to shoot a few shots together, before moving on to the next shop. They frequent food shops more often; the two of them can be spotted feeding each other as they continue strolling. It should look difficult, given that their arms are entwined together and there’s a considerable height difference between them, but the duo don’t even look at each other nor do they pause as they feed each other, their movements speaking of a great amount of synchronicity.

They walk slowly, seemingly taking their time.

On the silver-haired man’s free wrist hangs the handle of a boxy paper bag, as though there’s a gift box inside. It faintly sways along with them as they walk. His companion, a lady with curly hair and a frilly dress, has an umbrella hanging from the free wrist.

One would think, upon seeing the two, that they’re a loving couple who are whispering sweet nothings to one another, seemingly unbothered by the strange unease that blankets the entire area. Like they’re simply on a world of their own, untouched by the fear and nervousness of Yokohama’s residents, given the deaths that surround the area.

…They’re a loving couple, all right

“That natto reminds me of you,” Nakahara Chuuya says as continues looking around to confirm the location they’re in. “Stinky and very sticky!”

The man wearing a silver-haired disguise has an expression that appears so calm and chaste, like he’s a priest or a shaman untouched by worldly desires. It’s possibly for the best that there’s not a lot of people out in the streets, lest they overhear his words that are the furthest thing from ‘chaste’.

“Oh, I wasn’t the one who came five times while begging to be fucked harder,” Dazai Osamu says very serenely, half-closing his eyes to momentarily recall their activities earlier. “You’re the one who made me very sticky, darling.”

The one wearing the woman’s disguise clicks his tongue, but doesn’t refute the first part of his partner’s statement further, knowing it’s a lost cause. And because it’s true, anyway. But that doesn’t mean that… “You’re the one who refused to take a shower after, because you wanted to wallow in body fluids, shitty mackerel.”

“Ah, that… fufufu, that’s me indeed.”

“…So you admit it, then?” Chuuya huffs as he takes a bite of the **takoyaki** that Dazai feeds him.

Dazai hums, before, “Only if you admit it’s your fault.”

“I’m not taking the blame for your grossness.”

“Fufufu, shouldn’t you take responsibility?” Dazai licks Chuuya’s fingers when they press a **manju** against his mouth. Oh, Chuuya’s wearing gloves right now. It’s a shame to be unable to taste Chuuya’s fingers, but there’s always later. “Chuuuya’s the one who makes me do all those things!”
“No way, you’re crazy even before you met me.”

Dazai asks, lightly. “And after that, I became crazy for you?”

“You’re gross,” Chuuya says, smiling.

Perhaps it’s something like fate, that the two of them managed to meet each other, that the two of them managed to understand each other, despite the insanity that lurks deep within them. Or perhaps it’s because of it, not despite it? Twin points of darkness calling out to each other, gravitating to each other, amidst a world filled with billions of souls.

…Ah, it is kind of embarrassing to think about.

“You’re condition is good?” Dazai half-mumbles the question and makes it sound like he’s simply asking for the sake of filling the non-existent space between them with words.

“Yes,” Chuuya replies, lightly digs his elbow against Dazai’s rib. “I’ll give you the show that you want to see.”

“…Good,” Dazai mumbles again, relief carefully out of his tone. “Because it would suck if you suddenly make a rampage like some dog with rabies.”

You can always stop me for good, Chuuya doesn’t say. It would just be needlessly rubbing in the fact that Dazai cannot. Not at this point. Maybe, if it was during their first day of knowing each other.

Chuuya breathes in.

…Maybe not even then, huh.

Truly embarrassing.

Instead, “Professor Dostoevsky has never called me a ‘dog’ or anything unsavory. Maybe I should run away with someone like him instead of someone shitty like you, huh?”

“Oh?” Dazai’s eyebrow rises. “Did Chuuya’s taste evolve while I was unaware of it?”

“Meaning…?”

Like they’re simply discussing the weather, Dazai breezily says, “I didn’t know you’re now suddenly into corpses.”

Chuuya lets out an unladylike snort. “Corpses, huh?”

“Uh-huh.” Dazai swings the package from his wrist. “You disagree?”

Chuuya’s nose twitches as he thinks he’s successfully spotted their target destination just a few hundred meters away. The blade hidden inside the umbrella doesn’t feel heavy at all, even if it’s been quite some time since he’s practiced with a sword.

“You know I don’t,” he breathes out. “Though… I still don’t understand why you wanted Mori-san to be cured.”

“Are you sure you really don’t?” Dazai asks pointedly, before tugging at his elbow, effectively halting them both in their tracks. They end up facing each other, alone in an empty street. Around them, there’s a lot of trees, filtering the rays from the summertime sun, casting shadows to their faces.
“Or do you just want me to say it?”

“What do you think?”

“I think,” Dazai says slowly, rising to the challenge in Chuuya’s tone. “That you want the chance to slowly make Mori-san pay for what he did to me. Because you’re such a good dog. Ne, Chuuya?”

Chuuya’s mouth twists.

“…Yes.”

“Isn’t X nice, giving us this opportunity?” Dazai then asks offhandedly. “Tying up loose ends and all that.”

“Oh?” Chuuya then drags the two of them back to motion. “And here I thought all you needed in your life was me.”

“This is just a sideshow,” Dazai says with a laugh. “Plus, I need to assess my rivals, yes?”

“What rivals?”

“X is in love with Nakahara Chuuya, right?”

Chuuya rolls his eyes and lightly whacks Dazai’s chest. “Nakahara Chuuya is dead.”

“Hmm.”

“Nakahara Chuuya is listed as ‘Deceased’ in all of the records.” Chuuya amends his statement. “Therefore, as of this point in time, a person named ‘Nakahara Chuuya’ does not exist.”

“Well, that is true.” Dazai concedes. “But that doesn’t change the fact that X is my love rival, you see?”

A beat.

“You’re definitely crazy.”

“What if you suddenly decide that you’d like to reward X’s devotion to you? That would be the absolute worst!”

“Yup, definitely crazy,” Chuuya says with a shake of his head. “Who exactly did I beg to fuck me harder earlier?”

“Of course it’s me?”

“Then what the hell is your issue?!”

“Mou, Chuuya, it’s already 2019, you should know by now that lust and love are different matters, okay?!”

…Chuuya eventually lets out an aggrieved sigh. “You’re never going to let this go until I give you Professor Dostoevsky’s head, aren’t you?”

“Chuuya, you’re underestimating me,” Dazai says with a click of his tongue. “I wouldn’t be really satisfied until there’s nobody else in this world but just the two of us.”
“Oh, really?” Chuuya feels his gut twist and coil into something warm, a satiated snake inside of him. He’s definitely crazy too, getting satisfied by hearing Dazai’s unreasonable words. “I guess if you can’t be satisfied, then that means there’s no point in wearing those outfits you bought for me, hmm?”

And then Chuuya unwinds their elbows and starts to walk ahead of Dazai, approaches a house that looks so terribly normal from the outside.

A beat.

Dazai starts half-jogging after him, calling out, “No, Chuuya, wait, don’t be so stingy!”

They make enough of a commotion, as though to offer some alarm bells to their target.

Not that their target can scuttle away.

Not that their target will run away.

Nakahara Chuuya knocks on a wooden door, and calls out in dulcet tones, a butcher sweet-talking a pig as he leads it to the slaughterhouse: “Professor Dostoevsky, won’t you open the door for me?”

“Fufufu, we sincerely promise we’re not here to arrest you as X’s accomplice!” Dazai adds, a manic sort of cheerfulness edging his voice, carelessly littering the empty food packets on the doorstep. “In fact, we just want to have a double date with you!”

Flicking the package on his wrist, Dazai continues, “You want the chance to see your dear Kolya, don’t you, Dos-kun~?”

+  

**JUN 30, 2019. Sunday.**

He clenches and unclenches his fists as he stands on the steps leading to the garden of the Fitzgerald Mansion. From his spot, he can see the rose garden of the Yokohama University. If he closes his eyes, he can almost see Chuuya-san, surrounded by the roses in full bloom.

…But his eyes remain open now, the moonlight and the stars above bearing down on him.

Around him, there are sounds of chatter, of laughter. Chandeliers twinkle brightly, expensive watches sparkle brilliantly under the lights.

From his spot, he can see Paul Verlaine dragging his husband, Arthur Rimbaud, to a dark corner, away from prying eyes. Earlier, he’s spotted Professor Shibusawa Tatsuhiko and his TA Oda Sakunosuke, heads bowed together. And even earlier still, he spots Mark Twain in the grounds of the Fitzgerald Mansion, since he’s now working here after he’s been dismissed from the Mori Mansion.

Those five people.

