Obligatory Chatfic

Rating: Mature
Archive Warning: Choose Not To Use Archive Warnings
Category: F/F, F/M, M/M, Other
Fandom: Dangan Ronpa - All Media Types, New Dangan Ronpa V3: Everyone's New Semester of Killing, Dangan Ronpa Gaiden: Killer Killer (Manga), Super Dangan Ronpa 2, Dangan Ronpa: Trigger Happy Havoc, Dangan Ronpa: Another Episode


Character: Akamatsu Kaede, Amami Rantaro, Chabashira Tenko, Gokuhara Gonta, Harukawa Maki, Hoshi Ryoma, Iruma Miu, K1-B0, Momota Kaito, Ouma Kokichi, Sahara Shuichi, Shinguji Korekiyo, Shirogane Tsumugi, Tojo Kirumi, Yonaga Angie, Yumeno Himiko

Additional Tags: Chatting & Messaging, Chatlogs, Angst, Fluff and Angst, Light Angst, Angst with a Happy Ending, Okay yea there's a lot of angst but there is also a lot of, Fluff, No Smut, virtual reality au, Human K1-B0 (Dangan Ronpa), Hope's Peak Academy, Suicidal Thoughts, Suicidal actions, Very Minor Character Death, Depression, Mourning, Grieving, Misgendering, Gender Dysphoria, Self-Harm, Self-Hatred, Self-Esteem Issues, It can get pretty dark, Comedy, Wow that tag was a bit random Post-Game, Sad with a Happy Ending, It's not all bad, Tsumugi makes a crap ton of references, still love her, Everyone Gets Attention, Plot, Ouma and Shirogane aren't really liked at first but they're trying, at least Mugi is, LGBTQ Character, Gay Character, mentions of bullying, Past Abuse, Genderfluid Character, Questioning, Implied Sexual Abuse, Implied Physical Abuse, Found Family, Deep Conversations, Pining, Unrequited Love, BUT ONLY TEMPORARILY, break ups, Internalized Homophobia, Homophobia, Mental Instability, Nightmares, Questioning Sexuality, fixing friendships, Panic Attacks, Crying, Friends to Lovers, Slow Burn, like really slow burn, Homophobic Slurs, Although that only occurs a few times, Platonic Female/Male Relationships, Platonic Relationships, Love, Falling In Love, Platonic Soulmates, just a whole lot of love, and sadness, but let's not talk about that, Minor hallucinations, Sleep Deprivation, Insomnia, Guilt, Lots and lots of guilt, Therapy, talking about feelings, Anorexia, Eating Disorders, Bulimia, body issues, Lesbian Character, Bi-Curiosity, Bi-Gender Character(s), Coming Out, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder - PTSD, Heavy Angst, Emotional Numbness, Bottling Up Feelings, Fatal illnesses, But not on any of the main cast, Losing faith, regaining faith, Hatred towards humanity, pessimism, Compulsive lying, Pathological Lying, Thanks
Obligatory Chatfic

by Quite_The_Weeb

Summary

First of all, you gotta admit, my titling skills are A+ worthy. Second of all, this will contain spoilers for the entire series, mainly V3 because they're my main cast here. This will include ships and some head canons I personally have, but hopefully they don't dictate the story too much, but I hope you respect my choices here.

Anyways, as for the story itself, this takes place in a VR/Hope's Peak Academy AU where everyone is alive. However, not everyone is awake at the beginning of the fic, so some people will be absent until after a few chapters chapters. Since this is beyond what I'm used to as far as writing goes, I will be adding written scenes, as well as a plot (w o w .) All the characters, including those from THH and GD are in their first year and similar ages, that way we can have the same cast for all three years. Also, if you see parallels between the canon series, it is probably intentional. Kiibo is also human, but that will be mentioned in the story in case you didn't read the description. Thanks for reading and I hope you enjoy!
Warnings and Disclaimer!

Let me just start by saying thanks for reading and that I hope you enjoy! There won't be any OCs unless you count doctors and similar stuff to that, which have little to significance to the story. I also do not own the characters from Danganronpa and they all belong to their creators.

As for the story there WILL be some triggering themes, but those will be mentioned at the beginning of the chapters they're featured in. Examples of this include suicidal thoughts, gender dysphoria (although it's only for one character and it's brief,) identity issues and more (these kids have been through a lot.) This fic is far from lighthearted overall, but most chapters will be interesting and important to the current character arc(s.) There WILL NOT be any sexual themes either.

With that being said, I hope you enjoy (just realized how awkward that is, seeing as I've said it twice in under five paragraphs.) I'm completely open to feedback about my writing and portrayal of characters, but I won't accept ship bashing or anything like that however. This book is for me to write what I enjoy and share it with others, so I'd appreciate it if you all stuck with constructive criticism.
Kaede makes a chat for 16 people, ignoring the fact that the majority of them are currently comatose.

**Akamatsu Kaede has added, Amami Rantaro, Chabashira Tenko and 13 others to "Unnamed Chat."

February 9th, 1: 02PM

AkamatsuKaede: Hello everyone!

AkamatsuKaede: Sorry if anyone is busy, but I made this to sort of help us all talk

AkamatsuKaede: I know not everyone is out yet, but I don't want them to be left out when they are

Saihara Shuichi is online

SaiharaShuichi: Hello, Akamatsu-San. I'm sure the others will be on soon. There isn't much to be done here and as far as I know, we won't have to begin packing until everyone is awake, which should be within the next month at most.

AkamatsuKaede: You're being a bit formal there, don't you think?

Amami Rantaro is online

AmamiRantaro: Yea, you seem a little stiff there

AkamatsuKaede: Where did you come from?

AmamiRantaro: Oh, you know... Hell

AkamatsuKaede: See, if Amami is joking around, you could bear to loosen up a bit!

SaiharaShuichi: Sorry, but did you have to use the word "bear?"

AkamatsuKaede: Crap! Sorry

AkamatsuKaede: It was the first word that popped into my head

SaiharaShuichi: It's fine. Sorry if I seem so on edge. I've just been a little tired. I normally spend the night around the others. Tojo-San, Hoshi-Kun, Yonaga-San, Chabashira-San, Shinguuji-Kun, Iruma-San, Gokuhara-Kun, Ouma-Kun, Momota-Kun, Idabashi-Kun, Shirogane-San and even you two being alive is still sort of sinking in.

AkamatsuKaede: I was surprised, too, but I don't think it was really necessary to type out all their
Saihara Shuichi: Yea, I guess you're right. Sorry.

Amami Rantaro: I don't think I'll ever get used to calling Keebo "Idabashi"

Akamatsu Kaede: Well, his first name is Keebo, so he'd probably be fine with us sticking with that.

Saihara Shuichi: When Yumeno-San first saw him, she thought her magic turned him human.

Akamatsu Kaede: Oh, speaking of Yumeno, where are her and Harukawa?

Amami Rantaro: I think I saw them going to lunch in the cafeteria.

Akamatsu Kaede: Oh!

Akamatsu Kaede: We should go get lunch too, who's in?

Amami Rantaro: I could go for some food right now.

Saihara Shuichi: I'll go, too.

Akamatsu Kaede: Yay! I'll meet you guys there.

Akamatsu Kaede and 2 others are offline

<Wow, I made a divider to connect real life and the chat>

Kaede happily closed the chat, leaving her phone discarded on her pillow. She exited into her bathroom, studying her reflection as washed her hands. Her blond hair remained tucked behind her ears and decorated with music note hair clips. She'll occasionally wear it up, but only when she wishes for her locks to not cover her magenta, almost pink eyes. Drying her hands, Kaede left her bathroom.

Already dressed, Kaede pushed her room door open. In all honesty, she was glad to have left her room. It resembled her old one from the game and hit a little too close to home. It was sort of like getting sent a photo from your funeral or something ominous like that.

As her sock covered feet wandered through the carpeted hallway floors, Kaede reminisced about the events of the past week, which only bumped up her mood even more. Last Monday was when she woke up and got the news. Danganronpa had been fake. All of it. It was a test of psychological effects certain events had on talented students. Of course, she didn't exactly enjoy the memories she had of the game, but it was better than her friends being dead.

At last, Kaede made it to her destination. She pulled on the door, swinging it wide open. She entered the cafeteria, which looked a bit more like a lounge than it did a dining area. The floor was tiled with light oak and the walls were colored a soft orange that reminded Kaede of warm fires and autumn. There were multiple booth like areas in the room with cushioned seats and wooden tables. The only direct indications that you were indeed meant to eat here was the open window to the kitchen and the two girls who sat eating at a booth.

"Hey you guys!" Kaede greeted, happily waving as she made her way to their booth. "Saihara-Kun and Amami-Kun will be here soon."
"Saihara’s going to eat?" The taller of the two asked, looking uncharacteristically surprised.

To Kaede's knowledge, this was Harukawa Maki, the Ultimate Child Caregiver. Her long brown hair gently framed her face, her bangs grazing her intimidating red eyes. Maki's lips were quirked into her signature frown, which always looked a bit like a smile to Kaede. As always, she had her hair tied up into two pigtails, but her hair bands were black rather than the red she initially adorned.

"What? Has he not been eating?" Kaede cried.

"Nyeh, I don't think so. He hasn't accepted any of our requests to eat with him," yawned the other girl, seemingly dozing off.

This girl was Yumeno Himiko, the Ultimate Magician. She looked slightly different without the witch's hat she kept perched upon her head, but Kaede didn't blame her for not wearing anything that reminded her of the game. Himiko's appearance was still similar despite this, her short stature and lazy posture remained the same. Her red hair was still short and clipped behind her ears, leaving her auburn, half-lidded eyes uncovered.

"Aw, geez!" Kaede sighed, exasperated.

Kaede took a seat next to the girls, fussing over how they still looked just as cute as before. However, she made sure to remind herself to give Shuichi a stern talking to about his habits when he got here. For someone as smart as him, Shuichi could sure make some stupid decisions.

Speak of the devil, the door opened and two boys walked in, saying a greeting before coming over. Maki and Himiko looked up at one of the two and looked almost confused, Maki a little more on the worried side. However, before Kaede could comment on this, the other one of the two newcomers beat her to the punch.

"You guys are looking at Saihara-Kun like he's a ghost," he chuckled. "I know he's pale, but he isn't that pale..."

Rantaro Amami, who told Kaede he was the Ultimate Survivor, only to come back and tell her he was the Ultimate Adventurer after his previous memories were restored. A small grin spread across a relaxed face with feminine green eyes with some of the longest eyelashes Kaede has ever seen. He had pale green hair that curled in various directions and piercings lined his ears and had one on his right eyebrow. He had other jewelry items that Kaede recognized from his outfit from the game and it was beyond her how he was so comfortable wearing them.

"No, it's not that," Himiko mumbled. "He's just changed again."

Kaede looked at the other newcomer. Saihara Shuichi, the Ultimate Detective and Kaede's best friend. He had an even more feminine face than Rantaro, although his green, almost golden eyes didn't have lashes of the same length other than at the very corners. As Rantaro mentioned, he was quite pale, but not in an unhealthy way. He had dark blue hair that looked almost black, which hung around his face and perched on top of his head was...

"His hat," Maki commented, "he's put back on his hat."

"Eh? He took it off?" Kaede asked, clearly puzzled.

"Yea," Himiko chimed in. "It was right after you..."

Himiko trailed off, but it was clear she was referring to Kaede's execution from the game, yet that was the least of her worries now. Chances are, she's the only one who knew why he had worn the
hat. Simply put, he fears eye contact due to a particularly nasty case he solved once. She felt a bit of pride in the fact she had assisted in the removal of this cap, but she reminded herself that the cap in question is now back.

"Erm, could we just eat?" Shuichi mumbled sheepishly, pulling down his hat. "Please."

"Fine," Maki muttered, turning back to her plate, only to soften her tone a little and say, "s'about time you ate..."

"Wait, Saihara-Kun. It can't be that bad, right?" Kaede joined, hoping to get him out of his shell, "I mean, I'm—" she hesitated before continuing "—I'm a murderer, so whatever it is, it can't be that bad."

"Hold on," Maki interjected, looking at Kaede. "Did you say you're a murderer?"

"Yea, why?" Kaede asked, confused. "I killed Amami-Kun, remember?"

Rantaro, who sat next to Shuichi at the end of booth grinned and did jazz hands. The two of them had made up quite fast after waking up and actually grew closer over their common goal.

"No, that's wrong," Shuichi spoke, ignoring his previous goal of avoiding talking to anyone.

"What?" Both Kaede and Rantaro both cried at once. It was probably the loudest anyone had ever heard Rantaro speak.

"Shirogane-San," was all Shuichi said, "the Mastermind."

The table went quiet for a moment, Kaede looked confused while Rantaro had a blank face.

"Geez," Maki uttered, "you two are really behind. Well, I guess we should catch you guys up a little. I'll start. I'm an assassain."

"What?!"

"Want us to tell you what happened?" Shuichi offered.

"I'll pass," Rantaro responded almost immediately. "I'd rather not remember anything about that game for the time being."

"Yea..." Kaede trailed off. "Maybe some other time."

The group ate in a comfortable silence, only occasionally discussing plans for when the got to Hope's Peak. Once the remainder of their class had woken up, they'd be transferred there to settle in for the incoming school year. Two other classes will be joining them, ones that also went through the game. Their discussion was soon interrupted by a buzz coming from Shuichi's phone.

"Did someone send something to the group chat?" Kaede questioned, earning confusion from Maki and Himiko, who had yet to discover the chat.

"No, but this message is to everyone. I guess I was just the only one who brought their phone," Shuichi explained, looking pretty happy from what he read. "Good thing I did, too. I was thinking this might happen."

"Why? What happened?!" Himiko yelped, far more energetic and lifelike than Kaede remembered her being.
"Idabashi-Kun is awake," Shuichi breathed.

"He is?" Rantaro asked.

"Nyeh?" Himiko cried, "but wasn't he the last one to... you know..."

"Well, considering he was completely robotic in the game, I guess all they had to do was restore his psyche..." Shuichi pondered, mostly to himself.

"Well?" Kaede sighed, standing up. "Why are we sitting here? Let's go see him, cmon!"

Shuichi, surprisingly, led the others through the corridors, maybe because he had probably been to the "resting room" the most. Anticipation hanged in the air, but the undeniable excitement they all felt more than made enough up for it. Not only was Keebo awake, but this would be the first time any of them got to see him breathing and human.

Of course, his personality will likely be the same and had been transferred to his robotic self during the game, but the idea was still exciting. From what Kaede heard, Keebo's real talent was the Ultimate Roboticist, but it had been changed due to being too similar to Miu, another sleeping classmate of theirs' talent.

"Uh—wait..." Shuichi mumbled with uncertainty. "Oh—never mind. This is it, guys—the resting room, I mean."

Shuichi pushed open the door, holding it open for everyone to walk past him. The resting room colder than the rest of the building, but it was the comfortable kind of cold that is like a breeze during a summer day. The floors were tiled with shiny white squares and the walls were a cool gray and lined with similarly colored pods, only six of which were open. However, the thing that attracted the most attention was the vaguely familiar boy sitting on a stool as a doctor checked his blood pressure.