Chuuuya-san’s parents who didn’t care enough for him to ensure that he’s happy and has instead allowed his mental state to be degraded, without anyone else knowing his suffering. Professor Shibusawa and Oda-san—the two who were involved in the experimental medicine that was supposed to help, not forsake, Chuuya-san. The
Those five people who made Chuuya-san live a lie and die with lies about his person being cast everywhere.

Those five people are liars who need to pay for their sins.

He looks up at the moonlight.

Years ago, he’s looked up at Chuuya-san and saw the light, the wind, the dreams, the everything that breathes life to him.

Chuuya-san—

*Even if your body is dead,  
I will consume you instead,  
So that eventually, you can reach your destination.*

—I may not be as strong and as brilliant as you, but for your sake, even this weak boy can grow strong claws, you see?

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**JUL 6, 2019. Saturday.**

- **11:30 AM JST. Akutagawa Ryuunosuke’s interrogation continues.** He claims that he’s the one who hacked into the CCTV Cameras. The hacking was done in order to mask the fact that the murder method is via poison that was administered days beforehand. He claims that the poison used as X was stolen from Shibusawa Tatsuhiko’s laboratory before.

He claims that the poison has to be administered in two doses via consumption. The first dose of poison was added to the food of the participants during the party at the Fitzgerald Mansion last June 30, 2019.

He claims that he is the one who placed a second dose to Shibusawa Tatsuhiko’s food in the cafeteria during lunchtime last July 4, 2019.

He also claims that the poison is mostly tasteless and scentless, but to ensure it can’t be detected, it’s added to food with strong taste and aroma, like curry.

Akutagawa Ryuunosuke then insists that he’s working alone as X.

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**JUL 3, 2014. Wednesday.**

“Chuuya-san, I’m—”

Nakajima Atsushi fiddles with the hem of his shirt, bites his lips as he tries to get the words out. He’s been trying for weeks, has even asked Kyouka-chan to help tail Chuuya-san so he can be sure to find a good time when Dazai-san isn’t around, because Dazai-san can be quite mean when he feels like it. Dazai-san is also very potent in diverting Chuuya-san’s time and attention, and Atsushi just wants a little bit of Chuuya-
san’s time, just so he can get the words out—!

Chuuuya-san looks relaxed, like he belongs right in that moment, a backdrop of roses in full bloom. There’s an easy grin on his lips as he comments, “Why are you so nervous? I’m not going to bite you.” A small chuckle. “With how nervous you are, I’d start to think you’re about to confess to me.”

Atsushi thinks, **please bite me**, and then, “N-N-N-No, I mean yes!”

“Hmm?”

Atsushi squeezes his eyes shut as he tries another time. If he can’t do it today, Akutagawa’s threatened to gut him if he starts flailing about his weird stomach cramps whenever he thinks about Chuuya-san! And then Higuchi will keep on sending him consolation packets made of tissues! He’s going to be brave, this once! He’s going to confess first, ahead of Tachihara, even!

He can do this!

“I like you, please go out with me!”

A few seconds pass, a passing breeze rustling rose petals into the air.

“I’m sorry,” Chuuya-san says with a small, apologetic smile on his face. “I am grateful for your feelings, I really am. But I can’t…”

Atsushi swallows hard before faintly asking, “…Is it because of Dazai-san…?”

Both Dazai-san and Chuuya-san have staunchly denied using the word ‘lovers’ to define their relationship, and then there was that incident that ended the kayak club… But, while Atsushi is confused by how they interact with each other, closer than friends, more violent than enemies, he also knows that Dazai-san is a huge part of Chuuya-san’s life. One only has to listen to Dazai-san for five minutes, especially during their tutoring sessions.

…Though, Dazai-san’s chatter about his plans for pranks on Chuuya-san is pretty helpful, because Atsushi then runs to Chuuya-san with this information and he gets a pat to the head, an invitation to eat together, and sometimes even an invitation to taste-test his cooking…

“That mackerel? No way!” Chuuya-san denies vehemently. “That bastard has no say on who I fall in love with! I hate that asshole the most!”

“Oh.” Atsushi blinks. So they’re just really strange friends…? Or are they just confused rivals? In any case, Atsushi clears his throat before asking again, “I… do I really have no chance with you, Chuuya-san?”

Maybe Chuuya-san is pining for Dazai-san? Why though? Atsushi likes his senpai, but given that he’s publicly admitted to only associating with Chuuya-san because of his parents’ whims… Atsushi has been avoiding Dazai-san a lot recently.

“I don’t want to belong to anyone,” Chuuya-san confesses after a few moments. “It’s not because of you… Hah, it’s gonna sound cliché, but it’s not you, it’s really me, in this case.”
Atsushi takes a deep breath. “I… I see.”

“I’m sorry,” Chuuya-san repeats, patting his hand. “You’re still my favorite kouhai, if that helps.”

A laugh escapes Atsushi, giddy despite everything. He finds himself nodding profusely.

The two of them eventually leave the rose garden, on their way to having dinner at the cafeteria. Atsushi hopes that his blush has already receded, because he’s not looking forward to fending off Dazai-san’s inquiries about Chuuya-san’s whereabouts nor is he excited to deal with Higuchi’s teasing.

A particularly strong gust of wind sweeps rose petals around them, catching Atsushi’s breath as he watches some of them tangle in Chuuya-san’s curls, even as Chuuya-san yelp obscenities into the air as his hat is blown off.

Intent as he is on observing Chuuya-san, he easily notices it, when something slips out of Chuuya-san’s pocket.

Seeing that Chuuya-san is still busy chasing after his hat that’s drifting away, Atsushi picks up the small card. He didn’t plan on snooping, but his gaze catches on the index card.

The card says: ‘Nakajima Atsushi’.

He’s confused, but also a little bit flattered. He can recognize the handwriting there. It’s Chuuya-san’s. Maybe— He’s heard some rumors about how Chuuya-san’s having some bouts of mental problems? Maybe it’s a way for Chuuya-san to remind himself of their meeting?

“—Atsushi?”

“Y-Yes!” He instinctively responds, shoving the card forward, half-bowing. “You dropped this!”

“Thanks,” Chuuya-san says with a grin and a pat to Atsushi’s head. Chuuya-san doesn’t explain anything and Atsushi’s too dazed to ask.

By the time they reach the cafeteria, nearly everyone’s there aside from Dazai-san.

He tries not to feel too disappointed when Chuuya-san only stays for a short while, before claiming that he has to leave soon, something about needing to lock himself up in his room so he can study for the upcoming exams.

…Apparently, his disappointment is too palpable, because he gets bombarded by teasing and consolation the moment Chuuya-san leaves.

He tries to console himself with the knowledge that even if Chuuya-san has rejected him

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JUL 6, 2019. Saturday.

- 12:30 PM JST. Fukuzawa Yukichi and Mori Ougai wake up. Upon receiving information
about the package that’s been sent to him, Mori Ougai then asks to speak with Fukuzawa Yukichi.

- **01:00 PM JST.** Fukuzawa Yukichi opens a manhunt for humans with the name ‘Nathaniel Hawthorne’ and ‘Margaret Mitchell’. He claims that the two are the real X and his accomplice, and are responsible for attacking Fukuzawa Yukichi, Mori Ougai and Paul Verlaine in the Mori Mansion.

+ **JUL 5, 2019. Friday.**

[Jul 5, 2019, 00:01 AM] – [Sender: Unknown Number] – [Father, soon, I will be reborn.]
[Jul 5, 2019, 00:02 AM] – [Sender: Unknown Number] – [Father, I will be at the library before sunrise. I will be waiting.]

Arthur Rimbaud’s hands shake in something that isn’t related to the seething coldness that seems to have blanketed him ever since the loss of the person that he’s already thought of as his son. While it’s true that they adopted Chuuya-kun for the sole purpose of raising an heir to their cause… it had stopped being simply that, for him.

He’s suspected it, that Chuuya-kun had simply faked his death. Fukuzawa Yukichi had been suspiciously reticent about the DNA and Dental Records, but Chuuya-kun was—is their son. He knows his capabilities—if he’s able to find a body-double, a person who isn’t supposed to be in the database to begin with… perhaps an overseas assassin or a spy… if he’s able to swap his information with theirs, he can effectively erase his existence.

It’s impossible to believe in Shibusawa’s research. There’s no true immortality – and the years of his research have only yielded more and more poisons, capable of condensing the cancerous effect of cells rapidly reproducing into a much-shorter timespan, allowing the human body to end up poisoning itself.

…Of course, it’s still valuable research.

There’s no shortage to war and to research about weapons.

The research that started out to be a quest for immortality is now a research to ensure mortality.

But he still stayed inside the mansion for all these years, buried himself in investigating his son’s death, buried himself in thinking if they’re the ones who pushed Chuuya-kun to the brink, if sending him to meet with Mori’s spawn, effectively sealed his doom.

No matter—

He’ll see Chuuya-kun in a few hours.

Paul will see reason, he’s sure. The three of them can just leave all this behind and start anew.

Perhaps he can grant this rebirth that Chuuya-kun had wished for hard enough that he willingly killed himself for it.

+
“You don’t want to fight?” The question is asked very sulkily. “Boo, this is so boring!”

“Yes, you’ve mentioned it five times in the past two minutes,” Chuuya reminds his companion, one hand on his hip and another on the drawn blade. To the other person in the living room, he says, “Though seriously, you don’t even want to try?”

“I do not believe that I will have the means to fight back,” Fyodor Dostoevsky says evenly while eyeing the katana. “I would like to avoid unnecessary bloodshed, the carpet is Persian antique.”

“Oh, I don’t mind a scenery change,” Chuuya shrugs, though he widens his stance, as though in an attempt to block Fyodor’s sight of Dazai who’s made himself at home by lounging at the couch. Dazai yawns and appears bored enough to start juggling the skull that they’ve brought along for this meeting.

“I’m afraid that everything in this house is priceless antique,” Fyodor’s apologetic tone sounds very sincere, even if his face betrays his intentions. He doesn’t look defeated, aside from that split-second of distress when he spots the package they’ve brought.

Chuuya raises an eyebrow as he notices Fyodor take a step back, closer to the hallway that leads to the inner portion of the house. “Everything?”

“Except perhaps the visitor behind you,” is said with palpable distaste. “Really, Chuuya-kun. Someone of your caliber is wasted on the likes of Dazai-kun.”

“Aw, chibi, you got called an antique!” Dazai calls out, faux cheer more poisonous than the poison they have brought with them. “Be careful, those who like antiques tend to be dirty old men.”

Wonderingly, “Weren’t you the one who wanted me to use this antique katana?”

“Fufufu, I’ll only be dirty if you come here and sit on my lap.”

“Disgusting,” Chuuya and Fyodor end up blurting out simultaneously, causing Dazai to huff petulantly and kick the back of Chuuya’s leg.

“How about it, Chuuya-kun?”

“That’s a hard pass from me,” Chuuya says, tone conversational if not for the fact that he’s raised his sword so that it’s level with Fyodor’s chest, ready to skewer his heart in one swift motion. There’s a couple of steps and a coffee table separating them, but Chuuya can easily vault over those in a heartbeat.

“…Also, you wish to avoid unnecessary bloodshed?” Dazai asks, all cruel laughter. “Weren’t you the one who convinced X poison unsuspecting students and staff, just so you could camouflage your actual intent?”

“We’ve only given the others a single dosage. Without a second dose, all they would experience is nausea and gastrointestinal distress.”

“Oh, wow, does this mean Dos-kun is actually an angel?” Dazai asks with exaggerated inflections, even going so far as to slowly clap. “They should be thankful they get to keep their lives, hurray, hurray~ ♪”

Chuuya resists rolling his eyes, continues to focus on Fyodor and his eerie calm. “Pfft, stop making
me laugh, shitty mackerel, I’m trying to focus here!”

“Oh, but I always like hearing you make all sorts of sounds!”

It’s harder to suppress an eyeroll this time. Of course Dazai would try to flaunt their relationship, especially in front of someone he wrongfully perceives as a rival. So stupid and so embarrassing. Chuuya shifts so that he can kick Dazai’s wayward leg instead.

“So, you guys give the first dose of poison to everyone in that party by Fitzgerald,” Chuuya starts, sounding like an aggrieved parent recounting the delinquency of their children. “And then, you tail your targets and give them a second dose once you’re all ready with your alibis and shit? Then why even bother tampering with the CCTV?”

“Isn’t it because they wanted to keep the mystique for a little longer? Play with the eyes of the police,” Dazai reasons, yawning in the middle of it. “Of course, Gogol-kun must have ordered Katai-san fiddle with the CCTV, once he’s learned that his dearest Dos-kun was being naughty, ne?”

“Katai-san got bullied, huh,” Chuuya says with a sigh. “He probably didn’t know he was actually tampering with CCTV footage. He probably thought it was some exercise or top-secret job?”

“Ah, the police is really sad, to trust someone like Gogol-kun in such a high position,” Dazai sighs dramatically. “But that works well for Fyodor-kun over here, because someone is watching out over him, like a guardian angel, how sweet, how sweet~♪”

“So, Fyodor has lunch with Shibusawa and gives him the second dose of poison.” Chuuya surmises after a few moments of the three of them simply watching each other’s movements. “And Fyodor asks Gogol to get him the copy of the Introduction to Witchcraft that was locked in evidence.”

Dazai murmurs, “Gogol-kun is so hardworking, isn’t he?”

“Was,” Chuuya corrects him.

“Well, he is still alive in our hearts, I’m sure,” Dazai says with a snicker. “But rather than a cute title such as ‘X’s accomplice’, all he actually is, is a poor narrator strung along by his beloved. Isn’t that tragic?”

“Hmm,” Chuuya agrees noncommittally. He’s more focused as to why and how Fyodor is very calm, despite the threat to his life. Of course, there’s always the possibility that Chuuya is surrounded by suicide maniacs, but the world can’t be that tasteless, can it? No, there has to be a reason for this.

“He probably got Mori-san to convince Fukuzawa-san to hunt the two of us down as ‘X’,” Dazai speaks up rather sleepily from behind him. “Tsk, Dos-kun, why are you like this? If you want to kill someone, you should do it yourself~! Otherwise, you won’t get to impress chibikko over here~!”

Chuuya snorts, and in the next exhale, deflects a small blade that comes flying towards Dazai.

“…Ah,” Dazai lets out a sound that is much more energized, as he acknowledges the arrival of two others. “Mori-san, Fukuzawa-san, you two look rather lively for having barely escaped from death, don’t you?”

XX, XX, 20XX
Reading books isn’t really his forte, but he’s been reading a lot recently.

As though to trace the footsteps of Chuuya-san during his life—

Chuuya-san is a frequent visitor of the library, even if he always ends up disappearing somewhere. He rarely checks books out. But after looking through all of the books in the library, he’s been able to find the books that have been checked out by Dazai-san instead.

He’d rather get his hands on Introduction to Witchcraft, but there’s only one copy of it and it’s taken as evidence.

One more thing about Chuuya-san that has slipped past his hands.

Still, there are other books. One of the books stands out to him. Like the Introduction to Witchcraft, it was also written by Professor Shibusawa.

The Travels of Prince Takaoka.

Dazai-san had borrowed this book last December 23, 2013.

It’s not exactly Christmas reading. It’s a book chronicling the journey of a prince, hailing from the east and going to the west, meeting all sorts of creatures in his travels. The prince meets all sorts of creatures, including a mummy that is a panacea, who could supposedly heal everything, but the prince ends up dying anyway, full of life and full of light, before he reaches his destination.

It’s easy to imagine it as Chuuya-san being the prince, who’s stuck in the eastern lake that’s overrun with rot and death, unable to reach his destination in the rose garden on the west.

It’s easy to imagine Dazai-san failing Chuuya-san.

If only—

Dazai-san, who always claimed and laughed about his plans always being right.

Dazai-san, who promised that there’d be no escape for Chuuya-san.

Dazai-san, who dragged Chuuya-san down with him.

If only—

If only he was the one beside Chuuya-san.

If only he was Dazai-san instead, he’d make sure to heal every single one of Chuuya-san’s pain, he’d make sure to not let Chuuya-san down.

If only—

Right now, there are things only he can do.

He may not be Dazai-san, but he can be better than Dazai-san.

Prince Takaoka may have died, but the story still had a happy ending, because a tiger came in and consumed the prince, and the tiger reached the west in the prince’s stead.
He may not be Dazai-san—
But he can be that tiger.
He’ll start with Professor Shibusawa.
After all, if not for his research, all of this wouldn’t have happened.

How about it, Readers?
Are you arriving at the truth as well?
Gogol-kun did his best to help you, didn’t he? After all, didn’t he say that the biggest clue of all is that this is a story about liars?
And that X is the one who lied the most.
Gogol-kun also did say this, didn’t he? That the messages from X all point to X’s identity!
…Oops, you’ll have to pardon me, I’ll have to leave first, or else my darling will have a harder time!
Family reunions are such troublesome work, after all~♪

Chapter End Notes

.......so :)
+ akutagawa’s canon interest = calligraphy
+ chuuya with a sword = based on that initial concept art from harukawa where they originally wanted to give chuuya a sword
+ as i had mentioned in ch3’s a/n = medicine mummy & consumed body are from IRL Shibusawa’s book, “The Travels of Prince Takaoka”
+ the ”important line” that i was referring to is ”the biggest clue of them all is X is the one who lies the most”... if you check the police statements there’s 1 person there who have lied so much lol

thank you for accompanying me this far & see you in the finale! ♥♥♥

ps, after this & my big bangs i might start writing a dangan ronpa or a snowy mountain villa murder mystery AU where soukoku is the culprit, but the task is to find out who soukoku is ;)
JUL 6, 2019. Saturday.