Idabashi Keebo, formerly known as the Ultimate Robot. His skin was pale and looked borderline sickly, but it was better than the paper white surface he previously had. His eyes were round and a shade of blue that reminded Kaede of lightning struck skyses. Keebo's hair was white and stuck out to the side into points that looked almost painful to the touch. He didn't seem to notice the group, focused on the doctor speaking to him. However, after he stopped, Keebo turned away and his eyes landed on the group before him.

"You guys are awake too!" Keebo cried happily, "I'm so glad! I hope I didn't hurt you three much in the explosions..."

"E—explosions?!!" Kadeem exclaimed, confused.

"Amami-Kun and Akamatsu-San!" Keebo cheered happily, ignoring Kaede's prominent puzzlement as happy tears streamed down his face. "Heh, I can cry now, see, see!"

Keebo stood up ecstatically, walking over to the group, but not using his limbs for so long made it difficult and he ended up stumbling half way.

"Woah there, I gotcha," Rantaro, who had caught Keebo, chuckled, obviously happy as well. "You seem very excited."

"Of course I'm excited," Keebo stated, standing up while using Rantaro as a support. "I learned all my friends are alive, and I found out I'm a human just like all of you!"
"It's good to see you again, Idabashi-Kun," Shuichi smiled, but Keebo's face suddenly looked concentrated before twisting into something uncomfortable. "Crap—sorry! Did I say something weird?"

"Eh—no, no, no—I just feel weird being addressed as 'Idabashi-Kun'," Keebo admitted, still awkwardly hanging from Rantaro's shoulder.

"Keebo-Kun it is, then!" Kaede declared, wrapping him and Rantaro into a hug.

"No, I'm fine with Idabashi, it just felt weir—" Keebo could only squeeze out those words before the rest of the group, even Maki despite her reluctance, joined the hug and he became too flustered to continue.

"Welcome back, Idabashi-Kun," Himiko mumbled, the room going silent for a while.

"Thank you."

"Unnamed Groupchat" March 14th, 6:47PM

Akamatsu Kaede is online.

AkamatsuKaede: Guys, the chat hasn't been used in over a month

AkamatsuKaede: We have to make it chaotic and hellish like all the other ones

Saihara Shuichi and 7 others are online.

SaiharaShuichi: Akamatsu-San, don't break the fourth wall.

AmamiRantaro: I heard hell

HarukawaMaki: I heard chaos

TojoKirumi: I am genuinely concerned for the mental condition of both of you. Also, I've come online to inform you that the chefs are almost done with dinner, so I advise that you all get ready.

IdabashiKeebo: I'll be there in a bit!

SaiharaShuichi: I'm not too hungry and I have to get ready to pack. The other three who still have to wake up should be up by Thursday, so I'm gonna pass on dinner for now.

AkamatsuKaede: Saihara Shuichi istg

AkamatsuKaede: I will have Gokuhara drag you to the cafeteria if I have to

AkamatsuKaede: He might've only just woken up the other day, but he could do it

SaiharaShuichi: Alright, alright, I'll go. I have to ask the other classes about some stuff anyway.

AmamiRantaro: The other classes aren't even in the same vacinity as us Saihara smh

SaiharaShuichi: Oh, sorry, didn't know. Don't worry, I'll still go with you guys.

IrumaMiu: how the fuck did u not know that if you've been here for a month?
ChabashiraTenko: he'd know if he went to the cafeteria enough!

SaiharaShuichi: I came here to have a good time and I'm being attacked...

AmamiRantaro: Oh

AmamiRantaro: Oh wow

AmamiRantaro: I didn't think the comedy and memes would start until Ouma woke up

IdabashiKeebo: But no.

IdabashiKeebo: It was Saihara-Kun.

SaiharaShuichi: Idabashi-Kun, not you too...

AkamatsuKaede: I mean, we're not wrong

IrumaMiu: abt what, the memes or the food?

HarukawaMaki: Both.

SaiharaShuichi: Harukawa-San why...

ChabashiraTenko: Hey! Don't kick this onto her u degenerate!

TojoKirumi: I'd rather not have interrupted your conversation, but if you don't get to the cafeteria, your food will grow cold.

SaiharaShuichi: Right, sorry!

IdabashiKeebo: I'm almost there now.

AkamatsuKaede: Lets go everyone

Akamatsu Kaede and 8 others have gone offline.

Alright, I hope you enjoyed the first chapter and I'm actually really excited about this project. I don't have a specific uploading schedule, but unless I say so, I shouldn't be gone for long periods of time. Chapters will be longer than this, but won't always be focused on anything. I have a lot of ideas and I made character arcs for just about everyone. Some of these may trigger something, but I'll be sure to mark a warning. The chapter ended with only Kaito, Kokichi and Tsumugi awake for reasons I can't say. Sorry, I stretched this note a little long, but this should be one of the only ones (A/Ns won't take up entire chapters, so don't worry.) Thanks again for reading!
Satan Himself

Chapter Summary

The rat has returned from his cave.

Chapter Notes

I'm really sorry about there not being any bold or italicized words in this and the next chapter. I copy pasted them from a separate page and so anything like that was removed. This also happened with the prologue, but I had more time to fix it (plus this chapter is about twice as long.)

I hope you understand and as always, please enjoy!

I'll admit, this chapter is a little boring until around halfway, but that's mostly because it's exposition and meant to hint at later plots, so please bear with me (pun intended~) Also, I'm not sure how notifications work, but if you get two for one chapter, it's probably just because I edited it.

"Unnamed Chat" March 14th, 8:38PM (A/N HBD Chihiro and Chiaki?)

Momota Kaito is online.

MomotaKaito: im not fishing for attention here or anything like that

MomotaKaito: but why did none of u guys come see me when i woke up?

Akamatsu Kaede and 11 others are online.

SaiharaShuichi: Wait, Kaito-Kun?!

HarukawaMaki: Wtf Kaito, when did you even wake up?

AkamatsuKaede: Hold on, first off

AkamatsuKaede: Welcome back, Momota!

MomotaKaito: thank you!

MomotaKaito: cmon sidekicjs

AkamatsuKaede: Second of all

SaiharaShuichi: Sidekicjs?

MomotaKaito: sidwkicks*
AkamatsuKaede: First name basis with you three? What's up with that?
MomotaKaito: those 2 r my sidekucks
IrumaMiu: pff, side cucks, real kinky
HarukawaMaki: Iruma, I S T G
AkamatsuKaede: ...
IdabashiKeebo: I'm not the only one who hears that, right?
GokuharaGonta: Hear what?
TojoKirumi: Nothing, Gokuhara-Kun, just please stay where you are.
MomotaKaito: IRUMA STOP MOANING
ShinguujiKorekiyo: Disgusting, I must say.
YonagaAngie: Sounds like this remind me of back home! Atua praises you, Iruma!
YumenoHimiko: Atua praises you!
ChabashiraTenko: YUMENO-SAN NOOOOOO!!!!!!!!
ChabashiraTenko: Yonaga-San, you tainted her!
HoshiRyoma: Are the moans gone yet?
HoshiRyoma: I'm watching over Gokuhara
MomotaKaito: dunno, maki roll can u check
HarukawaMaki: What, no I'm not going into Iruma's room. Do you want to die?
MomotaKaito: been there done that
SaiharaShuichi: Kaito-Kun, no...
HarukawaMaki: I hate you
SaiharaShuichi: You literally confessed your love to him, we have witnesses.
AkamatsuKaede: Woah, what!?
IdabashiKeebo: Can confirm
HarukawaMaki: Shuichi, wtf. You've ruined my reputation
SaiharaShuichi: Sorry, my hand slipped.
AkamatsuKaede: DANG, THAT'S SOME SASS RIGHT THERE
SaiharaShuichi: Wait, really? Crap, sorry if I was rude.
MomotaKaito: the effect was sort of ruine by the apology
Harukawa Maki: You apologize too much
Saihara Shuichi: I do? Sorry, I don't mean to.
Harukawa Maki: S h u i c h i
Saihara Shuichi: Oh, sorry!
Saihara Shuichi: Wait
Harukawa Maki: Holy shit
Idabashi Keebo: Language
Saihara Shuichi: Sorry about that.
Harukawa Maki: The thing is, I know he isn't even doing this on purpose
Saihara Shuichi: I read what I said and I'm just giving up at this point.
Yumeno Himiko: You're hopeless
Shinguuji Korekiyo: Definitely an unfortunate case.
Chabashira Tenko: You have no right to agree with her u degenerate
Hoshi Ryoma: A bit off topic here, but I have something I'd like to confirm with you, Momota.
Momota Kaito: aight
Hoshi Ryoma: So based off the order we all woke up, did you kill Gokuhara? I'm not mad, just ready to destroy your kneecaps.
Momota Kaito: what! no i didnt kill gokuhara
Shinguuji Korekiyo: I can confirm that Gokuhara-Kun had actually killed Iruma.
Shinguuji Korekiyo: For I am responsible for the murders of Yonaga-San and Chabashira-San. I had done it for my late sister, whom I believe I remembered having a rather degrading relationship. However, I do not hold such feelings for her now, so there is no need to worry.
Chabashira Tenko: WHAAAAAAA????!!!!!!
Chabashira Tenko: OF CORSE A DEGENERATE WOOD KILL ME FOR SUCH DISFUSTING REASONS!!!
Idabashi Keebo: She appears to be too angry to even bother with grammatical accuracy...
Shinguuji Korekiyo: As I said, I do not feel this way in actuality. It was a bug, might I say.
Yumeno Himiko: 'Twas still pretty nasty
Hoshi Ryoma: Well, back onto what I was saying. Are you saying someone as small as Ouma killed you?
Idabashi Keebo: Correction.
IdabashiKeebo: Momota-Kun had killed Ouma-Kun.

MomotaKaito: is the little gremlin still not awake?

HarukawaMaki: Are you really surprised? He was shot twice by a crossbow, poisoned, then crushed by a hydraulic press. I wouldn't be surprised if Shirogane woke up before him and she was squished by a fucking rock

IrumaMiu: holy balls

GokuharaGonta: But gonta thot everyone promjsed everyone would get along D:

MomotaKaito: if it helps it was his idea

TojoKirumi: That is even more concerning.

Amami Rantaro is online.

AmamiRantaro: Sounds about right to me.

IrumaMiu: where the fuck did you come from?

AmamiRantaro: Well, when someone with eggs and someone with semen love each other very much

AmamiRantaro: Oh hold on, I think I just heard something.

SaiharaShuichi: You're in the hallway at the east wing, right? If you are, then we probably just heard the same thing.

IdabashiKeebo: I'm there too. Should we meet up and investigate?

AmamiRantaro: Yea, should we meet near the bathrooms?

SaiharaShuichi: I'll meet you guys there.

IdabashiKeebo: Alright.

AkamatsuKaede: Don't do anything stupid

AmamiRantaro: Wasn't planning on it.

Amami Rantaro and 2 others are offline.

IrumaMiu: im taking bets on who dies

AkamatsuKaede: Iruma!

IrumaMiu: whaaaaat

HarukawaMaki: 20 bucks that Shuichi dies.

MomotaKaito: maki roll have faith in shuichi!

HarukawaMaki: I did until he exposed me.

<Scooby Doo and his friends weren't available and these guys were the next best thing. Oh yea,
"Okay, so where was everyone when they heard the noise?" Shuichi asked, palm resting on his chin and looking deep in thought.

"I was right here when I heard it," Rantaro claimed, leaning against the wall.

"I was around the entrance of the wing," Keebo responded shortly after.

"Okay," Shuichi continued. "How loud was the noise? Just knock on the wall as loud as it was."

"So, we just have to—" Keebo began, but was cut off.

A loud noise rang through the air. It was sort of a crash, maybe the faint sound of humans speaking, or probably yelling based off the volume. Alarmed, the trio exchanged looks. They all knew where the sound came from and with that, they probably knew what or who made it. Coming to some sort of consensus through expressions alone, the three of them made their way to the Resting Room.

"Stay behind me, you two," Rantaro warned, walking around two paces ahead of the others.

The group reached their destination rather quickly. Rantaro was the closest to the Resting Room based off the information from before. However, before any of them could approach the door, it swung open, the person who had done so slamming it shut after they wiggled through the already small opening. It was a woman in a lab coat and the three couldn't help but feel relieved that she seemed more disheveled than scared.

"Oh, hello," the lady panted, back pressed against the door. "This makes things a bit easier... could you three please tell your classmates to stay inside their rooms? That'd be great if you could."

"Of course, but what's going on in th—" Rantaro started, but he was cut off just like Keebo had been.

The door behind the woman shook a bit, resulting in her leaning back a little more.

"Uh, I can't really say, but there are a few other things I'd like you guys to do," she grunted as the door shook a little more. "Go to the staff room and tell anyone in there to come to the Resti—jeez, this kid is difficult—" she turned to the side a bit to put more strength on the door "—tell them to come to the Resting Room. You three stay in there until you're told you can leave."

"Uhm—yes ma'am," Keebo said, skepticism apparent in his voice as he and the other two turned on their heels.

"Oh, one more thing!"

"Yes?"

"Tell them that Ouma Kokichi is awake."

Making a final quick agreement, the trio finally made their way to staff room, opening it with ease. Doing as they were told and telling the few people in the room what the lady had instructed them to, they were at last able to collapse in the corner to tell the chat what had happened.

"Unnamed Chat" 9:46PM

Amami Rantaro and 2 others are online.
AmamiRantaro: Everyone stay in your rooms.

HarukawaMaki: What?

MomotaKaito: y?

IdabashiKeebo: I'm uncertain, but that's what we were told.

SaiharaShuichi: Ouma-Kun is awake.

AmamiRantaro: Oh yea, that too.

AkamatsuKaede: He is?

IrumaMiu: its abt time, im gonna beat his ass 4 sicking gokuhara on me

HarukawaMaki: This is one of the only things I'll agree on with you.

IrumaMiu: BOOYA! I EVEN GOT HARUMAKI ON MY SIDE

HarukawaMaki: Call me that again and I won't hesitate to destroy you.

IrumaMiu: wtf did i do to youuuuuuuuuuuuuuuu???

SaiharaShuichi: Guys, not now.

AmamiRantaro: We're going offline for now.

IdabashiKeebo: We'll tell you if there are any updates.

GokuharaGonta: Alright! Gonta wishes frends good luck!

Amami Rantaro and 2 others are offline.

HarukawaMaki: So we're just going to ignore how those three are perfectly in sync?

AkamatsuKaede: No, not yet

AkamatsuKaede: It's still the exposition part of the fic, so people aren't falling in love just yet and there hasn't been any angst yet to bring them together

TojoKirumi: Akamatsu-San, please refrain from absolutely obliterating the fourth wall.

<Tsumugi is my fourth wall breaker, but she's still a little bit in a comatose, so Kayayday is in her place for that.>

"So what should we do now?" Keebo was the first one to speak.