“Ah. Mori-san, Fukuzawa-san, you two look rather lively for having barely escaped from death, don’t you?”

“You too, Dazai-kun,” Mori replies serenely. The layers of his clothes seem to act as an armor, as though they’re able to hide the wound that Chuuya has inflicted on him not even a day ago. Still, he keeps up with a genial act, at odds with his companion, who has his lips set in a grim line.

There’s a sheathed sword by Fukuzawa’s hip, the other half of the pair of antique katana that went missing from the Mori Mansion’s study.

Mori adds, “You two look rather lively for being considered as ‘deceased’, aren’t you?”

“Oh, we’ve been rather energetic recently,” Dazai cups a hand over his mouth, as though he’s not supposed to be saying these things, but he just can’t stop himself from oversharing. “Quite vigorous, actually.”

Mori asks, thoughtful and intrigued, “Is it the type of vigor that would be better off locked in a padded cell?”

“It’s the type of vigor that doesn’t mind slaughtering a person,” Dazai says, equally thoughtful-sounding. “Or ten.”

“But it’s not really you who’s doing the dirty work, is it?” Mori continues asking, just as he continues to inch closer to where Fyodor is, to where the hallway that leads to the kitchen is. “Shouldn’t Chuuya-kun over there have a say on these proceedings?”

Chuuya cuts his gaze towards where Mori is standing nearly shoulder-to-shoulder with Fukuzawa. Going three against one is doable, but going against three people while having to ensure that Dazai doesn’t make a nuisance of himself is much more difficult. Still, he retorts with a, “I say shut the fuck up and let’s just fight if we’re gonna fight, damn it.”

Mori lets out a sigh, sounding like an aggrieved parent. “Verlaine-kun never did manage to teach you how to be less brutish, did he?”

“You never did manage to teach the shitty mackerel how to be less shitty of a person,” Chuuya fires
back, “so we’re even on that front.”

“Ouch,” Dazai purrs and makes pawing gestures with his hands from behind Chuuya. “Chibikko, why are you so irritable? You should be happy you get to kill three people here!”

“Stop making me sound like a psychopath!”

“Oh, pardon me, battle maniac,” Dazai simpers, but it’s like a switch has been flipped, as Chuuya jumps forward and vaults over the coffee table in one smooth motion.

The blade in Chuuya’s hands was originally pointed towards Fyodor’s heart, but he changes direction at the last split-second, driving it towards Fukuzawa instead as he shifts slightly to the right. Mori and Fyodor move simultaneously on opposite directions, Fyodor going towards the hallway and Mori towards Dazai.

Chuuya and Dazai exchange neither words nor eye-contact, but there’s a thread of understanding between them, as Dazai runs after Fyodor and Chuuya sweeps back and blocks Mori’s charge using the sheath of his own borrowed katana.

“Chuuya-kun,” Mori says sweetly, covering up his labored breathing as Chuuya pitches his entire weight on the sheath as it presses hard enough to bruise and reopen wounds against Mori’s torso. “Won’t you allow me to discipline my own son?”

“Mori-san, I don’t know if you’ve heard the news.” Chuuya goes for a conversational tone, even as he avoids a swing from Fukuzawa’s sword in the same fluid movement, as he continues sweeping back and preventing Mori from following Dazai and Fyodor. The katana nicks the edges of the dress he’s wearing, but it also serves to hide the movements of his feet, so he does not discard it in favor of easier movement. “But your son, Dazai Osamu, is already counted as ‘Deceased’.”

“You’re referring to your trick of hacking into all of the databases in order to render all means of identification useless?”

“I’m not so sure how I feel about it being called a mere ‘trick’…” Chuuya murmurs, as he deflects another charge from Fukuzawa while keeping Mori at bay. “I had to work on it for quite some time, after all.”

There’s a sudden crashing sound from beyond the living room, causing Chuuya to tighten his grip around his sword.

“Oh, pardon my rudeness then.” Mori says very insincerely. “I should have asked you for the names that you two are now using.”

“Pfft, it doesn’t matter.”

“It does not?”

Chuuya shakes his head and hooks his heel against one of the coffee table’s legs, so he could fling it sideways towards Mori’s shins. A split-second later, he moves too quickly for the naked eye to notice, slashing twice towards Fukuzawa. The first one is directed towards Fukuzawa’s hand; the second is to cut it off entirely to prevent him from recovering his grip on his own katana.

Despite it all, Fukuzawa’s swordsman is honest and straightforward in its strength. There is no guile nor greed in his movements, and that is the one thing that separates them. Fukuzawa’s sword is there for the sake of fighting for his principles.
Chuuya’s sword is just one of his weapons, simply an extension of his will.

When they had faced off the day before, Verlaine’s sudden arrival distracted and tempted Chuuya into sating his desire to demand payback from the person who had adopted him, allowing these two to escape with their lives. There is no second time for these two.

“It does not matter—X’s plans, Fyodor’s plans, your plans.” Chuuya whispers as he stalks towards Mori, katana raised like a gleaming guillotine, after he successfully incapacitates Fukuzawa. “The only thing that matters is that he’s mine.”

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JUL 5, 2019. Friday.

Surrounded by the roses in full bloom, Akutagawa Ryuunosuke wears gloves as he unlocks Izumi Kyouka’s phone. Nakajima Atsushi is pacing beside him, looking more wrecked than ever. This is why Akutagawa had his reservations about this entire thing. He understands it, he really does.

Chuuya-san is very important to him, after all.

But avenging his death is not going to bring him back to life. No, all it will do is bring them closer to death.

He also doesn’t trust Professor Dostoevsky. But—the jinko is stubborn. Akutagawa won’t say that he’s been outright brainwashed or hypnotized into doing these things, but something has happened to make the jinko ignore common sense and insist on these things.

In the end, Akutagawa doesn’t stop him. He’s going to be the voice of reason here, to stop the foolish jinko from going too far. Kyouka knows too much and Akutagawa doesn’t want to harm her, doesn’t want to have it come to that. So they’ll just have to temporarily take her out of the picture.

So, he asks the jinko, “How does Izumi Kyouka usually word her messages?”, as he prepares to send a faked text message.

+ 

JUL 6, 2019. Saturday.

“Aren’t you being too dramatic, Dazai-kun?”

Dazai hums as he lightly kicks at the broken shards of porcelain, from the vase that he unceremoniously elbowed out of its display. “I’m being generous to you, you see?”

Fyodor raises an eyebrow from the other end of the dining room, a twelve-seat wooden table separating him from Dazai. “Oh?”

“See, with this, my darling will certainly come running here!” Dazai blinks huge eyes at Fyodor, acting like an innocent lamb before it gets slaughtered. It is laughable acting, even if there’s no hint of comedy in the atmosphere. “And you’d like that, wouldn’t you?”

“You have trained him like a dog,” Fyodor spits out, terribly unamused. “Such a disgusting feat worthy of someone like you, I suppose.”

“Oh, come on, Dos-kun, aren’t you projecting yourself on me?” Dazai strikes a thinking pose as he lets his fingers tap a metronome beat against the wooden table.
Fyodor stands beside the chair reserved for the Head of the Table. One of his hands is also tapping against the wooden table, as the two of them exchange Morse Code barbs about how disgusting the other is, even as they continue their verbal sparring.

“No, no, I’m afraid you have the monopoly on disgusting schemes, Dazai-kun.” Fyodor sounds apologetic, like he’d be happy to fight Dazai for the dubious honor, but has chosen not to. “Didn’t you try your very best to seduce me during our counselling sessions?”

“Oh, that?” Dazai waves that off with his free hand, as though it’s a particularly nasty fly. “That’s just part of my card game with the chibikko.”

“Nakahara Chuuya does not strike me as the type to willingly play with others’ emotions,” Fyodor says steely. “You must have goaded him into doing so, Dazai-kun.”

“You see, I think this is the problem with his adoring fans.” Dazai lets out a long-suffering sigh. “You all seem to think he’s a goody-goody two shoes when he really isn’t.”

“Anyone is angelic compared to you,” Fyodor points out sweetly. Dazai blinks. “Hmm, good point.”

His fingers tap out, he’s mine and you absolutely hate it, don’t you? He simply needs to be brought out of your thrall, Fyodor’s fingers relay, as his mouth says, “Another good point is that it is you who needs to perish here, Dazai-kun.”

“Fufufu, Chuuya definitely won’t like that.” Dazai lets out a genuine chuckle—bone-chilling in its honesty. “You’ve tried to your very, very best to seduce him during your counselling sessions with him and never got anywhere. What makes you think you can succeed now?”

Fyodor taps his lips using his free hand, as his expression drips pity, “I assume he never told you about that time in the parking lot?”

“I assume he never told you that I was in the backseat of that car?” Dazai fires back, his lips jutting out in an exaggerated pout. “To be so satisfied with a little bit of necking… quite pathetic, wouldn’t you say?”

Fyodor looks disbelieving. “You were there all along?”

“Of course?” Dazai looks disbelieving that Fyodor dares to disbelieve his words. “A good relationship needs a little spice of jealousy every now and then!”

A moment, before: “The rumors… they were true?”

“I told you. It’s all just part of our game.” Dazai is merciless as he continues, “We see how well we can pretend with acting human with others. Whoever wins gets to top. Pretty simple, no?”

“Impossible. Nakahara Chuuya would never—”

“Fufufu, and you know him well, hmm?” Dazai has a very cruel smirk. “Of course, that’s not the only reason, but… I don’t need to explain such things to you, do I?”

“What I’d like to know,” Chuuya’s voice cuts in, just as he enters the dining room and stands beside Dazai, his dress sustaining several slices and blood splatters, “is just why and how you’ve managed to rope Atsushi and Akutagawa into your schemes.”
Fyodor’s expression flickers, greed and ecstasy flaring before not-quite-managing to settle. “Chuuya-kun.”

Dazai mock-gags. “Chuuya-kun,” he mimics with a syrupy tone. “Uwaaa, how disgusting, how disgusting!”

Easily ignoring Dazai now that his real target is in the room, Fyodor says, “But I am not X. I am not the evil mastermind here, Chuuya-kun.”

“So what if you’re not X?” Chuuya scoffs. “Finding X isn’t the main point of this façade, is it? After all, the one who wants the readers and the police to find X… isn’t it Nikolai Gogol who started off that quest?”

“Poor, hardworking Gogol-kun did his best to protect you, didn’t he?” Dazai asks, leaning his entire body weight against Chuuya, as his free hand wraps around a petite waist. “He even joined the party as the Narrator by the second chapter of this tale, just so he can help guide everyone into searching for X! That way, he can ensure that you get to do what you want without getting caught, and for everyone to find and blame everything on X!”

“He’s very efficient, wasn’t he?” Chuuya asks as he leans right back against Dazai. His left hand has two sheathed katana in his grasp. “He isn’t exactly an accomplice to X’s plans because X never outright talks to him about them, but he helps you out through other means.”

Dazai chimes in, “Manipulating the CCTV Footage with Katai-kun’s help, in order to disguise the fact that the killings are done via poison. I wonder, did you promise him that you’ll love him instead of Chuuya if he helps you with your schemes?”

“I hate rats, sorry,” Chuuya says completely unapologetically.

Dazai rubs his cheek over Chuuya’s wig. “You prefer handsome, intelligent, very tall men?”

“I like to eat seafood,” Chuuya simply says, but doesn’t push Dazai away too hard when the other tries to steal a kiss right in front of their audience.

Fyodor’s expression grows sour at the blatant display of affection. “Chuuya-kun, I simply wanted to give you a chance to come back and settle your accounts.”

“Boooooo,” Dazai sticks his tongue out at the end. “As soon as you learn that there’s a possibility that Chuuya’s alive, you start making plans to have some poor kids do your dirty work, then you can have all the blame pushed on them, and then claim glory of being the mastermind all along? Do you think that’s enough to impress a chibi?! He’s too short for such things!”

“Oi!” Chuuya jabs his elbow against Dazai’s ribs. “That ‘short’ bit is totally unnecessary!”

“I think Dos-kun here is totally unnecessary too,” Dazai points out, sobering Chuuya up.

Finally, Chuuya peers straight at Fyodor, even as he talks to Dazai. “You want me to kill him? Not going to be jealous that I’ll be in close contact with him?”

Dazai clicks his tongue. “Can’t you just throw your sword at him?”

“It might not be fatal,” Chuuya argues.

“Afraid you’ll miss?”
“Anticipating the amount of bitching you’ll give me,” comes the correction.

Dazai sighs, even more at the deathly calm that Fyodor still possesses, even like this, forced to confront the fact that it’s completely impossible for him to ensnare what he truly wants. “A chibikko is trying to predict me? How far you’ve evolved, really…”

“So?” Chuuya asks with a raised eyebrow, watching Fyodor put one of his hands in his pockets.

“I had hoped you’d see sense,” Fyodor says, shaking his head. “Nakahara Chuuya, won’t you leave behind someone like Dazai-kun?”

“Even if I dumped his sorry ass,” Chuuya says, shrugging off Dazai’s hold on his waist and ignoring Dazai’s protests at being considered a ‘sorry ass’, “that doesn’t mean that I’ll come running to you.”

And then, thoughtfully, Chuuya tilts his head.

“Oh. Maybe I will.”

And then, as quick as lightning, he leaps over the dining table, unsheathing the two blades as he runs towards Fyodor on the other end of the room. The sheaths are tossed aside for Dazai to pick up, as Chuuya throws his entire body weight on his heels as he kicks himself off the table so he can jump the remaining distance and swing the swords in a pinwheel guillotine towards his target.

For his part, Fyodor looks like he wants to be decapitated.

And then, with a crack of lightning-like noise—

A series of explosions go off.

Starting from the bomb that’s been attached to the back of the chair Fyodor’s standing behind.

+  

**JUL 6, 2019. Saturday.**

06:00 PM JST. Police Superintendent Natsume Souseki releases a press release and a public statement that X and his accomplice, Nathaniel Hawthorne and Margaret Mitchell, have both perished during a suicide attempt on his hideout, as soon as X has learned that the police is closing in on him. The statement implicates X as a foreign spy who was planning to steal the research done by Shibusawa Tatsuhiko. This foreign spy then wanted to cripple Yokohama’s network by also targeting influential people, like Shibusawa Tatsuhiko, Nikolai Gogol, Tayama Katai, Arthur Rimbaud, Paul Verlaine, Mori Ougai and Fukuzawa Yukichi.

In order to protect the knowledge that these honorable people have died for, a charity organization will be set up to help continue funding research on antidotes for biochemical weapons.

Natsume Souseki then reassures the citizens of Yokohama that peace has been restored in Yokohama.

+  

**JUL 6, 2019. Saturday. 11:30 PM JST.**

“…Eh, that was a load of bullshit,” Dazai says as he stretches his limbs outwards, letting out a sigh as there are popping sounds. “Don’t they ever learn?”
“What else they were supposed to say?” Chuuya asks as he ensures that the cloth is laid out properly. “Some totally thirsty guy thought he could seduce a legally-dead guy by setting up a murder spree?”

“That sounds about right,” Dazai mutters sullenly as his muscles twinge in protest.

“Pfft. Now you’re actually wearing bandages for a reason,” Chuuya points out, grinning. “Not so fun, eh?”

The moon is high up in the sky, illuminating them very well. It’s quite risky, going back here when there’s still a palpable sense of panic and tension. But this is where everything begins—it’d be fitting if everything ends here as well. The picnic cloth that they brought with them is red like dried blood. There’s even a picnic basket with them. Only, instead of containing sumptuous food, the basket is simply a first aid kit.

“You only have yourself to blame,” Chuuya adds, but tellingly doesn’t punch Dazai’s face away when the other starts to lay down on the spot that Chuuya has set up for them, laying his head over his lap. Chuuya stretches his legs and wiggles his toes, one of his hands running through Dazai’s hair, poking the bandage wrapped around his hairline. His left hand is free for Dazai to play with, and Dazai does not hesitate in intertwining their fingers. “If you didn’t have the insufferable need for dramatics, we could have avoided the explosion entirely.”

There’s a rope of bandages snaking around Chuuya’s legs, rising from his calves and ending just past his knees. Right now, Chuuya’s in fitting summer shorts and a plain white shirt, reminiscent of what he usually wore during kayak club practice.

“I wanted to see how they’d spin it,” Dazai mumbles.

“And?”

“…I wanted to let them do the hard work of explaining away our sudden presence.”

Chuuya sighs and traces skin just-past the bandages around Dazai’s head, using his nails, digging it just enough to cause a light crescent to be imprinted. Looking down and meeting the other’s eyes, he sighs, “…And?”

Dazai pouts up at him. “I wanted to see Chuuya covered in bandages!”

Dazai’s hand, the one that’s not intertwined with Chuuya’s, makes several sweeping gestures that belong to a toddler throwing a temper tantrum.

“Why is the chibikko so strong and agile?! You managed to throw the chair with the attached bomb, stab Fyodor AND flip the table so it can act as a shield for the two of us! In under five seconds! All of my plans to have Chuuya so injured he’ll have no choice but wear nothing but bandages! All of my plans to have Chuuya be so drugged with painkillers that he’ll be so cute and obedient! All of my plans are ruined! RUINED!”

“I am never talking to you again,” Chuuya declares, as he removes his hand from Dazai’s forehead and slaps it over the other’s mouth that keeps on spewing out nonsense.