The staff room was about what you'd expect. Carpeted floors, creamy white walls, vending machines. It was expectionally tidy, the trio had taken place in the corner on a padded wooden bench, where they now sat awkwardly, the only sounds being chaos echoing through the walls and the ticking of the clock stuck the wall. The biggest issue was Rantaro, who was sat between the two with his feet up on the bench, hugging them to his chest because apparently he can't physically sit in a chair correctly.

"I dunno," Shuichi mumbled sleepily into his hand, seemingly nodding off.
"You good there, Saihara-Kun?" Rantaro asked, chuckling at the boy as he snapped back to reality at the mention of his name.

"Wha?—Oh—yea, I'm fine. I've just been spending a bit more time in the resting room lately," Shuichi admitted sheepishly, leaning into his hand.

"You already spend hours in there every day! You've got to rethink your habits!" Keebo scolded from the other side of Rantaro.

"I know and I'm sorry, but..." Shuichi trailed off, pulling his cap further down his face. "I didn't exactly end things well with Ouma-Kun and Shirogane-San and I at least wanted to know they were okay."

"The others didn't seem too happy to hear he was awake," Rantaro observed. "What did he even do? Surely nothing too crazy if he was a victim."

"Well—" Shuichi had a look on his face that crossed between pure exhaustion and concentration.

"No," Rantaro intervened, "Idabashi-Kun can answer me. You go to sleep. You need it."

"But—"

"Come on, you can use me as pillow, heheh."

"You're not going to give up until I agree, will you?"

"Nope!"

Shuichi grumbled something as he repositioned himself to rest his head on his hands, which were supported by his arms that lay on the armrest of the bench. It wasn't the most comfortable, but at this point, Shuichi was too tired to care and dozed off almost instantly.

"His wrist is going to hurt when he wakes up," Keebo commented absentmindedly.

"Yea," Rantaro agreed, moving Shuichi to rest against the weight of the other two, removing the pressure on his hand. "You don't have to tell me about Ouma-Kun if you don't want to. I'll admit, I'm curious, but I only said you'd tell me so Saihara-Kun would finally sleep."

"Ah, I see. Clever," Keebo praised, smiling. "I think that it'd be better if you heard these sorts of things from Ouma-Kun himself. None of us really know for sure what he was doing. I'd also rather know it's alright for me to say. He did some rather morally grey things."

"Hm, I can respect that," Rantaro responded.

The two of them sat in silence a little longer. It was awkward, the chaos outside having died down a bit and the clock seemed to mock the two of them as it ticked on and on.

"So—uhm, what's it like to travel around the world?" Keebo inquired, attempting to make some form of small talk.

"Travel? Oh, it's great," Rantaro stated simply.

Keebo averted his gaze, realizing he'd failed to start a conversation. Rantaro, who was now sitting criss cross, knees resting on the thighs of his two classmates, noticed this and comprehended that he had made the air even more awkward than it had been previously.
"Would you—uh—like to hear about some of my adventures?" Rantaro offered, sending a smile to the shorter boy.

"Huh—of course!" Keebo exclaimed, wary of not waking up Shuichi, who was still resting peacefully against Rantaro's left arm, expression neutral and soft. "I myself have always wanted to travel! All the cool places and the machinery you get to travel on is so cool and advanced now. Although I'm not that fond of riding them, my memories tell me I get motion sick quite easily so—" he caught himself mid sentence and his face turned red "—sorry! I've been rambling a bit haven't I?"

"Nah, its fine," Rantaro humored the boy. "I don't really like riding vehicles either, especially cars. It kind of takes away the purpose of sight seeing. Boats are fine though, I get to see everything in the open air at least. One of my first solo adventures actually began on a boat. Well... I guess it wasn't really solo, I had..."

Rantaro suddenly went quiet and his face went blank. Confused, Keebo looked at the door, thinking his companion's silence had come from someone arriving at the door. However, when no one came, Keebo was able to piece together that Rantaro had accidentally brought up something sensitive and changed the subject.

"So—em do you have any other adventures?" Keebo piped up.

"Hm? Oh, maybe some other time, sorry," Rantaro mumbled, looking very interested by his shoes all of a sudden.

Their attempt at a conversation concluded, the two sat on the bench awkwardly, Shuichi still in an uneasy sleep against them. The clock ticked on for what seemed like forever until the door finally opened, two people walking through. Due to the unforeseen action, mixed in with the tension in the room, both boys jumped a bit, efficiently waking up Shuichi, who rubbed his eyes sleepily. The first person to walk in was the same woman in the lab coat from before and trailing behind her...

Ouma Kokichi himself stood there, staring the trio down. He had wide, violet eyes that looked more tired than the three of them remembered them being. His hair was similar in color, a few strands a bit lighter in shade and stuck out on both sides. As for the rest of him, he was small, almost too small and his skin was a similar pale shade to Shuichi. His expression was blank for a moment before stretching into a large grin that didn't quite meet his eyes. However, the most unsettling part of his appearance was—

"Woah! You weren't lying when you said Keeboy was a real human. Amami-Chan really is alive too!" Kokichi gaped in wonder. "My beloved Saihara-Chan is here too? What a lovely surprise! Aw, but he brought back the emo hat..."

Kokichi pranced over to the triad, who didn't miss how he stumbled a bit and winced when he landed too hard on his feet, but they all remained quiet about it. Kokichi looked at them all for a moment before stretching into a large grin that didn't quite meet his eyes. However, the most unsettling part of his appearance was—

"Man, I wasn't expecting a hug or anything, but you guys are being way to boring right now!" Kokichi sighed, holding out the 'a' in 'way.' "Ms. Mean Science Lady just wanted me to come in here and tell you to get out. She is super duper boring too!"

'Ms. Mean Science Lady' cleared her throat with a twinge of annoyance, getting Kokichi's attention. She jutted her head towards the door, gesturing him over. Then, as shocking as it sounds, Kokichi complied, walking to the exit before turning to face the three again.
"Bu bye!" He sang, waving his arm high in the air, only to flinch, wince and pull it down after to settle for another grin.

The triplicity stayed seated for a moment, almost as if they were an old camera, trying to collect and process all it's memories. There was a pause as they all met each other's gaze, confirming that what they saw was in fact real.

"Should we alert the others about that?" Keebo pondered.

"No, I don't think any good would come from it," Shuichi rejected.

And so, they set off to their rooms with a new found sense of unity. Maybe it came from the bench, or the ticking clock, or the fact that they now shared, but will never tell.

The fact that Kokichi was bleeding through his shirt.

"Unnamed Chat" March 15th, 1:07PM

Saihara Shuichi is online.

SaiharaShuichi: Guys, I know you all got the alert that Shirogane-San is awake, but only Gokuhara-Kun, Tojo-San, Hoshi-Kun and I went to see her.

SaiharaShuichi: I know you're all mad, but we all remember that someone had to be the mastermind. She just ended up with the role. Why don't you guys just give her a chance?

Harukawa Maki and 3 others are online.

HaruwakaMaki: Why don't you come to the cafeteria at the right time ever?

SaiharaShuichi: Maki-San, I'm being serious...

HarukawaMaki: So am I

HarukawaMaki: Besides, she put us through that hell, so we don't owe her anything

YonagaAngie: Atua says that Angie shouldn't go near Shirogane just yet!~

GokuharaGonta: But gonta wants everyone to be frnds but everyone is angry

Shirogane Tsumugi and 3 others are online.

ShiroganeTsumugi: It's alright Saihara. I'm just plain happy that none of this was real

ShiroganeTsumugi: She said hopefully, wishing for redemption just like that of a presumably dark wizard who had betrayed the protagonist's trust one too many times.

YumenoHimiko: U have no right to make that reference!

IdabashiKeebo: Sorry for interrupting, but you guys should get packing.

AkamatsuKaede: Idabashi is right!

AkamatsuKaede: Now that everyone is awake, we should prepare for Hope's Peak

GokuharaGonta: Gonta will go pack then!
YonagaAngie: As will Angie! Byeonara~

Gokuhara Gonta and Yonaga Angie are offline.

HarukawaMaki: Akamatsu, give me admin rights

AkamatsuKaede: Why?

HarukawaMaki: I want to kick Shirogane

SaiharaShuichi: Maki-San...

AkamatsuKaede: I could kick her myself

SaiharaShuichi: Akamatsu-San, please don't!

ShiroganeTsumugi: Kill or save? Red or blue? Which side will win and decide the fate of their supernatural, yellow mentor?

HarukawaMaki: Shut up

YumenoHimiko: Shirogane or Saihara?

HarukawaMaki: I don't care. Both would be nice though

SaiharaShuichi: Maki-San, please let her stay.

HarukawaMaki: No

SaiharaShuichi: Maki-San!

AkamatsuKaede: I'm the only one here who can actually kick her

HarukawaMaki: Then do it!

SaiharaShuichi: Maki, please

AmamiRantaro: Let's let her stay.

HarukawaMaki: Okay, where the hell do you keep coming from?!

IdabashiKeebo: Approximately how long have you just been lurking for?

AmamiRantaro: Ever since Harukawa and them logged on, but that's not my point.

AmamiRantaro: I don't see why we shouldn't let Shirogane stay.

SaiharaShuichi: Thank you, Amami-Kun.

AmamiRantaro: Don't mention it.

YumenoHimiko: I think ur forgetting that Shirogane literally killed u

AmamiRantaro: No, I didn't forget, I'm just getting over it

HarukawaMaki: You know what? Fine. She can stay
AmamiRantaro: I knew you were soft for me ;3
HarukawaMaki: Do you want to die?
AmamiRantaro: Fine.
AmamiRantaro: You're soft for your buddy Saihara
HarukawaMaki: He is not my buddy

*COUGH* SAIHARA AND MAKI ARE ONE OF MY MY BROTPs *COUGH*

ShiroganeTsumugi: He is! Plus, you never denied being soft for him!
HarukawaMaki: SHIROGANE TSUMUGI YOURE ALREADY ON THIN ICE
IdabashiKeebo: Guys, packing!
AkamatsuKaede: Right , I forgot about that...

SaiharaShuichi: Oh, I have something I'd like to ask you all before you leave.
IdabashiKeebo: Fire away!
SaiharaShuichi: Have any of you seen Ouma-Kun since he woke up? Amami-Kun, Idabashi-Kun and I all saw him yesterday, but I haven't been able to find him since then.
HarukawaMaki: No, luckily I haven't seen him.
ShiroganeTsumugi: I only just got to leave the Resting Room, so I haven't seen anyone besides anybody who visited.
AkamatsuKaede: No, I think I'd remember talking to him if I did
IdabashiKeebo: I haven't encountered Ouma-Kun yet either.
AmamiRantaro: Same.
IdabashiKeebo: Did you wait for me to type out my response?
AmamiRantaro: Perhaps.

YumenoHimiko: He'll probably be here before we leave
SaiharaShuichi: Right.
AkamatsuKaede: Okay, but seriously guys
AkamatsuKaede: Get off and pack, geez!
Akamatsu Kaede and 4 others are offline.
ShiroganeTsumugi: You still on, Saihara?
SaiharaShuichi: Yea, why?
ShiroganeTsumugi: Why did you help me?
Saihara Shuichi and Shirogane Tsumugi are offline.

<Ooooh, is that some mystery I see? Feel free to comment any theories you have, I already have everything preplanned, but I'd love to see what you all think!>

The next day, the new class of Ultimates sat on a coach bus, chatting idly. Nobody could really say they enjoyed their stay at the research institution, so there were hardly any unhappy expressions amongst them. All the individuals held their own bags full of their belongings or stuff for the bus ride to Hope's Peak. Of course, it wasn't all of their possessions for the school year; those would have been sent from their actual homes and already waiting in their new dormitory.

Shuichi was currently sitting alone. The seating was narrowed down significantly because the group had come to the consensus that they'd leave all their bags in the front seats, which only left just enough room for actual people to sit. Spending the ride alone wasn't exactly Shuichi's first choice, but he didn't hate the idea of finally getting some time to himself. Besides, just about everybody had already found a seatmate for the trip.

Across from Shuichi was Keebo and Rantaro, who seemed to be speaking excitedly about motorboats or something like that. To his knowledge, Kaede had gone off with Miu to sit together and Maki refused to sit with anyone but Kaito or Shuichi, but he had let his two friends go on without him. Angie, Tenko and Himiko definitely went for the three seats way in the back and nobody but Kirumi would willingly sit with Korekiyo. Ryoma was sitting with Gonta, partially because he was the only one who would fit in a seat with him. With Kokichi still gone, that just left—

"Ah, Saihara-Kun," a high, airy voice rang out. "Mind if I sit here?"

Shirogane Tsumugi, the Ultimate Cosplayer. She had blue hair like Shuichi, but it was more distinguished and her cerulean eyes matched with it. On her nose rested a pair or rounded lensed glasses. She was quite tall, but had a plain, almost underwhelming demeanor. However, she still managed to collect a decent collection of glares as she walked down the aisle (NOT A WEDDING AISLE, YOU BAFOONS.)

Shuichi quickly nodded, moving even closer to the window as the girl took a seat next her. Rantaro and Keebo, both of which were alright with Tsumugi, snapped out of their conversation for a moment to wave at the two before continuing to speak happily about some country Shuichi has never heard of (he thinks it's called... Noveselic?)
"Sorry for intruding," Tsumugi apologized, leaning back in her seat a bit. "Everywhere else was full except for a few rows back, but Harukawa-San was there and I thought she might kill me if I sat there."

"No, it's fine," Shuichi assured her, turning to face the window. "And yea, Maki-San can be like that sometimes, but she'll come around eventually."

"I think it's nice that everyone is still able to become friends after all this," Tsumugi admitted. "Like look at those two—" she subtly gestured to Rantaro and Keebo, who were laughing about a train or something "—those two barely spoke and now look. I've never actually seen Amami-Kun laugh any louder than a chuckle"

Tsumugi looked happy, a small smile on her face, but Shuichi noticed her eyes, which were downcast the slightest bit and sort of sad. It was probably difficult for her to see everyone so happy all while she was stuck to deal with the aftermath of something she never wanted. Nobody had volunteered for the mastermind position before the deadline, so they were chosen anonymously at random, or so Shuichi heard. He figured this out on his own, so the others didn't know. Come to think of it, this explained why the others weren't as welcoming to Tsumugi.

"Yea, I just hope that Ouma-Kun is alright when he gets here," Shuichi replied, watching the foliage pass by. "Nobody was really on great terms with him and knowing hi—er—being with him has taught me enough to know he isn't going to try and fix things."

"Oh, is that why you've been so eager to talk to him lately?" Tsumugi inquired.

"Yea... well, sort of."

"Hm? Care to explain?"

"I don't know... I guess it's almost anxiety," Shuichi confessed. "I sort of screwed up his plan, so I thought that he might mad at me when he figured it out. I also wasn't the nicest to him, so..."

Shuichi pulled down the bill of his hat, removing his gaze from the window and to his other hand, which Tsumugi noticed was shaking a bit (I'm just now realizing that parallel to that one scene with Kayayday and Succi.) She quirked up one of her brows, frowning slightly. She almost laughed, not because she found this funny or anything, but the fact that the boy next to her was so wrong. It's beyond her how he didn't notice how he was the only one who actually talked to Kokichi willingly. However, she kept this to herself, not wanting to make Shuichi feel bad.