And then, to the two other people by the side of the Yokohama University’s abandoned lake:

“Sorry about that. You can ignore this shitty mackerel.”

Chuuya then tilts his head. “Oh. It’s not like you two have a choice, huh?”
After all, both Atsushi and Akutagawa have their limbs bound and their mouths duct-taped. Chuuya personally doesn’t think that the two even have the will to oppose him, but it’s to ensure that this picnic goes well. Atsushi in particular is looking at him with a dazed expression that is simmering with betrayal.

“I appreciate what you did,” Chuuya says, to the two of them. He slaps Dazai’s mouth harder when the other starts making protesting sounds at his words. “Atsushi, you even created that forum to help keep my memory alive. Akutagawa, you even became a moderator just so you can ensure that nobody taints my name.”

The two younger men are bound in a cross-seated position, their backs facing the algae-infested waters. One sharp kick to their chests would send them tumbling into the lake. But the two of them don’t seem to care about that danger. They’re both staring, imploring at Chuuya.

Chuuya sighs. “I appreciate it, but it’s useless. I’m not a good person, after all.”

“Ugly fashion sense, even uglier height,” Dazai murmurs in agreement. Chuuya pinches his cheek sharply.

They’ve always been different, after all. Almost as though there’s a dark, corrupt otherworldly being inside them, baying for chaos and destruction. Sometimes, Chuuya loses sight of his surroundings, of reason, until he wakes up and he’s restrained, surrounded only by two shades: fearfulness and power-hungry greed. And then he’s picked up by Verlaine and Arthur—and then he’s only surrounded by that greed to exploit him. After all, if one could ignore the bursts of violence, he is a very powerful tool.

And then, he met Dazai.

And the hollowness inside him was filled, with an even darker sort of black hole. Meeting someone like Dazai calmed down his outbursts and worsened them simultaneously. His blackouts happened less, but then his everyday thoughts are interwoven with things like wanting to please Dazai, like wanting to understand their utter inhumanity, like wanting to do everything possible that the two of them stayed together forever.

He even agreed to take the experimental drugs that Shibusawa Tatsuhiko had ended up developing, as he strayed from his original path of wanting to find the road to immortality. It’s much easier to destroy and human mortality is more lucrative. Shibusawa Tatsuhiko continued his research on immortality, did it on the sly and published his findings in code as books. *The Travels of Prince Takaoka*, and then *Introduction to Witchcraft*. And then, the incomplete sequel to Introduction to Witchcraft, the manuscript of which he hid under a certain bench in a certain rose garden near his laboratory.

…In any case, Chuuya agreed to take the experimental drugs, the search for the panacea to be tested against his damaged brain.

Because he wanted to see if he could achieve some semblance of normality, of humanity.

Because he didn’t want to be a monster and really hurt Dazai.

But the drugs didn’t work.

So he focused on Dazai’s plans. The game to find people they can play with, they can practice their humanity on, they can manipulate in the future. Laying the groundwork for their future. Trying to ascertain just what kind of feeling does he have for Dazai, that kind of all-consuming obsession to
devour him alive and keep him inside him.

Edogawa Ranpo apparently gave Dazai an idea. A faked suicide in the lake, followed by living in seclusion, invoking romanticism by scheduling it on a popular lover’s festival. The lake, the mountain and the bridge of stars.

After the events of July 7, 2015, Edogawa Ranpo confessed to Edgar Allan Poe about his involvement in the faked double suicide. It’s that knowledge that had prompted Edgar Allan Poe to fear for Edogawa Ranpo’s life the moment that it seemed that Dazai and Chuuya are coming back to Yokohama.

“—hey, why are you busy reminiscing?” Dazai asks, pouting again. “You dare to ignore the lovely person on your lap?!”

“I don’t see one,” Chuuya says with a roll of his eyes.

To the other two, Chuuya continues, “I’m not a good person. I knew that the two of you admired me as a senpai and so, would do a lot of things for me.”

Chuuya thinks, that in another world, Akutagawa will probably worship and seek the acknowledgement of the first person to treat him as someone who can be useful. In another world, Atsushi will probably think of the world of the person who’ll pick him up from an unpleasant situation. To the point that he’ll always believe that person is a good person and never hear a bad word about him. Even if they join hands with villains, Atsushi will believe that in that person.

In this world, Chuuya is that person for both Atsushi and Akutagawa.

“Wait, stoooooooop—!!!” Dazai suddenly sits up and knocks foreheads with Chuuya. “Admire as a senpai?! What the hell are you saying, chibi?! Did the hat finally end up eating your brain?!”

“What the hell is your problem?!”

“They definitely had the hots for you!” Dazai shrieks, before licking Chuuya’s lips. “They wanted to do that, and more!”

“Really?” Chuuya frowns as he thinks hard about it. “I guess I really am more handsome than you, huh, shitty mackerel?”

“What a stupid chibi,” Dazai huffs, but he sounds mollified, as he sinks back to his resting place on Chuuya’s lap. “We’re really going to live in seclusion after this.”

Chuuya thinks hard again. “I don’t mind the mountains, but…”

“Somewhere near an ocean this time?”

“Mm.” Chuuya thinks he can make do with the possibility of having to fish Dazai out of the sea, if he can spend every day with the sound of the waves hitting the shore, calming in its regularity. And then, every moment punctuated by Dazai’s heartbeat under his ear. Yes, that sounds like an agreeable prospect.

“Then we better end this picnic session, hmm?”

Chuuya lifts his gaze so he can look at his underclassmen.

He hates leaving things in a fuzzy state, so he says, “Dazai Osamu and Nakahara Chuuya faked
their double suicide last July 7, 2015. Their main reason is to leave behind Yokohama which has become filled with the ambitions of their respective families.”

“You could just say we left because we wanted to elope,” Dazai teases. “Edogawa Ranpo helped Dazai Osamu think of the double suicide plan.”

“And Nakahara Chuuya was the one who hacked into the databases to ensure that the DNA Records and Dental Records would show that the corpses found matched the records of Dazai Osamu and Nakahara Chuuya.”

“Of course, the bodies didn’t actually belong to us.” Dazai adds loftily. “Dazai Osamu and Nakahara Chuuya have disposed of foreign spies, Nathaniel Hawthorne and Margaret Mitchell, and used their bodies as body doubles.”

And then, Dazai chuckles up at Chuuya. “It’s very generous of me to pick them, really. Because this way, our height difference became just 17 centimeters instead of 21 centimeters! I gave you 4 centimeters in death, chibikko.”

“Shut the fuck up,” Chuuya responds to his lover’s generosity by pinching the other’s nose. “I’m sure that our respective families suspected that we’re still alive though.”

Dazai hums. “Fukuzawa Yukichi even helped cover up the discrepancies in our records.”

“I’ve always wondered about that.”

“Mori-san used to have a daughter that he adopted along with Fukuzawa-san,” Dazai tells him. “Fukuzawa-san probably assumed that if our faked double suicide was exposed, that would lead to the experimental drugs involvement to be exposed, which would then lead to the Shibusawa Tatsuhiko’s research to be exposed, which would lead to Mori-san’s wishes for Elise-chan’s resurrection to be blocked.”

Chuuya scrunches his nose. “…So it was because of love?”

“Wow, thanks for reducing my explanation!” Dazai sticks his tongue out, before mock-gagging. “But if you want to be dramatic, then yes.”

“I’m not the dramatic one here,” Chuuya reminds him.

“Oho, speaking of dramatic, Gogol-kun really was dramatic, wasn’t he?” Dazai chuckles. “It’s been kinda fun watching him try to spin things so he can help his dearest Dos-kun, but all along Fyodor had his eyes on a chibi! How absolutely disgusting!”

“I think you’re mad,” Chuuya says with a teasing grin, “that even though you tried to seduce Fyodor, it didn’t work at all.”

Dazai pouts again. Chuuya’s self-control can only go so far, so he leans down this time and kisses off the pout. He pulls away after a few seconds though, because they’re not about to make out in front of an audience this time.

“And then Fyodor somehow managed to get an inkling that the two of us faked the double suicide, probably by skulking around like a rat,” Dazai says after licking his lips, “and then he got the idea to influence Atsushi-kun and Akutagawa-kun over here that it’s a swell idea to start killing off the people responsible for the chibi’s death.”
“Maybe he talked to someone? Like the gardener?” Chuuya tilts his head as he considers it.

“Is that your narrator’s speculation?” Dazai asks. “Shouldn’t you use an underlined statement for it?”

“If everything’s going to end today, then there’s no use for further speculations,” Chuuya says as he flicks a finger over Dazai’s forehead, hitting above the spot where he knows there’s a fresh bruise.

“Speaking of speculations, I’ve always wondered just how close you are to Kouyou-anesan and Kyouka-chan.”