"I'm sure it will be fine," Tsumugi promised, sending another small smile at him, this one more genuine and reassuring than the one before.

"Maybe..." Shuichi trailed off, but his hands were no longer shaking and his gaze returned to the window after seeing Tsumugi's smile. He then said a quick "thank you."

"No problem."

<I wanted to write fluff, so here is some soft Keemami nobody asked for. They aren't couple yet, but hey...>

"Uhh, I spy with my little eye... something green!" Keebo exclaimed after looking around the bus for a moment.

The two of them had been talking about traveling for most of the ride, but there was only so much to talk about, so the topic changed to random games like this. It had nothing to do with the fact that
Keebo had accidentally asked about Rantaro's sisters and almost ruined the conversation.

"A tree?" Rantaro chuckled, "or maybe grass."

"No," Keebo objected (OBJECTION!) "We're sticking to objects inside the bus, remember?"

"Oh yea..." Rantaro realized. "Sorry, I tend to forget stuff like that. Let me guess... is it my hair?"

"No," Keebo repeated, 'you're getting closer, though."

They both sat in silence for a moment, Keebo staring expectantly up at Rantaro and Rantaro staring back down at Keebo as if trying to read his mind. Then, something seemed to click in the taller's mind, his eyes lighting up a bit, showing the pride that a child gets from finishing a puzzle or something similar.

"My eyes?" Rantaro attempted, sounding skeptical, but was quite confident in actuality.

"Yes, you got it!" Keebo cheered.

"Why'd you chose my eyes of all things? Is it because they're one of the only things I can't see?" Rantaro questioned, true curiosity prominent.

"Well, your eyes are actually very pretty!" Keebo complimented, seemingly unaware of his own words.

"My eyes are pretty?" Rantaro puzzled.

"Of course, they are pretty!" Keebo reiterated. "They're like a nice forest. You know, like when the sun is shining down on it after it rains. Well, not so much rain that it makes everything muddy, but just enough to have little droplets and—"

At this point, Rantaro couldn't stop his face from heating up a bit. Even someone as calm as him would find it difficult to stay completely composed when their friend starts rambling about how pretty their eyes are. It didn't take too long for Keebo to finally catch himself and turn a bit red himself.

"Sorry! I didn't realize how—how awkward and creepy I must've sounded!" Keebo cried.

"N—no no, it's fine, don't worry," Rantaro muttered. "Oh and—uh—your... your eyes are also very nice—or uh—pretty, too. They're like an ocean or a nice sky or—uh—yea... there, now we're even —" he topped it off with a small chuckle "—right?"

Keebo quickly nodded, face still red. Silence seems to have become a constant with the duo at this point as it fills in the air around them. It was awkward, painfully so and they could very faintly hear the clock from before coming back to mock them as it ticked over and over. Eventually, Rantaro felt a small weight on his right side. Already aware it was Keebo, he forced down the heat on his face, then closed his eyes to get some rest of his own, assuring himself that this might've been awkward, but the two were just friends. Nothing more. (Ha, alright, keep telling yourself that, bud.)

<Did I write flustered Amami alright? Anyway, now back to our two little blueberry children>

The rumble of the engine and fragments of conversations filled the pair's ears for the rest of the ride, which was only around twenty more minutes. Neither of them had anything to say to each other, so there wasn't exactly any sort of tension that needed to be solved with conversation. It
wasn't long before the bus rolled through the iron gates and up the the brick building and their new school, Hope's Peak Academy. This was the place where their lives would change forever.

Okay, these are the dorm rooms, so this is important. These will be brought up and actually have significance to the plot, but they'll be brought up when need.

So it's the same format as the actual in game dorms, separated by gender and two stories. They are in the order mentioned. Also, I already know there are going to be top/bottom jokes, but chill.

Guys Dorms:

Top Floor:
Shinguuji Far Left, Hoshi Left, Amami Right, Ouma Far Right

Bottom Floor:
Idabashi Far Left, Gokuhara Left, Saihara Right, Momota Far Right

Girls Dorms:

Top Floor:
Yumeno Far Left, Tojo Left, Harukawa Right, Yonaga Far Right

Bottom Floor:
Shirogane Far Left, Akamatsu Left, Chabashira Right, Iruma Far Right

"Ultimate Nightmare Fuel" March 21st, 5:36PM

Kayayday and 10 others are online.

Mwah: Hellooooooo!

MakiRoll: Oh god no

Atua: *Atua

Shumai: Ouma-Kun, where have you been for the past week? Nobody has seen you anywhere.

Mwah: I've been here, silly!

Pig: OKAY, WHO DID THISSSSS TO MY NAAAAAME?!!?!

Mom: Iruma-San, please cease your moaning, especially while typing. Also, might I ask what has happened. I believe I have a basic hypothesis, but that is it.

Shumai: We went on a multi hour bus trip and in that time, Ouma-Kun discovered the chat. Either that, or he found it in the past week, I can't be sure.

Kayayday: Is this supposed to be my first name?

Kayayday: Ouma and I aren't on first name terms though

Weeb: Oh, that's a reference to a separate function you can choose!
Weeb: It's been so long since I've broken the fourth wall, it's just gotten plain boring...

Idiot: oma change are names back!

MakiRoll: That's Kaito

Shumai: Hello Kaito-Kun

Idiot: y did u assume its Kaito?

MakiRoll: Well, we're not wrong, right?

Mwah: Nah, that's Momota-Chan alright!

Idiot: u little

Robophobic: My name is inaccurate and I would like it to be removed...

Dora?: It isn't that bad.

Pig: wow the cryptid didn't pop outta nowheee

Dora?: How did you figure out my talent anyway? I don't think I told you.

Mwah: Easy! I just snuck in, bashed a few skulls in then snatched the files easy peasy!

Kayayday: How did you get admin rights?

Pig: the twink got his mits on the school files, this is nothing bakamatsu

Mwah: The pig has a point.

Pig: AYEEEEEEEE

MakiRoll: Quit while you're ahead, Iruma...

Weeb: And so, with the class reunited at last, the school year will soon begin. A journey of love, sadness and growth has only just begun... what will happen next chapter when they group enters their first day? Class rep will be chosen and peculiar teacher will be introduced (a character from the spin-off manga Killer Killer!)

Mwah: That's gonna get old fast, Shirogane-Chan...

Shumai: Yea.

And so, the first official chapter draws to a close. Once again, I'm sorry if things weren't really interesting, but I'm actually quite happy with what I've made. However, if you have any suggestions or constructive criticism for the portrayal of any characters, please feel free to comment and I'll take note of it. Thanks for reading!
Teacher in The Ceiling

Chapter Summary

The first day at Hope's Peak finally arrives! Ultimate Labs, newfound friendships and supposed secrets are introduced as our Ultimates meet their classmates for the next three years.

Chapter Notes

Going back, I realized I forgot to upload the seating chart. Don't worry, I've now added it and I'm really sorry for the inconvenience!

"Ultimate Nightmare Fuel" April 2nd, 6:01AM

Mom is online.

Mom: Everyone wake up. Breakfast is downstairs and you should all eat before you begin your first day. Nobody should be late for any reason.

Mwah and 14 others are online.

Mwah: My own Mommy Maid alarm clock!

Mwah: I've always wanted one of these~

Idiot: y dosnt anyone stop him when he speaks?

MakiRoll: On it

Kayayday: And she's off

Mwah: HECK, Shumai, save meeeeeeE.

Shumai: Why me of all people? Idabashi-Kun's super senior citizen strength is probably greater than mine.

Robophobic: I'm not sure if I'm insulted or not...

Pig: don't stress it, Keebs

Kayayday: I'm so excited to get to my lab

Kayayday: I get to hang out with other musicians and it's been so long since I've played piano

Robophobic: My slip says that I was assigned to the Engineering Lab, but I'm also able to access the Researchers Lab. Where are you all assigned?
Pig: niceeee, i'm also in the engineering lab

Weeb: I'm backstage in the auditorium, but the slip called it the Performers Lab...

Smoll: Gym

MakiRoll: Me and I think Kaito are also assigned to the gym. I was placed in the Sparring Lab mainly, though

Idiot: yep!j

Robophobic: Kaito and I*

MakiRoll: Do you want to die?

Kork: Researchers Lab.

Kork: ...

Kork: What in the diddly darn heck is my user?

Mwah: Well, to put it simply...

Mwah: You're K o r k .

Dora?: How did you not know?

Shumai: It's sort of common knowledge.

Robophobic: Don't you think?

Dora?: Indeed.

Mwah: Sir yes sir!

Weeb: Those four are so in sync, it's just plain creepy...

DEGENERATE: it's probably some sort of ritual that males have...

Kayayday: Oh, I got this!

Kayayday changed Mwah and 3 other's names

ThingPurple: Oh, neat!

ThingBlue: I think I preferred Shumai.

ThingWhite: Matching nicknames?

ThingGreen: I forgot you had admin rights, Akamatsu.

Weeb: And the Robbie Rottens, now multiplied, began to devise their plans to take down the heroes, breaking into song!

Kayayday: Shirogane, you're sort of pushing your freedom there

Gonta: R we stil talking about labs? Gonta is outside in the gardens with the bugs!
ThingGreen: Oh yea...

ThingWhite: Forgot about that.

ThingBlue: Weren't you the one who asked us about it to begin with?

ThingPurple: Yes, but I think he short-circuited~

ThingWhite: I'm not a robot, nor will I tolerate your robophobia!

Weeb: Once one speaks, the others follow

Mom: Quickly say your labs. You still have to eat and you've already lost about twenty minutes.

ThingPurple: But mooooom!

Mom: Now.

ThingPurple: Fine.

ThingPurple: Leadership.

ThingGreen: Research.

ThingBlue: ^^^^^

ThingWhite: You guys want to meet me at breakfast?

ThingGreen: Ye

Mom: As for the rest of you, I trust that you will come down on your own.

ThingBlue and 4 others are offline.

Kork: Those four are troublesome...

Idiot: there stealing my sidekick from me!

Weeb: Yea, right when they went offline, the chapter reached 420 words

Atua: Atua cannot protect the fourth wall at all times, Shirogane!

Kayayday: And I thought Amami was the lurker...

DEGENERATE: Yumeno-San hasnt said anything yet!

Magician: I'm in the performance lab. I'm going to breakfast now

Magician:

Magician: OUMA IM A MAGE AND YOU KNOW THAT

DEGENERATE: Lets go to breakfast together! Tenko can use her neo-aikido on that degenerate!

Atua: Angie will come too~

Smoll: Gokuhara, want to come with?
Gonta: Yes! Gonta will be right down!

DEGENERATE and 4 others are offline.

Kayayday: Who all is still on?

MakiRoll: Me

Idiot: i am

Kork: As am I.

Weeb: WATASHI WA GITA

MakiRoll: No.

Weeb: D:

MakiRoll: Shuichi and Amami aren't here, so we can kick her now

Idiot: nah, i believe in shuichi's judgement

Kayayday: So you want her to stay?

Idiot: yea

Weeb: I wasn't expecting that

Kork: Neither was I.

Kayayday: Guys, we need to go eat

Weeb: Fine, fine, I'm going

MakiRoll: I've been downstairs and eating. Unlike you guys, I'd rather not be late to school.

Idiot: wait we had school today?!

MakiRoll: K a i t o

Kayayday: Geez

MakiRoll: K A I T O

Idiot: im sorry!

Kork: Your idiocy is pitiful.

Idiot: HEY!

Weeb: He has a point

MakiRoll: Shut it, Shirogane

Weeb: Harsh, but valid I guess...

Weeb: See you guys there.
Weeb and 4 others are offline.

Pig: IM BACK BITCHES

Pig: DAMMIT

<Can we get an F for Iruma and Shirogane?>

Class that morning started out calm. It was sort of like when a lion crouches down before pouncing, making all hell break loose. Everyone had eaten breakfast and exited the dorms on time, although Kaito had to rush through the door at record speed to catch up.

"Alright, so... we're going to our... labs first, then to homeroom... right?" Kaito panted.

He quickly began to cough, which alarmed Shuichi and Maki. Of course, anybody who had survived longer than Gonta was concerned (although Kokichi seemed to be laughing), but those two were especially sensitive to it. Upon exiting the simulation, the group learned that Kaito's terminal illness, which had killed him, was implanted by the system itself. This was good to know, but it didn't help stop the worry the two of them felt every time Kaito so much as coughed.

"Wake up earlier next time and maybe you'd not leave your slip behind," Maki scoffed, turning to the boy behind her, expression disdainful. "But yea, we do."

Momota Kaito, the Ultimate Astronaut. His hair looked as if it was being held up by ungodly amounts of hair gel, sticking upwards into a point. However, he insists that the style is almost completely natural and he just has to mess with it a bit. His eyes matched his hair in color, a deep magenta. Kaito's eyes were slightly intimidating, but the effect was dampened by the wide smile on his face.

"Harukawa-San does present a valid argument," chimed in another voice, this one calm and composed. "Accommodating such unnatural habits will only degrade your physical, as well as mental capabilities."

Tojo Kirumi, the Ultimate Maid. She stood tall, posture relaxed yet proper. She radiated an aura of importance to a nearly unnerving extent as she held her book bag as if it were a suitcase. Her hair was a dull shade of green and was cut short, laying freely over her left eye. Speaking of her eyes, both were the similar grounding shade as her hair, sharp yet shaped in an almost kind and welcoming way.

"Oooh," Kokichi cooed. "You just got scolded by mom! It's timeout time for Momota-Chan~"

"Oi!" Kaito squawked, "I ain't getting in timeout!"

And so, the two of the, inevitably dissolved their conversation into bickering. The two had never exactly gotten along during the game and not even the joy of seeing all their friends (well, at least in Kaito's case,) could stabilize the amount of conflict between them. Although, something notable about their consistent disputes was that they never brought up anything from the game. Ever.

"Oh! Gonta has a question. Who is this Mr. Hij—Hijiri—how does Gonta say his name? Gonta doesn't want to be mean to new friends! Gentlemen always remember names." Yet another voice chirped, this one deep, yet bright and happy.

Gokuhara Gonta, the Ultimate Entomologist. His resting face was nothing short of scary with harsh, red eyes covered by a pair of glasses. He had a massive frame, muscular and towering at least half a foot over most of his classmates. His brown, perhaps even green hair was an unruly
mess and he almost has a passing resemblance to Tarzan, often forgetting to put on shoes. However, his expressions were nothing short of childish and lovable.

"Hijirihara," a new voice corrected Gonta, this one even deeper.

Hoshi Ryoma, the Ultimate Tennis Pro. His hair was a pleasant caramel color and shaved quite short. However, this was all covered by a hat that didn’t seem to match him at all. It was blue and had protrusions similar to cat ears on both sides. Unlike Gonta, Ryoma was very short, a height disadvantage of over a foot to everyone. His eyes were wide and gave out the impression that he’s staring into your soul if he’s not paying attention.

"Gonta sees... Hijirihara! Thank you very much, Hoshi-Kun!" Gonta gratified. "Gonta can see the Gardens now! Goodbye everyone!"