“Just leave them be,” Chuuya says with a heavy sigh. “I’d rather not test my blade against Ane-san.”

“So you help Kyouka-chan escape from Akutagawa-kun and Atsushi-kun, then deliver her to Kouyou-anesan.”

“Ane-san’s always had a soft spot for her,” Chuuya explains. “So whisking her away didn’t need a lot of thinking on her part.”

“Hear that, kids?” Dazai addresses the young duo in front of them. “Better hope that Kouyou-anesan doesn’t cross paths with you, lest she cuts you down.”

“I think Akutagawa and Atsushi just wanted Kyouka out of the way, for her own safety,” Chuuya quietly says. It’s still difficult for him to try to understand other people’s emotions, especially those that are so painfully human like the two in front of him.

“Is that so?” Dazai doesn’t sound like he really cares.

“That is so.”

“Are we really letting those two go?”

“Oda Sakunosuke has already joined forces with Andre Gide. Since Oda Sakunosuke did not receive the second dosage of the poison, he should not die from the poison set out by X.” Chuuya closes his eyes briefly. “But should our paths cross in the future, I will not hesitate to fight them.”

Dazai flutters his eyelashes exaggeratedly. “Ah, are you gonna fight them because OdaSaku disapproved of our relationship?”

“What? No!” Chuuya pinches Dazai’s nose again. “They seem strong, so I want to see how they fare!”

“…Ah.” Dazai looks disappointed. “You like fighting more than you like me.”

“Of course. I don’t even like you at all,” Chuuya declares. His declaration is absolutely ruined, not only by the fact that he’s allowing his lap to be used as Dazai’s pillow, not only by the fact that he’s smiling down at him, but mostly because of the fact that their intertwined hands haven’t separated the entire time they’ve been talking.

Dazai’s about to reply, but then he suddenly sneezes. He, of course, made sure to sneeze right into Chuuya’s face. Instead of being annoyed, Chuuya’s more worried about Dazai getting a summer flu. Not because he can’t bear it if the other is sick… actually, yes, that’s it. He can’t bear it if Dazai is sick; Dazai’s already filled to the gills with bullshit when healthy, he only gets more incorrigible he’s filled with snot and germs on top of that.
“That’s a sign, huh.”

“Uh-huh.”

Dazai sits up slowly, before rising to his full height, tugging Chuuya up with him. The pair of katana are beside them on the picnic cloth; Chuuya picks them up and slowly unsheathes them, the blades gleaming silver in the moonlight.

For a moment, Chuuya thinks about how the author and the narrator have tried to alert the readers about suspecting Nakajima Atsushi since the first chapter. X is the one who lied the most. Not only that, he’s a mere underclassman, a seemingly unrelated person whose police statement was published alongside the victim’s father and landlady. And then, the emphasis on notes, which were handwritten very clearly and neatly. Apparently, Akutagawa Ryuunosuke’s hobby including calligraphy is a published detail about him.

As the narrator had mentioned, Knox’s Decalogue applies to this case.

1. Nakajima Atsushi is mentioned and involved in the first chapter, but has not had his thoughts published until the denouement part.
2. No supernatural elements or magic are involved, as everything is merely a matter of deception and planning.
3. No secret passages or rooms are involved.
4. …Well. A poison is involved, but it’s still a pretty straightforward poison, isn’t it?
5. No Chinaman… well, no obscure foreigner got involved in the vital parts of the plan, at least?
6. There are way too many geniuses running around in Yokohama for things like unaccountable intuition to matter.
7. The detectives are corrupt, yes, but they did not commit the crime.
8. Wait, is there even a detective…?
9. …Does this mean that he’s the Watson?!
10. The idea of Dazai having a twin is enough to make him hurl.

Thankfully for Fyodor Dostoevsky, Nakajima Atsushi and Akutagawa Ryuunosuke, it seems that only Dazai Osamu and Nakahara Chuuya have read the Travels of Prince Takaoka. Therefore, only Dazai and Chuuya received the hint about the prince’s death leading to a tiger carrying his will.

…Ah, but what is he even thinking about?

Isn’t he breaking character right now?

Ah, but it’s so that the readers looking over this story will be able to sleep peacefully, knowing that the story ends now.

Chuuuya shakes his head to clear his thoughts.

He then approaches the two bound men, a figure clad in white, like an angel of death. He smiles as he says, “X, Nakajima Atsushi, and X’s accomplice, Akutagawa Ryuunosuke – I will have both of you die right here and now.”

July 7, 2019, 00:00 AM JST.
A story filled with liars finally comes to a close.

XX, XX, XXXX. Unknown location.

There’s a sound of waves hitting the sandy shores. There’s a faint hissing sound of summer sparklers, and an even fainter sound of lips against each other.

When the shorter man pulls back from the kiss, there’s a chiding tone on his voice, “If you end up dropping the sparklers on your feet, I’m going to laugh at you.”

“I’m going to set your clothes on fire,” his companion promises with a smile.

“You liar, you wouldn’t dare,” the shorter man says with a laugh, as he tugs at their linked hands so they can continue their trek on the sandy shores and get back home. With a smile warmer than the press of tropical summer heat, he adds, “Do it and I’ll kill you dead, shitty mackerel.”

“Fufufu, is that so?”

“That is so.”

“I wouldn’t hold my breath on it,” the other man replies. “After all, you are quite the liar, aren’t you?”

He laughs again, the laugh turning more cheerful when he notices that they have visitors on their secluded beach home.

liar, liar: END

Chapter End Notes

+ thank you for reading until the end! thank you for accompanying me on this journey!!! ♥♥♥

+ now, just who are those visitors? SSKK? Because Chuuya is a liar and therefore did not kill them? OdaGide who are sent to assassinate them (and therefore makes Chuuya happy for the prospect of a fight?) Kyouka and Kouyou? Fyodor + someone from the Rats? I’ll leave it up to you guys to decide ♥ perhaps fittingly, even the final chapter is filled with lies and cover-ups? ^^-; i might post an extra/side-story that has the alternate timelines (like: gogol surviving) but it depends on the interest i guess lol or if you guys have more questions/scenarios you want answered??

+ also, PS: remember in ch1 where the note from skk says “awaiting rebirth”? the kanji for “rebirth” can also be read as “regeneration” and we have one BSD MC whose power is regeneration… :P :P :P

+ if you want to read other murder mystery fics of mine, you can read the Murder Island
AU if you haven’t yet!

+ my next murder mystery fic will probably come around October/November? basically once i finish all 3 of my big bangs LOL it’s still a toss-up between:

(a) Snowy Mountain Villa setting + Mafia/Werewolf;
(b) Dangan Ronpa 3 AU because the NG Codes were fun;
(c) Chuuya having Poe’s powers and writing murder mystery novels, which only Dazai can solve, so they trap each other inside the novel, and—
i’ll probably post teasers up on my twitter first haha

anyway, thanks again and see you next time! :D♥
extra chapter: [alternate timeline where gogol survives]

Chapter Summary

as promised & requested! alternate timeline where gogol survives!!

this takes place starting Chapter 6 – where the 24-hour protection detail is set on Oda and Gogol stays in the police precinct to help guard Oda (aka: the double Oda result);
I’ll just be posting the changes to the timeline, so I won’t repost everything LOL

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

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JUL 5, 2019. Friday.

• 06:15 PM JST. Internal Memo for the Yokohama University Serial Murder Task Force states that a protection detail would be assigned to Oda Sakunosuke.

• 06:25 PM JST. Katayama Katai was seen leaving the police precinct to help investigate the CCTV Footage from the Mori Mansion.

• 06:30 PM JST. An anonymous tip was left on the police line regarding the whereabouts of Izumi Kyouka. This ‘anonymous tip’ was left by Nakahara Chuuya and Dazai Osamu. The phone call was traced in one of the five public phone booths available near Yokohama University. The tip states that they have last seen Izumi Kyouka near the Student Apartments owned by Ozaki Kouyou.

• 06:35 PM JST. Edogawa Ranpo successfully boards a 2-stop flight to Maldives from the Narita International Airport. Edgar Allan Poe promises to follow him as soon as he’s able.

• 06:50 PM JST. Katayama Katai arrive at the Mori Mansion. Hirotsu Ryuurou, the butler, hands over the disks with the CCTV information by the front door, claiming that the Crime Scene Investigators who are about to leave have finished processing the scene. Hirotsu does not answer any questions from Katai and does not ask him to stay for tea.

• 07:00 PM JST. Hirotsu Ryuurou shuts off the CCTV Surveillance Feed from the Mori Mansion and starts preparing a late dinner.