"No prob," Ryoma mumbled as Gonta broke away from the group. "See ya."

"Uh, Kaito-Kun?" Shuichi suddenly spoke, distracting Kaito from his debate with Kokichi.
"We’re about to pass the Gym."

"The Gy—oh yea, the Gym! Thanks sidekick!" Kaito exclaimed. "Maki Roll, you coming?"

"I’m mainly assigned to the Sparring Lab, idiot," Maki grumbled.

"Oh, right!" Kaito reminisced, laughing. "Just me and you then, Hoshi!"

Saying a quick goodbye, Kaito and Ryoma split from the group, heading to a separate building.

"Aw man, Momota-Chan left before I could even pull out my Trump card!" Kokichi whined. "I mean, if he left, I guess he forfeited, so I won!"

"I don’t think that’s how it works, Ouma-Kun," Shuichi sighed.

"What do you mean? That’s like, the very first rule in my book of rules for everything!" Kokichi rebutted. "My beloved Saihara-Chan is such a silly goose, don’t you think, beloved Amami-Chan?"

"Don’t you ever get tired of saying Beloved Saihara or Amami-Chan every time you talk about one of us?" Rantaro chuckled.

"Nope!" Kokichi asserted, popping the p.

"What, how?" Keebo cried in disbelief. "Addressing to those two like that is way too time consuming."

"Well, I make up for that time by calling you Keebs!" Kokichi declared, bopping the slightly taller boy on the nose.

"What happened to Ke—" Keebo paused for a moment "—Keeboy?" Keebo seemed to noticeably cringe from saying the name himself.

"Well, Idabashi is sorta boring and Keeboy is like, a bit too..." Kokichi’s face morphed into an expression of some sort of realization. "Oooh, I see! Keebs hasn’t told anyone yet!"

"Told anyone what?"

Nobody in particular had asked it. Well, at least not distinguished. Everyone in their little group, which was down 9 to because Kirumi had gone to the kitchens, Angie had gone to the Creative
Arts Lab and both Maki and Tenko went to the sparring lab, had been intrigued.

"Nishishi, I'm not telling~" Kokichi teased, acting like a smug child who had hidden their sibling's toys. "Besides, it's Keebs' secret anyway."

Automatically, everyone turned to Keebo with expectant looks, only for him to shrug nervously, likely having no memory of telling Kokichi this "secret" to begin with.

"Jeez, don't make them say it now, that'd be a boring way to end it!" Kokichi groaned. "How about Amami-Chan tells us another traveling story?"

"Yea, I'd enjoy to hear another story," Keebo quickly agreed.

"Oh, sure?" Rantaro obliged.

"Uh, Ouma-Kun? I think you passed your lab," Shuichi added before any story telling could begin.

"Wha—? Oh, I did! This is why Saihara-Chan is even better than Amami-Chan!" Kokichi praised, patting Shuic on the head before skipping back down the corridor.

"So, Idabashi-Kun," Kaede began. "What was the thing that Ouma-Kun was talking about?"

"What? Oh, nothing. Ouma-Kun was just... messing around," Keebo assured, "that's sort of his thing, y'know?"

"It can't be that bad if you told Ouma-Kun of all people though," Kaede reasoned.

"Well, I didn't tell him anything," Keebo stated, a twinge of annoyance and discomfort in his voice, "there isn't anything to tell him anywa—"

"Oi, Keebs!" A rough, female voice bellowed.

Iruma Miu, the Ultimate Inventor. She had an air of confidence around her. She wore her uniform with the first few buttons undone and had a pair of gloves added to her hands. Her hair was blonde, seemingly pink in some places. Her eyes were a watery blue similar to Keebo's, but the irises seemed to shake a bit if you stared too hard. To top it all off, she had a pair of goggles placed atop of her head.

"Our lab is here."

Wordlessly, Keebo followed Miu into the lab. However, before closing the door, Miu poked her head out, making a face at Kaede. It was aggressive, but had a shocking amount of disappointment, something you don't often see on someone like Miu. Keebo and Miu had become good friends during the game and like Kokichi and Kaito and just about everyone else, their bonds lasted in the real world as well. She was probably not a fan of Kaede trying to pry information from him.

The walk was quieter from that point on. Himiko and Tsumugi left into the Performers Lab, Kaede exiting into the Musician's Lab shortly after. This left the remaining three to their own devices as they walked to their own lab, that being the Researchers Lab.

"How do you suppose they function in the Musician Lab?" The tallest of the three asked. "Surely it must be difficult to get work done whilst there are others working."

Shinguuji Korekiyo, the Ultimate Anthropologist. He was a peculiar young man who screamed abnormality. For starters, he wore a mask on his face. Throughout the game, this had covered up
Korekiyo's deceased sister, with whom he had a disturbing relationship. However, this was an actual style choice he had in the real world. His hair, a deep blue, had initially been very long, but was now cut to about halfway between his shoulders and neck. As for his eyes, they were a bright gold and slim.

"I'm not sure," Shuichi pondered the thought.

"Maybe the Engineering Lab made some sort of soundproof technology," Rantaro commented absentmindedly.

"You four really do seem to bounce off one another," Korekiyo remarked. "It's quite interesting to witness as an anthropologist."

"Four?" Rantaro replied.

"Well, the other two aren't currently present, but I was referring to both of you, as well as Ouma-Kun and Idabashi-Kun," Korekiyo continued.

"Really? I'm not particularly close with any of them," Shuichi murmured before quickly adding, "sorry, no offense!

"None taken," Rantaro chuckled. "I guess the same could be said for me too anyway."

"I can still sense some form of unity within you," Korekiyo insisted. "Perhaps you'll come together in the future. Being able to find these sorts of things in everyday life is exactly why humanity is so be—" Korekiyo faltered for a moments, face screwed up like he had swallowed something sour "—interesting."

"What happened to 'humanity is beautiful'?" Rantaro quizzed, raising his pierced brow.

"Ah, nothing..." Korekiyo muttered, unusually nervous. "That sort of thing was just something she would've said."

It didn't take a genius to figure out that Korekiyo was referring to his sister. In fact, there were a few things Korekiyo had changed about himself. There was his hair, obviously, but there's had been one or two times where he's come down to breakfast without his usual mask. However, he'd always end up excusing himself, returning with the garment secured on his face. Yet, as a detective, Shuichi didn't miss the nagging feeling that Korekiyo hadn't just told the full truth, but he decided not to pry.

"I see..." Shuichi uttered. "This is our lab, right?"

The three came to a halt in front of a large wooden door. The lumber was glossy and accented by bronze detailing. It was chillingly close to the door to the library from the Killing Game Simulation (dubbed "KGS" by most.) Rantaro could feel a surge of unease from the sudden remembrance of the place he thought he'd breathe his last breaths, but nodded at Shuichi's question. The number on the door had matched the one on their slips.

Wordlessly, the trio strode through the door and Rantaro nearly lost it. The room was practically a library, shelves upon shelves of books. It didn't have the same scent as the one from the KGS, but familiarity was awful enough. The books were still overflowing, stacked on top of one another. In attempt to calm himself, Rantaro concentrated on what was different. There were rows of desks with computers and textbooks, along with a few windows to remind the green haired boy that he was no longer in the basement library he had "died" in.
"Amami-Kun," Shuichi spoke up worriedly, "are you alright."

"Yea, I'm alright," Rantaro lied, trying to will away the nauseous feeling in his stomach.

"Your face is green. If you have to puke, go to the infirmary," a new voice came out of nowhere.

Before them stood a girl with a face nearly devoid of any emotion. Her hair was lavender, a small portion tied into a braid with darkly colored ribbons. Her bangs reached the top of her calm, violet eyes and her mouth was curled into something that couldn't be distinguished as a frown or smile. On her hands were studded black gloves. None of the three had ever seen this girl before and given their naturally antisocial tendencies (except for Rantaro, but he was still adjusting to the room,) none of them asked for a name.

"Kirigiri Kyoko, first year. Ultimate Detective," she informed them, seemingly reading their minds.

"Ah, we're first years, too," Rantaro finally regained his composure. "My name is Amami Rantaro, I'm the Ultimate Adventurer."

"You're a detective, too?" Shuichi blurted out of the blue. "Gh—Sorry! That was sort of random."

"That's fine. Just get your friend to the infirmary if he doesn't feel better soon," Kyoko huffed, casually flicking her hair back. "We're here until 7:20, so you only have about ten minutes."

"Ah, r—right," Shuichi sputtered, turning back to Rantaro. "Are you sure you're alright working here?"

"I'll be fine," Rantaro mumbled, sounding very slightly annoyed and turning away.

"S—sor—! Sorry..." Shuichi tried to apologize, but was unsure if it reached Rantaro as he walked to the corner of the library, Korekiyo going in the same general direction.

"He seems to be the irritable type," Kyoko observed coolly.

"No, he's—he's normally very calm actually, it's just that he died in a library during the KGS, so —," Shuichi caught himself. "Sorry! I—is this a sensitive topic? Sorry if I brought anything bad up."

"You apologize too much," Kyoko stated. "It's alright though. I survived my simulation, so I've chosen not to dwell on what happened."

"Oh, I see..." Shuichi trailed off, "I also survived... but I've never really been that strong, so I haven't exactly moved on yet."

Shuichi looked at the lavender haired girl with a pained expression. It was a nasty mixture of guilt and sorrow, a single eye peeking out at her. Kyoko also couldn't help but notice the boy started to tremble a bit. She cast a look at the two boys in the corner of the library, gesturing them to come over. After they complied, Kyoko gazed at the other detective for a moment before walking off to the desks, where a large man dressed as one of her classmates sat.

<i>I think Succi broke his spine after he finally grew it. Anyways, now for a segment at the Ultimate Engineering Lab>

"That bitch shouldn't've pushed ya," Miu growled as she closed the door, "I'll break her virginity!"
"Iruma-San, I don't think you've comprehended what you've just said!" Keebo cried, mortified of his friend's strange threat to 'break Akamatsu's virginity.'

"Yea, well I don't even know this so called secret of yours and I'm not pushin' ya!" Miu responded. "And I'm your maintenance buddy, Keebs!"

"There is no secret!" Keebo insisted. "Ouma-Kun was just... messing around, alright?"

"Sure he was."

"I'm serious!"

"Hey, keep it down, I'm looking at the tools!" Someone stepped away from a tall wall of cabinets to look at them.

The guy had the type of appearance that stuck out in a crowd. His hair and eyes were a flaming pink, the former being covered partially by a dark beanie. His locks were abnormally long, around shoulder length, a very small part twirled into a braid. His ears were pierced, screws taking the place of your typical earrings. As for his teeth, they were razor sharp, almost shark like. Rather than the typical Hope's Peak uniform, he wore a jumpsuit that Miu could only describe as atrocious.

"Oi! Mind your own business!" Miu snapped, shockingly not cowering from the volume. "Ya don't have ta look for tools if you already are one!"

"Aw, now that's just rude!" Cried the guy, pulling a face.

"Heeeeeeeee!" Miu backed down, "y—you didn't have to be so harsh!"

"What's with this girl?!" The guy yelled, obviously baffled. "Those two are way calmer!"

The dude gestured at two figures in the back, one looking up while the other didn't bat an eye at the acknowledgement.

"The two girls in the back are way calmer. Iruma-San just takes some getting used to," Keebo assured.

"U—uhm, sorry, but I'm a boy," one of the 'girls' in the back squeaked out.

The boy was very small, even more so than Kokichi. It wasn't exactly surprising Keebo mistook them for a female given their wide, chesnut eyes and cutely styled hair. They were at one of three computers in the corner of the room and had gone completely unnoticed. As for the person at the computer next to them, they were in fact a female. She had light pink hair that curled at the tips, part of her bangs clipped with a pixelated hair clip. Her eyes were pink, half lidded and had bags under them. Her uniform was messy and she had a zip up hoodie rather than a blazer.

"Wha—really?! I am so sorry!" Keebo apologized profusely. "I'm so embarrassed!"

"Heh, you sort of remind me of Ishi," the small boy giggled. "I'm Fujisaki Chihiro, first year Ultimate Programmer."

"Du-doy, the sign outside said first years only," Miu spat, having gained back some of her confidence. "Of course, I guess only the gorgeous girl genius, Iruma Miu would pick up on that! BOOYAH!"
"Is she always like that?" The pink haired guy stressed over Miu's cackling.

"You'll adjust..." Keebo reasoned.

"I hope so," the guy deflated. "Anyway, the name's Souda Kazuichi, I'm the Ultimate Mechanic."

Being the one of two people left for introductions, everyone turned to the pink haired girl on the other computer. Although, she seemed completely oblivious and kept on playing some sort of game. Even after people cleared their throats in attempt to get her attention, Miu even insulting her, she still remained focused.

"That's Nanami Chiaki, Ultimate Gamer," both Kazuichi and Chihiro spoke at once.

"Wait, you're not in our class," Kazuichi stated, "how do you know Nanami-san?"

"He's my stepbrother," Chiaki spoke at last, probably snapped out of whatever kind of trance she was in by the sound of her name. "I'm going to get back to playing Duck Life 4 unless anyone has any questions."

"Uh, I'm Idabashi Keebo, Ultimate Roboticist," Keebo introduced himself. "Although I was formerly known as an actual robot during the KG—"

"You were a robot!?" Kazuichi exclaimed, "that's awesome! Do you have any cool similarities to a robot, maybe like a mechanical way of thinking or a cool immunity to feeling emotions you don't want to?"

"What? No, don't be robophobic! I am in no way robotic," Keebo rebutted. "I'm not nearly as advanced, I'm—" a strange look crossed Keebo's face for a second "—just a normal human. Nothing more..."

The group spent the rest of their time casually talking about what they wanted to make that year. Chiaki even briefly explained that she was assigned to the Engineering Lab so she could test out certain programs and technology. However, she made it clear that they needed a permission form with her signature before testing physical machinery.

<Okay, I just wanted to do a segment with the Leader Lab because it's so chaotic>

Kokichi pranced through the door to his new lab. He'd never admit it, but he was slightly excited to meet people with similar talents to him. It helped him size up the competition. Although, the sight he walked in on was far from promising.

The room was split into three even sections, all of which seemed to have stuff to accommodate two people. Right where these parts intersected, there were four boys, all sort of ridiculous in their own way. They seemed to be arguing rather aggressively.

The first guy seemed to be the calmest, but his face was rather smug, only occasionally flaring up with anger. He had the longest legs Kokichi had ever seen and had an air of wealth and snobbism to him. His hair was blonde, eyes blue and had a judgmental feel to them as he gazed at the other guys behind a pair of shockingly cheap looking glasses.

The next guy was probably the most emotional considering the fact that he was angrily crying. He had huge, furrowed eyebrows that matched his bright red eyes, which were round in shape. His black hair was cut fairly short, but seemed much shorter because the guy had chosen to slick it back a bit. His posture was very stiff and matched that of a soldier.
The door suddenly burst open, revealing a sixth person. She looked disheveled for a moment, but quickly bounced back. She had golden hair tucked neatly into a rather complex looking ponytail. Kokichi guessed that the stylish bow was meant to hide some crazy mess of hair pins. She had a kind, pretty face with blue eyes and a rather pleasant smile.