• 08:00 PM JST. Nakahara Chuuya and Dazai Osamu return to the Mori Mansion Study. As they eat the dinner prepared by Hirotsu, they offer Hirotsu a ‘deal’, for him to be spared of any more heartache if he disappears now. They promise to not chase him down, out of gratitude for his years of tireless service. Dazai Osamu completes his sweep of the five remaining bookshelves, while Nakahara Chuuya takes the time to slice open the vault. Within the timeframe they’ve agreed on, Nakahara Chuuya is not successful in opening the vault; they only have two options: to obtain the help of another top-class hacker like Katai, or get Mori Ougai to open it for them.
• 09:00 PM JST. Nikolai Gogol starts interrogating Oda Sakunosuke. Oda Sakunosuke agrees to reveal information to Nikolai Gogol, as long as it’s not under record. Oda Sakunosuke then confirms with Nikolai Gogol that he’s sent by someone to originally assassinate Shibusawa Tatsuhiko, but after seeing that Shibusawa’s research can be useful to help people, Oda has decided to simply keep an eye on him and help guard him. **From the beginning, Shibusawa Tatsuhiko is aware that Oda Sakunosuke is an assassin.** But Shibusawa only had his interest on his research and doesn’t mind it, if Oda can help alleviate his boredom. It is Shibusawa’s idea to hire Oda alone as his TA to help facilitate his ‘assassination’, as he’s curious to see just how Oda will act against him. Oda Sakunosuke then asks to speak with Natsume Souseki, so he can request for an extraction.

• 10:00 PM JST. Edgar Allan Poe arrives at the local precinct and asks to urgently speak with Nikolai Gogol. Poe brings with him a coded letter handed to him by Edogawa Ranpo. The coded message says, ‘they will come for you next’. Nikolai Gogol then frantically tries to contact Fyodor Dostoevsky, but is unsuccessful.

• 11:00 PM JST. Andre Gide arrives at the local precinct to post bail for Oda Sakunosuke. However, Oda Sakunosuke suggests that he stay in the police precinct until the morning, to help keep an eye on things.

+  

JUL 6, 2019, Saturday.

• 02:38 AM JST. Power returns to Yokohama Hospital after a blackout at 02:27 AM JST. The corpses of Fukuzawa Yukichi and Mori Ougai are found on their respective hospital beds. **Both corpses are beheaded and both their heads are missing.** Nakahara Chuuya is a bit disappointed that he does not get to fight Fukuzawa on an even ground, but Dazai Osamu claims that he’ll make it up to him by setting him up to fight someone else. They quickly take the head of Mori Ougai to the Mori Mansion vault and use it to open the vault.

• 03:00 AM JST. Nakahara Chuuya and Dazai Osamu originally plan to go and ‘greet’ Oda Sakunosuke, but upon seeing that he’s still in the precinct and Andre Gide is there as well, along with the full police force, they decide to bide their time and they return to their temporary hideout at the Verlaine mansion. Based on the sudden cautiousness of Nikolai Gogol, Dazai Osamu guesses that Oda Sakunosuke must have come clean about his affiliation and that Edogawa Ranpo must have betrayed them. They decide to pay a visit to Edgar Allan Poe in the morning to let him lead them to Edogawa Ranpo for ‘payback’.

• 04:00 AM JST. Upon learning of the fates of Mori Ougai and Fukuzawa Yukichi, Nikolai Gogol panics and attempts to contact Fyodor Dostoevsky once more. He is unable to contact him, but he does leave a coded voicemail stating that they should hide underground first and simply leave Akutagawa Ryuunosuke and Nakajima Atsushi as the scapegoat.

• 05:00 AM JST. Still unable to contact Fyodor Dostoevsky, Nikolai Gogol threatens Katayama Katai to assist him in tampering with the electronic evidence that they have, so he can expose the crimes of Akutagawa Ryuunosuke and Nakajima Atsushi, while erasing Fyodor Dostoevsky’s involvement.

• 06:00 AM JST. Nikolai Gogol issues a warrant of arrest for Akutagawa Ryuunosuke and
Nakajima Atsushi, under suspicion ‘that the two are acting in tandem together as X’.

• 06:05 AM JST. Fyodor Dostoevsky’s calls to Nakahara Chuuya’s old number finally connects. Phone records show that he’s been trying to call Nakahara Chuuya’s number for the past twelve hours. The 06:05 AM call only lasts for fifteen seconds – it’s of Nakahara Chuuya saying that Fyodor Dostoevsky is not even worth killing.

• 06:12 AM JST. Paul Verlaine’s beheaded corpse is found inside of the Verlaine Mansion. Initial autopsy places his time of death between 3:00 to 6:00 AM JST.

• 06:45 AM JST. Dazai Osamu and Nakahara Chuuya make their way to Edgar Allan Poe’s residence.

• 06:58 AM JST. Akutagawa Ryuunosuke and Nakajima Atsushi have been successfully captured and detained in police custody.

• 07:00 AM JST. Fyodor Dostoevsky arrives at the police precinct and tells Nikolai Gogol that he’s willing to run away with him, at least for now. Gogol doesn’t comment on how Fyodor seems distraught; he immediately books them a bunch of tickets to different flights and boat rides, to throw off any pursuers.

• 07:30 AM JST. Natsume Souseki arrives at the police precinct and takes over supervising the case. He then authorizes the release of Oda Sakunosuke and cancels the protection detail on him. Oda Sakunosuke and Andre Gide leave the precinct together. Nikolai Gogol uses this commotion as a chance to leave with Fyodor Dostoevsky unnoticed.

• 08:00 AM JST. Natsume Souseki publishes a statement as to how X has been captured successfully and that it’s been the work of a pair of outliers, who have simply snapped under the stress and pressure of academia. He then opens the floor for investors who can help ensure that the Shibusawa Tatsuhiko’s research does not become forgotten, for the kind of medicine that he’s researching could help people like X in the future, by curing their mental ailments.

+ 

POST-SCRIPT.

• Nikolai Gogol and Fyodor Dostoevsky manage to run off to Russia, where they spend their days hopping from one cold city to another. Gogol helps Fyodor set up an information network they jokingly call, ‘House of the Dead’, especially since they’ve received news that Oda Sakunosuke and Andre Gide have been slain in a bloody fight by an assassin who wields dual-blades. Because of the dual-blades and the fact that the crime scenes are discovered once the victims’ blood have turned black, this assassin is given the code name ‘double black’.

• Ozaki Kouyou and Izumi Kyouka eventually end up meeting Hirotsu Ryuurou in a fishing town in a southern tropical country, all three of them already sporting different identities.

• Akutagawa Ryuunosuke and Nakajima Atsushi have been sentenced to life in prison, in adjacent cells. Akutagawa Ryuunosuke does not tell Nakajima Atsushi that he has seen that Nakahara Chuuya is alive, half in avoidance of Atsushi’s reaction, and half because he wants them to be able to move on.
• Akutagawa Gin, the only person who Akutagawa Ryunosuke has told, during that hospital visit, that Nakahara Chuuya is alive, established a company called ‘Black Lizard’ along with Tachihara Michizou and Higuchi Ichiyu. On the surface, it’s an IT Company, but it actually works to help track down Nakahara Chuuya and Dazai Osamu. The trio also have plans to break Akutagawa and Atsushi out of prison, but whether their plans will succeed is still uncertain.

• Kunikida Doppo and Sakaguchi Ango eventually both end up working for the government. The two of them eventually end up working together to help uncover the conspiracy regarding Shibusawa Tatsuhiko’s research that is deeply-rooted into Yokohama’s grounds.

• Edgar Allan Poe’s fate is uncertain, but there’s a certain detective who’s been helping feed information to the ‘Black Lizard’, the ‘House of the Dead’ and to Kunikida and Ango, leaving them hints and clues as to Nakahara Chuuya and Dazai Osamu’s whereabouts. This certain detective refuses any payment, and only asks them to make him happy by ensuring that ‘double black’ is brought to justice.

• Nikolai Gogol and Fyodor Dostoevsky leave Russia after four years, as per Fyodor’s insistence. There’s an advertisement for a Sky Casino, something that they both agree to visit before leaving for a tropical location next.

• Dazai Osamu and Nakahara Chuuya receive an anonymous message from someone claiming to be a ‘rat’, advising them that they are free to exterminate rats aboard a blimp. Nakahara Chuuya and Dazai Osamu flip a coin as to whether they’ll bite the bait that Fyodor Dostoevsky left for them.

And for the result—

Fate is still uncertain.

+ liar, liar alternate timeline: END

Chapter End Notes

+ thanks for reading until the end again! ♥

it deviates quite a bit from the plot, but there are some things that never changed, huh... in my mind the only timeline where soukoku got foiled so hard is if chuuya dies early on - as in during the drugs w/shibusawa (but then dazai-san will probs just go full yandere lmao). i think that as long as those two work together (whether as lovers or simply cooperating) they’d be able to take on anything, after all haha

anyway, thanks again!!! go and read the Murder Island too, if you liked this one ♥

have a great week ahead!
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