"I am so sorry for my tardiness!" She yelped. "I got into a rather engaging conversation about Atu —"

"Bout time ya showed up, your highness," another guy spat. "Tell these dumbasses I'm right!"

This guy was around the same height as Kokichi, but his face was a bit more babyish. He had long eyelashes, pink cheeks, freckles, a particularly large one on his chin, and soft green eyes. Kokichi would've been impressed if it weren't for the scowl and angular brows. His hair was buzzed like the other kid's, but he had a few lines shaved into his scalp.

"I will if you request me to do so formally," the girl huffed.

"Fuckin' fine," the short guy grumbled. "Sonia Nevermind, Ultimate Princess, will you tell these unintelligent bums that I'm correct?"

"Of course," Sonia complied, turning to the others. "Gentlemen, Kuzuryuu Fuyuhiko, Ultimate Yakuza Boss, is correct on whatever matters you may have been discussing."

"Just cuz you said it, don't make it true," the last guy objected. "Ishimaru Kiyotaka, Ultimate Moral Compass, tell these other dumb bums that ain't how this works."

This dude had the worst haircut out of anyone and reminded Kokichi of a croissant based off both color and shape. There were some longer, black strands of hair left down. He was definitely intimidating, sharp eyes and furrowed brows—angry eyebrows seemed to be a theme with these guys. He also had the coolest jacket Kokichi has ever laid his eyes on. He made a mental note to steal it at some point.

"Oowada Mondo, Ultimate Biker Gang Leader—bro, you need to rethink your profession—is correct," Kiyotaka, the guy with the huge eyebrows, declared. "That is not how this works!"

"Well, I, Togami Byakuya, Ultimate Affluent Progeny, say you are all incorrect," the smug guy, Byakuya scoffed. "And since my vote is basically worth more than any of yours, I have automatically won this."

Byakuya broke off from what was probably the strangest sequence of introductions ever and sat down to read. At this point, Kokichi realized three things. One, his Lab partners are strange. Two, he still had yet to say something, or even be noticed for that matter. And three, there were two names on a plaque for each section of the room.

"Well Togami-Chan," Kokichi chirped, "I, Ouma Kokichi, the Ultimate Supreme Leader, have sent out a message to the whole wide world and everyone says I'm right! Good luck going against the universe!"

"Oh great," Byakuya sighed, "a rat."

"That's cold, Togami-Chan! I thought we... I thought we were buddies!" Kokichi wailed.

After getting no reaction, Kokichi looked around to find his name. He soon found his space and discovered he had been paired with Kiyotaka (alright, these two are my strange BROTP.)
"Ishimaru-Chan!" Kokichi exclaimed, skipping over to the boy. "Your name is too long, I don't like it!"

"I'm not exactly fond of my family name either," Kiyotaka admitted, "however, that is exactly why I must work hard! I will redeem the Ishimaru family name!"

"Why aren't you intense?" Kokichi teased, moving to sit down next to the dude. "You should be fun to hang around Ishi-Chan~!"

<Hijirihara Takumi, the teacher, is a canon character from the spin-off manga, Danganronpa Gaiden. He is not an OC>

One by one, the Ultimates of class 78C filed into the empty classroom. There was currently no sign of a teacher other than name tags resting on every desk.

Okay, here are the seating arrangements:

UwU

"Where the hell did the teach get the grand old idea to put those four idiots near each other?!" Miu complained.

"They went by alphabetical order," Shuichi observed, hand covering his mouth and muffling his words a bit, "but it was put boy girl order and the second and third rows were reversed."

"What kind of logic is that?!" Kaito revolted. "It's like this guy wants us all to die!"

"Wow, Momota-Chan, h—how could you say such things?!" Kokichi bawled, suddenly bursting out into obnoxious tears. "WAHHHHHHHHH! YOU'RE SO MEAN, MOMOTA-CHAN"

"Somebody take care of him or else I will," Maki warned, eyes staring darkly at Kokichi.

"Might I ask where Hijirihara-Sensei may be?" Kirumi asked as Shuichi tried to calm the falsely crying Kokichi. "If I am not mistaken, he was meant to be here before us."

"That's right!" An angered female affirmed, "where is that degenerate?"

Chabashira Tenko, the Ultimate Aikido Master. She had a cute face (according to Kaede,) with green eyes and a beauty mark on her chin. Her hair was styled uniquely with two pigtails tied in ways that shouldn't be physically possible. She accessorized with a headband and a cloth on the back of her head that resembled a pinwheel.

"I wouldn't call our teacher a degenerate," Keebo suggested warily.

"Actually says that they're in the ceiling!" An energetic voice chimed. "Angie heard it~"

Yonaga Angie, the Ultimate Artist. Her skin was dark, but her cheeks were slightly pink and accented her blue eyes. She had her thin, white hair pulled neatly into two matching pigtails tied around her shoulders. She had a very strange resemblance to a chipmunk, but her cheerful self didn't care.

"I doubt that our teacher is in the ceiling, Yonaga—" Keebo tried to speak, but was quickly cut off.

Oddly enough, the ceiling had begun to shake, alarming the class. They stared on with curiosity as the panels calmed down, collective breaths held. Everyone sighed I need relief when the shaking stopped, only to freak out once more when it started up again.
"Could it be?" Kokichi yelled.

"Could it be what?" Shuichi gasped.

"That our dear old pal Monokuma has returned?!" Kokichi snickered, his face feigning fear (or at least it seemed fake.)

Everyone's face paled and turned to look accusingly at either Tsumugi or Kokichi. Tsumugi aggressively shook her head in denial whereas Kokichi shrugged with a lackluster smirk on his face.

"Everyone get behind Gonta!" Gonta demanded, jumping in front of the group as they cowered in the corner.

"Kokichi, quit screwing around!" Kaito threatened.

Before a retort could be delivered, one of the panels in the ceiling was removed, revealing a young man. His hair was black and lazily done, partially laying over one of his red eyes. He peered down at the children before him before grumbling something about fear or passion. Then, with ease, he jumped from the ceiling with great agility. He casually sauntered over to the teacher's podium before finally addressing the frightened cluster of teenagers.

"Hijirihara Takumi, former Ultimate Detective (A/N not really, but in this AU he is.) I'll be your teacher for the year," he stated with simplicity before vanishing behind the podium.

Nobody could say a word.

Lunch time came a little while after the welcoming ceremony. However, the class hadn't attended mostly because their teacher was asleep under their podium and slightly because they were still shaken up by Kokichi's words. The Ultimates now sat in jumbled patterns, seemingly split down the middle (sCrUm DeBaTe?!) in the cafeteria.

At one table, which had a capacity of ten people, sat Shuichi, Kaito, Maki, Keebo, Rantaro, Miu and Kaede. At the identical table next to them was Kirumi, Ryoma, Gonta, Tenko, Angie, Himiko and Korekiyo. This left Tsumugi and Kokichi, who had opted to sit by themselves.

"Heya!" Kokichi greeted when Tsumugi sat across from him. "What brings you here, Shirogane-Chan? Come to kill me little Miss Mastermind?"

"Don't call me that, please," Tsumugi muttered as she whipped out her chopstick. "Besides, I bet you already know why I'm here."

"Hm? I have no clue what you're talking about," Kokichi grinned.

"Don't make me say it," Tsumugi grumbled after swallowing a mouthful of rice. "Besides, it's just plain obvious that you're here for the same reason."

"Oh?" Kokichi remarked, "are you a loser with no friends too!? The pleasure is all mine, Shirogane-Chan~"

Tsumugi couldn't miss the slight flash of sadness that crossed the small boy's eyes as he spoke. She didn't recall him being much of an open book. She of all people would know, she had monitored him for weeks during the KGS. This probably meant he had struck one of his own nerves. Feeling some sort of sympathy for him, Tsumugi went to speak.
"Uh, maybe you shouldn't be that hard on yourse—"

"That was a lie though," Kokichi claimed happily. "Those idiots just hate us!"

"Some of them are nice," Tsumugi reminded. "Saihara-Kun has been very nice and Amami-Kun and Idabashi-Kun are as well."

"Yuck, what are you, in love?" Kokichi gagged.

"Of course not! I'm just plain grateful," Tsumugi protested.

"Fine, I guess Saihara-Chan has always been stupidly nice, even to me," Kokichi mumbled uncharacteristically quiet.

Tsumugi blinked a few times, waiting for Kokichi to bounce up, claiming the statement as a lie, but he didn't seem to comprehend what he had said. The boy in question was now staring at his food, which he had barely touched. Tsumugi guessed that he either didn't want to talk anymore, or was waiting for her to continue. His expression was concentrated, pink dusting his cheeks.

"I'm surprised you're talking to me," Tsumugi admitted. "I thought you'd be especially angry with me."

"Really now?" Kokichi piped up. "Why are you shocked? I'm like, the embodiment of evil."

"I was the mastermind, Ouma-Kun. I saw the motive videos," Tsumugi prompted. "Besides, Saihara-Kun told everyone about it in the sixth trial."

"Whaa?!" Kokichi cried, "that is just one teeny tiny thing though! You gotta have more than that Shirogane-Chan!"

"Momota-Kun told us about your plan before his execu—" Tsumugi began.

"Huh?! Momota-Chan betrayed meeeeee," Kokichi interrupted, crocodile tears earning a few passerby's weird looks.

"We could tease him in the chat if you want," Tsumugi suggested.

"Wooooow, I didn't know you had it I never you, plain Jane," Kokichi applauded, pulling his phone from his pocket.

"Ultimate Nightmare Fuel" April 2nd, 12:24PM

ThingPurple and Weeb are online.

ThingPurple: Hey Shirogane-Chan.

Weeb: Why yes?

ThingPurple: I learned something new today!

MakiRoll and 6 others are online.

MakiRoll: I've had nightmares like this

ThingPurple: The human body is 70% water!
Weeb: Really? Now that's swell!

"Hush you."

MakiRoll: AKAMATSU, RID US OF THESE DEMONS
ThingBlue: Maki-San, chill.
Kayayday: I'm actually curious, so no
MakiRoll: I'm going to die here...
Idiot: i dont like were this is going
ThingPurple: So is the other 30% of Momota-Chan hair gel?
Idiot: jasrdw

"DAMMIT OUMA!" Kaito bellowed, alarming the students around them.
"Nishishi, mission accomplished," Kokichi laughed.
"That was pretty funny actually," Tsumugi chuckled. "I can see why you enjoy this."
"Oh, does that mean you'd my secret organization~?" Kokichi proposed.
"I'll pass."

ThingWhite: I don't think you had to yell...
ThingPurple: Oooo, Ishi-Chan is chewing you OUT, Momota-Chan~
Pig: kINKY
ThingPurple: Begone thot.
Pig: HEYYYYYY
ThingPurple: Amami-Chan, get out of your cave you lurker!
ThingGreen: lol
ThingBlue: Amami-Kun, no...
ThingWhite: Why must you do this?

—
"You four are seriously just clones of each other sometimes..." Tsumugi commented. "It's just plain silly because your actual personalities are so different."

"Yes, and we are going to take over the world! Nothing will hold us back!"

—

Kayayday: Hate to break up your craziness
Weeb: No you don't
Kayayday: Okay, true
Kayayday: But not my point
Kayayday: Class starts in two minutes
MakiRoll: Already there
ThingBlue: What?
Idiot: when?
ThingBlue: Oh wow, she really is.

ThingBlue and 8 others are offline.

"Okay, I'm going to make this quick. We need a class representative," Takumi announced. "And so I drew a name from a hat."

"Ouma is your class rep."

"I VETO THAT!" Once again, the voice wasn't distinguishable, for multiple people had spoken.

"Alright, then pick a new one and keep it civil," Takumi sighed, climbing back into the ceiling.

"Aw darn. Well, I guess I didn't expect anyone to believe in me anyway," Kokichi confessed in a tone far too happy for his words.

"Alright, I think we should have a vote," Kaede recommended, ignoring Kokichi. "Keep it anonymous though. And no voting for yourself!"

"I don't see why not," Rantaro agreed. "Anyone object?"

Kokichi brightly raised his hand, but nobody acknowledged it.

*~<Voting Time!!~*~

Akamatsu-Saihara
Amami-Idabashi
Chabashira-Akamatsu (or Yumeno!!)
Gokuhara-Akamatsu
Harukawa-Saihara
Hoshi-Tojo
Idabashi-Amami
Iruma-Akamatsu
Momota-Saihara

Ouma-He wrote everyone's names overtop of each other, but in very tiny writing in the corner, it says Aihara Sig.

Saihara-Akamatsu
Shinguuji-Atua
Shirogane-Saihara
Tojo-Akamatsu
Yonaga-Atua!
Yumeno-Saihara

"Okay," Kaito began, "Idabashi, Amami and Tojo got one vote ea—what the hell did you even write, Ouma?!!"

"Check the corners," Kokichi snickered.

"Pig Latin... anyway!" Kaito continued. "There are... what the heck? Two votes for Atua—" Angie began cackling "—a very close second with Akamatsu, five votes and the winner is... Shuichi!"

"Wha—why?" Shuichi questioned. "You guys really want me as your rep?"

"Of course!"

"Are you really sure?"

Shuichi's eyes were glossy and he had the same look from the library earlier as everyone stared down at him expectantly. His breathing was becoming uneasy.

"Oh! Idea, idea!" Kokichi screeched, successfully taking all eyes off Shuichi, who looked ready to break. "Akamatsu-Chan, you could be something like, I dunno, Saihara-Chan's deputy since you only just failed!"

"I don't think I'd be that fit for the job though," Kaede objected.

"No, that's wrong," Shuichi spoke up. "I'd be happy to have your help... I don't think I'd be able to handle it on my own."

"Oh... well in that case, I'll do it," Kaede obliged.

The class broke out into cheers, mainly from Kaito before breaking off into their own little groups. Since they didn't have any actual classes for most days, especially on the first day of the school year, the class had a couple of hours to spend doing whatever.

"Hey, Ouma-Kun," Shuichi addressed.
"Oh, Saihara-Chan, what a lovely surprise!" Kokichi cheered. "Have you come to confess your undying love to me?"

"Wha—n—no! That's not—" Shuichi sputtered, "I—I just wanted to thank you."

"Thank me? Thank me for what~?" Kokichi teased, actually curious.

"For distracting the others earlier..." Shuichi trailed off.

"Ehh?! I was just sharing my brilliant idea! I have no clue what your eyes talking about," Kokichi denied, but he smiled. "But if there was anything, I guess I'd say no problem or something."

"I see," Shuichi humored him.

Shuichi turned and walked away from Kokichi, leaving him to his own devices. However, when he did, the small boy's face dipped a bit. He sunk his head onto his desk, disguising it as a nap or something. He sighed, disappointed.

That is not what he wanted Shuichi to say.

WOO! Another chapter is out! Feel free to theorize, I make sure to point out clues to character arcs in my writing. As always, constructive criticism is welcome. I hope you enjoyed and thank you for reading! 6666 Words...
Atua’s Local Malmart

Chapter Summary

In which birthdays are planned, hat conspiracies are formed and Atua possesses a Malmart.

ThingGreen: You’re adorably innocent sometimes, Idabashi

ThingGreen: Wait

ThingGreen: Shit

ThingGreen: How do you delete a message?

ThingPurple: PFFTAMAMICHANYOUDISASTERAHADNRJTM

ThingGreen: OUMA, I AM A TRAINED BABYSITTER, I AM LICSENCED TO GIVE TIME OUTS

Atua: Praise Atua for your suffering~

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

"Oh Akamatsu-Chaaaaaan~" Kokichi sang.

It was at this moment that Kaede knew today was going to be chaotic. This purple little gremlin who had come stumbling into her room (which she vividly remembered locking last night) always seemed to be an omen for chaos. He stared up at her with wide, violet eyes unblinking. Kaede, on the other hand, was unamused.

"What?" Was all she bothered with.

"Wowie, such a sharp tone! Better watch out or you'll end up all alone just like me!" Kokichi warned. "That's a lie, though. My organization of over ten thousand members all fear me too much to leave!"

"Just get on with it," Kaede groaned.

No, Kaede wasn't normally harsh with people, this little boy has just always gotten on her nerves and pushed all the wrong buttons. This only worsened when the screening was held. The screening was meant to catch up all the dead contestants on what happened. They were all sat down in a theater and was shown complete versions of the trials, deaths and even little snippets of their classmate' said daily lives. It was an awful and quite cruel idea, so it got cancelled right after they watched those remaining exit the trial room after the fourth trial.

"How mean," Kokichi sniffed, faux tears sprinting into his eyes, “you kiss Saihara-Chan with that mouth?”
“What? It’s not like that!” Kaede insisted, “I don’t feel that way about him!”

In truth, Kaede would be lying if she’d never thought about it. During the game, something must’ve messed with her brain a little bit or something. However, she can safely say now that she’s woken up that she no longer has such feelings for her best friend.

“Suuure,” Kokichi grinned. “Well anywho, you know how you’re like, the class deputy or whatever?”

“Yes. You’re the one who suggested it,” Kaede deadpanned. “If this is about any sort of task, you should probably go to Saihara-Kun first.”

“Well, I was GOING to, but he’s all holed up in his room, sleeping!” Kokichi cried. “I couldn’t possibly disturb him! Did you know he sheds his emo hat everyday and has to sleep to regrow i—“

“Ouma,” Kaede interrupted, losing patience.

“Fiiine,” Kokichi sighed. “I just wanted to ask you if you knew that Yonaga-Chan’s birthday is soon.”

“Wha—oh geez, you’re right!” Kaede exclaimed. “We need to get a party in order!”

“Nishishi, I’ll be sure to spike the punch,” Kokichi giggled. “Be sure to make it extra demonic~”

And with that, Kokichi spun on his heel and left through Kaede’s door, leaving the girl to her own devices. Having already gone to breakfast and having about an hour before she had to leave for class (she likes to wake up early,) Kaede had some time to ponder what she could do for the upcoming birthday. She briefly found herself wondering why Kokichi had come to her anyway. Shaking her head, she got back to thinking.

"Ultimate Nightmare Fuel” April 11th, 6:03AM

ThingPurple: I’m telling you!

ThingPurple: It just grows back onto his head overnight!

Idiot: woah!

Gonta: wow!

MakiRoll: You guys are idiots

Smoll: Watch it.

MakiRoll: Fine.

MakiRoll: Kaito, you’re an idiot

Idiot: HEY!

Kayaday is online.

Kayaday: Who all is online?

ThingWhite: I am.
ThingGreen: Same

Smoll: Heya.

ThingWhite: Since when have you been online, Amami-Kun?

MakiRoll: Here

Idiot: im on

ThingGreen: I’m always online...

Gonta: Gonta is!!!

ThingPurple: I’m not!

Atua: Angie is here~

Kayayday: Perfect timing, Yonaga!

Kayayday: You’re just who I wanted to talk to

Atua: ???

Kayayday: Your birthday?

Atua: Aha! Angie's birthday is coming up soon!

Atua: Atua doesn't have time for birthday celebrations, so Angie forgot

ThingPurple: Your buddy Atua seems awfully forgetful.

ThingPurple: It's almost as if he's...

ThingPurple: Nonexistent.

Atua: Are you questioning the presence of Atua???

ThingPurple: Yep!

ThingWhite: Oh no.

ThingGreen: Oh no.

Atua: Atua says you're going to hell!

ThingPurple: I don't need a god to tell me something I already know, silly!

Kayayday: Guys, back on topic!

MakiRoll is offline.

ThingPurple: lol gottem
Idiot: what's with the random change in tiping?

Smoll is offline.

ThingPurple: Dawwww, you scared Hoshi-Chan off too, Momota-Chan!

Idiot: ...

Idiot: akamatsu?

Kayayday: Yea?

Idiot: can we kick him?

Kayayday: No!

ThingPurple: What’s this? Someone actually wants me around and thinks I’m special? I think I’m gonna cry!

Kayayday: Well, you can think that about me if you want

Kayayday: But I’m only keeping you here because I want everyone to get along

Kayayday: I’m trusting that you’ll become a good person someday

ThingPurple: I’m really feeling the love here

ThingWhite: I doubt Akamatsu-San holds any sort of attraction towards you.

ThingGreen: You’re adorably innocent sometimes, Idabashi

ThingGreen: Wait

ThingGreen: Shit

ThingGreen: How do you delete a message?

ThingPurple: PFFTAMAMICHANYOUDISASTERAHADNRJTM

ThingGreen: OUMA, I AM A TRAINED BABYSITTER, I AM LICENCED TO GIVE TIME OUTS

Atua: Praise Atua for your suffering~

Kayayday: Oh good

Kayayday: You haven’t left yet

Atua: Why would Angie leave?

Atua: Atua loves watching the awkwardness of social ineptitude!

ThingPurple: Oh, you better watch out, Yonaga-Chan. Or else Amami-Chan is going to call mom on you!
**ThingWhite:** My apologies. I feel as if I'm at fault for this.

**ThingGreen:** No, you're perfect

**ThingGreen:** LY FINE

**ThingGreen:** PERFECTLY FINE

**ThingPurple:** Wow, I didn't know it was possible to be this smooth over the internet...

**ThingGreen:** HUSH

**Atua:** Atua is very happy right now!

**Idiot:** you guys are wired

**ThingPurple:** *Weird. Your grammar is atrocious, Momota-Chan!

**Idiot:** HEY!!!!

**Kayayday:** It's sad how it's so difficult for us to stay on topic here...

**Weeb is online.**

**Idiot:** oh no

**Weeb:** That's just plain rude

**Idiot:** hey i kept everyone from kicking u!

**Weeb:** Well, I came to say that it is way too early on for Amami actually have romantic feelings for Idabashi yet! He isn't great at trusting people like that, so he probably just panicked.

**ThingGreen:** ^^ As scared as I am about how much you know, I agree

**Idiot:** stop ignoring me!

**Kayayday:** That's great and all

**Kayayday:** But shouldn't we be talking about Yonaga's birthday?

**Atua:** Oh yea!

**Weeb:** Ah, that's in couple of days, right? What do you want to do?

**Kayayday:** Well that's ten minutes of my life I'm never getting back

**ThingPurple:** Pfft

**ThingWhite:** I believe this is what one may call a “feels bad, man” moment.

**ThingGreen:** Idabashi...

**Atua:** Atua would like Angie’s party to be dedicated to them!
Weeb: Really now?

Atua: Yep!

ThingPurple: I told you she would want something demonic~

Atua: Atua is not a demon, Ouma~

Idiot: rr u shure uuu dont want anything else? plz

ThingGreen: It’s her birthday

Idiot: shit

ThingWhite: Language!

Weeb: Okay, so am Atua birthday party...

Kayayday: We could work on that!

Weeb: We?

Kayayday: Yes, me, you, Yonaga and anyone else who wants to join of course!

Weeb: Really? I wasn’t really expecting that...

Weeb: Thank you

Kayayday: No problem. When we had to spend a day with therapists last week, she told me to work on forgiving people

Kayayday: Anyway

Kayayday: Are you alright if we come over now, Yonaga?

Atua: Of course~

Weeb: Alright

Kayayday: omw

Atua and 2 others are offline.

ThingPurple: ...wait just a McFrickin’ second

ThingWhite: What?

ThingPurple: 

ThingGreen: 

ThingWhite: 

ThingWhite: O H N O .
Gonta: ???

**ThingGreen**: YOU CUSSED IN FRONT OF GOKUHARA, MOMOTA?!

**Idiot**: IM SORRY

**Idiot**: IRUMA DOES IT ALL THE TIME THO

**ThingPurple**: SORRY WON’T CUT IT

**ThingPurple**: BESIDES, EVEN GONTA-CHAN KNOWS NOT TO LISTEN TO IRUMA-CHAN

**Gonta**: Gonta didn’t hear anything! Onest! Gonta foregot two turn off his fone wen he went two hang out with Hoshi-Kun!

**ThingWhite**: Phew

**ThingPurple**: Oh good

**ThingPurple**: YOU’RE STILL ON THIN FUCKING ICE, MOMOTA-CHAN

**ThingWhite**: OUMA.

**ThingGreen**: OUMA.

**ThingPurple**: H E C K

**Idiot**: GONTA PLEASE GO OFFLINE AND TALK TO HOSHI

**Gonta**: Okay??

**Gonta is offline.**

**ThingGreen**: Can I start?

**Idiot**: yea sure

**ThingWhite**: Please do.

**ThingGreen**: Neat.

**ThingGreen**: Ahem

**ThingGreen**: LISTEN HERE YOU HYPOCRITICAL NISHISHIT

**ThingPurple**: *Chuckles*

**ThingPurple**: I’m in danger.

<yea you are, buddy.>

Angie started absentmindedly out her window. It was rainy outside, it had been since late last night. She left out a dejected sigh before leaning back in her desk chair. Her face was empty and
devoid of emotion, just like that of a blank canvas. Suddenly, a knock rang through her room, which earned an instantaneous response. Her back immediately straightened, face strained into a cheery expression. With nimble movements, Angie pranced through her room to the door. It was like she was putting on a show nobody was watching.

“Ya-ha~! Hello Shirogane, hello Akama—” Angie began, only to stop mid-sentence from the sight before her. “Ah, Saihara?! Atua never told Angie you were stopping by!”

“Yea, I guess I sort of showed up randomly. Sorry,” Shuichi admitted, pulling down his hat the slightest bit. “Akamatsu-San just told me to come here to talk about your birthday? I might be wrong, but it isn’t for another two days, right?”

“Mhm!” Angie agreed, hopping back into her dorm. “Her and Shirogane just wanted to talk about throwing a party for Atua!”

“Atua...” Shuichi trailed off, looking almost hesitant. “Isn’t it your birthday, though?”

“How many times must Angie tell you?” Angie exclaimed, puffing out her cheeks into an expression that didn’t really hold any malice. “Angie is only a vessel for Atua! Rather than celebrating Angie, shouldn’t we be celebrating Atua?”

“Well, maybe you think that, but—“ Shuichi began, only to get cut off.

“No buts!” Angie butted in, “Shirogane and Akamatsu will be here any moment now, so come one in~”

Shuichi carefully stepped through the door as if he were nervous he’s set off a trap if he did it wrong. Angie’s room looked about the same as everyone else’s. The walls were a plan cream color and the floors were tiled with oak wood. She had moved her bed up to the glass sliding door to her balcony, leaving hardly enough room to actually open the it. Her desk was where her bed was originally: right to the right of when you walked in. However, the chair had been taken to the other side of the balcony entrance and looked like it had been sat on recently. Before Angie could close her door, Kaede rushed in.

“Ah, Yonaga-San, sorry I took so long,” Kaede apologized. “I ran into Iruma-San on the way over.”

“Aw, it’s okay~” Angie sang. “Atua forgives you, so Angie does too!”

Then, as if on queue, Tsumugi stumbled through the door, hastily adjusting her glasses. She also frantically apologized, saying she had to change into her uniform so she wouldn’t be late to classes.

“Wait, before we do anything,” Kaede apple suddenly as if she just realized something. “Saihara-Kun, have you eaten yet?”

“I’m not hungry,” Shuichi responded, only to take one look at Kaede’s face and say. “But—! I—I’m going to get some cereal anyway...”

With that, Shuichi turned on his heel and left the room in a hurry, leaving behind a half disappointed, half worried Kaede and Tsumugi. Then, at no specific time after, the three finally began to discuss what they came to do.

“So... an Atua party?” Tsumugi began the conversation with the tone of a mother whose child just picked out a huge pack of candy at the store. “How are we going to accomplish that?”
“Ah, simple!” Angie cheered. “Atua loves going to stores and picking out the greatest stuff! I—“

The moment the vowel rolled off her tongue, Angie went silent, face looking like she had swallowed something sour. Kaede and Tsumugi, on the other hand barely caught the word. It was the first time they had heard the white haired girl refer to herself outside of the first person, so it was only natural to not realize something like that. It took a moment, but Angie quickly recovered from her slip up, continuing to speak with ease.

“Angie! Angie loves seeing what Atua picks out!” Angie cried, laughing a bit in attempt to cover up her discomfort.

“Uh, you know...” Tsumugi mumbled. “Yonaga-San is a great person and it’s alright to be her rather than Atua sometimes.”

“Nonsense!” Angie replied, voice angry. “Angie is not a person, just a vessel for Atua!”

“But—“ Kaede began, just like Shuichi had moments earlier.

“No. Buts,” Angie growled lowly, somehow still maintaining that pleasant twinkle in her eyes. “Angie will go to Malmart with Chabashira and Yumeno and then ATUA will help us, got it~?”

With awkward nodding, Tsumugi and Kaede were quickly pushed out of the room by a flustered Angie, who slammed the door right after. It was a side of the girl neither of them had seen and it was almost defensive? Exchanging worried looks, the two of them walked away from one another, attempting to escape the situation. On the other side of the wall stood a panicked Angie, eyes flickering around the room before hurrying to her bed and facing her window. Giving a quick prayer, Angie then grabbed her bag and exited the dorms, deciding to get to class early. The following words were lost in the wind, only falling onto the ears of those lost.

“Don’t fail me now, Atua...”

<What do you suppose is going on with our funky little demon baby?>

”Ultimate Nightmare Fuel” April 12th, 16:43 (Yea, I switched to military time)

DingusTheSecond: WHO CHANGED MY NAME?!

ThingBlue: Oh wow. Is that you, Kaito-Kun?

ThingPurple: BAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHA

DingusTheSecond: OUMA WHAT THE HELL

ThingPurple: IT WASNTMEHDB

DingusTheSecond: YEA RKGHT

Kayayday: ...

DingusTheSecond: Akamatsu?

Kayayday: ...

Kayayday: Yes?

DingusTheSecond: y?
ThingPurple: OHWOW

ThingWhite: Momota-Kun got what one may refer to as “rekt.”

ThingPurple: Every time someone says rekt, a year is shaved off my lifespan...

MakiRoll:
REKT REKT REKT REKT REKT REKT REKT REKT REKT REKT REKT REKT REKT REKT

DingusTheSecond: RELT

ThingBlue: Guys!

ThingPurple: OUCH

MakiRoll: Begone.

Pig: bye bye, twink!

Kayayday: I didn’t realize you were online, Iruma

Kayayday: Why don’t you ever say anything?

Pig: I HAVE MY REASONS YOU IRONING BOARD

ThingPurple:

ThingPurple: OH SHIT

*ThingPurple changed Pig’s name to ProfessorThot*

ProfessorThot: heyyyyyy!!!!!!!!!!

_Private Messages “Ouma Kokichi and Saihara Shuichi” April 12th, 16:47*

OumaKokichi: I need to borrow your phone.

SaiharaShuichi: Pardon?

OumaKokichi: Please

SaiharaShuichi: Can I ask why?

OumaKokichi: No

SaiharaShuichi:

SaiharaShuichi: Fine. I’m in the common room.

**OumaKokichi: Yippy!**

**OumaKokichi: Thanks**

**SaiharaShuichi: Woah, manners?**

**OumaKokichi: Don’t take it personally.**
Saihara Shuichi: Got it.

Ouma Kokichi: .

*Ouma Kokichi changed 2 names.*

BwuesCwues: Dammit Ouma-Kun, here I thought we were having a pleasant conversation.

Magwenta: As if, Saihara-Chan!

Magwenta: Anyway, I’m here, so had it over!

BwuesCwues: Why don’t you just say it out loud if you’re right in front of me?

Magwenta: No one can know. Plus, aren’t you typing, too???

BwuesCwues: Okay, fair point, but why not?

Magwenta: I have my reasons, now gimme!

*Private Messages “Iruma Miu and Saihara Shuichi” April 12th, 16:50*

Saihara Shuichi: I’m sorry on behalf of Ouma-Kun calling you a Pig. It was sort of rude.

Iruma Miu: what’s with this sudden development?!

Iruma Miu: do you have the hots for me, shyhara?!

Iruma Miu: still, why would i have a problem with being called a pig?

Iruma Miu: it’s not like i think i’m a pig or anything

Iruma Miu: I AM A GORGEOUS GENIUS, YA HEAR ME?!!!!!

Saihara Shuichi: Yes, I hear you!

Iruma Miu: good!

*Saihara Shuichi has left the conversation.*

Iruma Miu: dammit! shit! fuck! ass! pussy! WHOOP, FREEDOM OF SPEECH, BABY! ONE PERSON CHATROOM HELL YEA. ITS LIKE GOOD OLD FASHION MASTERBATION.

*Private Messages “BwuesCwues and Magwenta” April 12th, 16:52*

BwuesCwues: You forgot to delete the chat room. I saw your messages.

Magwenta: What messages? I just looked up a bunch of porn to make Saihara-Chan look like a total pervert!

BwuesCwues: Ouma-Kun.

Magwenta: Yesss~?

BwuesCwues: It’d help out Yonaga-San a lot if you changed her name.
Magwenta:
Magwenta: I’ll do it for Saihara-Chan’s silly fantasies I guess. Le sigh...

BwuesCwues: I see.

BwuesCwues: Oh, and Ouma-Kun?

Magwenta: What now? I have an evil organization to run!

BwuesCwues: You’re doing good.

Magwenta: I have no idea what you’re talking about~

“Ultimate Nightmare Fuel” April 12th, 16:59

ThingPurple: UwU

ThingBlue: Why?

Kayayday: There you are, Saihara!

ThingPurple: Hey, I was missing, too!

ThingBlue: Sorry, did you need something?

ThingPurple: Pay attention to meeee

MakiRoll: Shut uuup

Kayayday: I was just wondering if you had any more ideas for Yonaga’s birthday

ThingPurple: Oh! I almost forgot about my present for Yonaga-Chan!

Kayayday: Which is?

ThingPurple changed Atua’s name to NotTodaySatan.

ThingBlue: Fitting.

**ThingPurple:** Aw shucks!

ThingGreen: Interesting.

ThingPurple: Why is it that Amami-Chan only becomes a lurker when Keebs is offline???

ThingWhite: I’m online.

ThingPurple: GASP

ThingPurple: AMAMI-CHAN, YOU INFECTED KEEBS WITH YOUR LURKINESS!

ThingBlue: Ouma-Kun, I think you’re overreacting...

Weeb: Oh gosh, they’re synced up, you know what this means.

DingusTheSecond: RUN
DingusTheSecond and 4 others are offline.

ThingPurple: Rude!

ThingWhite: Oh, I just remembered!

ThingGreen: Hm?

ThingWhite: Tojo-San wants to know what Yonaga-San wants for a cake. Has anyone seen her?

ThingBlue: She’s at Malmart with Chabashira-San and Yumeno-San.

ThingWhite: Ah.

ThingGreen: Couldn’t you just text her?

ThingWhite:

ThingWhite: Oh golly, you’re right!

ThingPurple: PFFT

ThingWhite: IT’S NOT FUNNY!

ThingBlue: Sorry, but it is sorta funny.

ThingWhite: SAIHARA-KUN WHYYYY?!

ThingGreen: Hey, do you guys want to go get ice cream?

ThingPurple: How can I be sure Amami-Chan isn’t gonna kill me?

ThingGreen: I’m not going to kill you.

ThingPurple: That’s exactly what a person who’d kill me would way.

ThingGreen: ...

ThingBlue: I mean, he’s not wrong...

ThingWhite: Yea...

ThingGreen: Okay, but this is a chat with our entire class.

ThingGreen: Everyone would know it was me if I killed you.

ThingPurple: Hm...

ThingPurple: Seems legit. I’m jumping over to your balcony.

ThingGreen: You’re what?

ThingGreen: Oh yep, there you are.

ThingBlue: Why?

ThingPurple: Why not?
ThingWhite: You can’t have jumped onto Amami-Kun’s balcony.

ThingPurple: Not with that attitude.

ThingGreen: Okay, so we all can go?

ThingBlue: Sorry, but I have to work on Yonaga-San’s party.

ThingPurple: Awwww!

ThingWhite: I could ask Iruma-San if she’d like to come instead.

ThingBlue: That’d work.

ThingGreen: Any objections?

ThingGreen:

ThingGreen: Okay, could you go get her, Idabashi?

ThingWhite: Of course!

ThingPurple: Hey Amami-Chan, lemme in. It’s about to rain again and I’ll melt if I get water on me!

ThingGreen: No, perish.

ThingPurple: He says as he opens the door.

ThingGreen: Shut

ThingBlue: Sorry again that I can’t make it.

ThingPurple: It’s not okay! I’m going to send a hit man after you for abandoning me!

ThingBlue: Thanks for understanding.

ThingPurple: It’s nothing~

ThingGreen: What just happened?

ThingWhite: Have any of you seen Iruma-San?

ThingPurple: Have you tried, I dunno

ThingPurple: Texting her?

ThingWhite: That... no.

ThingGreen: It happens to the best of us, Idabashi.

ThingPurple: Sure it does, Amami-Chan.

ThingBlue: You texted me not even twenty minutes ago while we were face to face.

ThingPurple: THAT’S DIFFERENT, SAIHARA-CHAN!!!
“There are so many degenerates working in here,” Tenko mumbled, trying to avoid touching anything as if the store were covered in dirt. “Who knows what they could’ve done to all this stuff!”

“Maybe there are so many males here because the females were given a break,” Himiko reasoned. “I need a break, too. I’m sleepy.”

“You’re right, Yumeno-San!” Tenko exclaimed a bit too loudly, earning stares from other customers. “You’ve become so smart, I’m so proud!”

“Nyeh...” Himiko muttered, looking away with a strange look on her face.

“Is there something the matter? Was is a degenerate?” Tenko immediately worried.

“Nyeh, it’s nothing... it’s not nearly as bad as what you and Yonaga have to go through,” Himiko admitted, crossing her arms.

“Hm...” Tenko contemplated whether or not she should push further, “okay! I believe you.”

Himiko exhaled in relief as the two of them continued walking through the aisles of Malmart. In front of them was Angie, who had been oddly quiet the entire way there. As of right now, the white haired girl was pushing the cart with her eyes closed, hands in a prayer. Despite her closed eyes, Angie still seemed perfectly able to navigate the store without bumping into anything, which gave her two friends the feeling she had done this before. Occasionally, the cart would stop at a random object and Angie would pick it up, inspect it, then put it back.

“Didn’t you say Atua was going to help us get everything?” Himiko asked as Angie placed a box of crayons back on the shelf.

“Yes, but...” Angie stared at the wall with an almost distressed look, save for the small smile on her face. “Atua is sleeping right now and cannot help us!”

“Since you’ve been sleeping a lot lately,” Tenko commented. “Unless you have anything else you want, shouldn’t we just get going? We still have tomorrow and Tenko doesn’t think Yumeno-San’s feet can take any more abuse!”

“Nuh-Ah! Angie has a plan!” Angie claimed before shoving her hands in her pockets to look for something. “We’re going to summon Atua!”

“Here?” Himiko inquired.

“But of course!” Angie answered, seemingly finding what she was looking for.

With that, Angie retracted her hand: from the pockets of her long, red rain jacket. In that hand was two things.

“Degenerate head on a stick!” Tenko whisper shouted, jumping in front of Himiko like a shield. “Why the heck do you have gun and a lighter, Yonaga-San!”

“Like Angie said, we’re summoning Atua!” Angie repeated. “Now, go get some candles and then a stuffed animal!”

“Why a stuffed animal?” Himiko quizzed, shaking a bit from the sudden behavior of her friend.
“Wha, isn’t it obvious?” Angie cried. “We need a sacrifice!”

“You’re going to shoot a stuffed animal with a gun?!” Tenko continued. “You do know that if you break it you buy it!”

“Nyahaha! Angie is aware! Besides, this is only a BB Gun. Angie couldn’t get the real thing from the sparring lab...” Angie sighed, shrugging.

“Oh god, I’m gonna go to jail...” Himiko panicked under her breath as she collected the candles. “Why do we have to summon Atua is he’s already inside of you?!”

“Enough silly questions,” Angie rejected, but neither Tenko nor Himiko missed the small frown flash across her face.

It didn’t take long for Tenko and Himiko to come to some sort of nonverbal consensus. Yes, this was absolutely crazy and could probably take someone’s eye out, but it was the best thing they could do for their friend right now, so they should at least try to go through with it.

<Now with our ice cream squad>

“Iruma-Chan, if you don’t stop deep throating your ice cream, you’re going to choke on it, you bottomless vore pit,” Kokichi snapped, no real malice behind his voice.

“Heeehee!” Miu shrieked, resulting in her actually choking on her ice cream. “D—dammit—” she coughed “—O—uma! F-fucki—“ another cough “—fucking gremlin!”

Over bouts of laughter from Kokichi and curses from Miu, Rantaro’s phone began to ring, alarming the group. Rantaro immediately grabbed his phone, carefully checking the caller ID. To the group’s confusion, Rantaro went slack upon reading the name, almost as if he had been expecting someone else to call, before hitting the answer button. Immediately, the group was greeted by the loud sound of Tenko’s voice over the speaker.

“Alright, listen here degenerate! Akamatsu-San didn’t pick up and you were the second one on my contacts, so I had no choice!” Tenko wasted no time clarifying.

“Aw, I’m in your contacts? How sweet,” Rantaro cooed jokingly, earning a strange noise that sounded like a mixture between a huff, a growl and a squeal from the other side of the line.

“I’d yell at you more, but I don’t have the time,” Tenko grumbled and the four of them could practically feel her rolling her eyes.

“What’s up, Chabashira-Chan?” Kokichi teased, leaning close to the speaker.

“What the—Ouma! Amami, you put me on speaker?! Who else is there,” Tenko cried, forcing Rantaro to turn the volume a bit so nobody else sitting outside the parlor could hear.

“Uhm, Idabashi-Kun and Iruma-San,” Amami answered, looking at the two of them as he said their names.

“Oh, perfect! Can you put me on with Iruma-San?” Tenko pleaded.

“You’re already on speaker,” Rantaro chuckled.

Tenko went silent on the other end, so the tour instantly went to the conclusion that she had become too frustrated to speak. However, they then heard muffled voices, which led them to
believe that she was just talking to someone else.

“Alright, Iruma-San! I need you to come pick us up from jail!” Tenko instructed, ignoring the mannerisms of her words.

“Jail?! What the hell did you do to get thrown into the can!?” Miu shouted, warning flared from other customers. “And who’s we?”

“Yonaga-San and Yumeno-San,” Tenko mumbled sheepishly. “Yumeno-San is innocent though, honest!”

With that, Kokichi collapsed into a fit of giggles, which only worsened when Tenko explained what happened. Apparently, the Atua summoning has been unsuccessful. They lit all the candles in a circle and people had begun filming the three of them as they sat in a triangle with a bright pink teddy bear in the middle. The staff got involved once Angie began aggressively shooting said bear.

“It’s not funny!” Tenko insisted, but she herself was chuckling a bit.

“I have to check if that video is up...” Rantaro stated, his words muffled by the hand he was using to stifle his laughter. “Ouma-Kun, could you look that up?”

“Already on it,” Kokichi giggled, typing furiously into his phone.

“What station did you guys say you were at?” Keebo, the only one not laughing, asked.

“I’ll ask if I can send the address. I can’t remember which one we’re at,” Tenko responded, hanging up right after.

At last, with the phone turned off, Keebo joined the three other teens in their laughing fit, ignoring the disapproving stares and having the time of their lives.

<Good Job, Unholy Trinity...>

”Ultimate Nightmare Fuel” April 12th, 18:04

ThingPurple: Ultimates-Summon-God-In-Malmart-And-Get-Banned/MyTube.com

ThingPurple: I want this to play at my funeral after I die from people saying Rekt.

ProfessorThot: OH MY GOD, YOU ACTUALLY FOUND IT

Mother: You managed to be kicked from Malmart even with your status as Ultimates?

NotTodaySatan: Yep!

ThingGreen: I had a bear just like that when I was a kid, so this is traumatizing.

ThingGreen: I think I have it in a box somewhere in my closet.

NotTodaySatan: Perfect, now I can redo the summoning!

ThingGreen: YONAGA PLEASE NO

NotTodaySatan is offline.
**ThingGreen**: SHIT

**ThingGreen** is offline.

**MakiRoll** is online.

**MakiRoll**: What did Ouma do?

**ThingBlue**: Scroll up.

**MakiRoll**: Oh damn

**MakiRoll**: Yonaga can aim, my god

**Kayayday**: Harukawa!

**Weeb**: We still need stuff for Yonaga-San’s party.

**ThingBlue**: I’ll go to Malmart tomorrow. I don’t really know what Yonaga-San likes, but I think she can decorate the stuff I get.

**Kayayday**: You’ll go?

**ThingBlue**: Yea.

**ThingPurple**: Good job, Saihara-Chan!

**ThingBlue**: It isn’t a really big deal. I am the class rep, so I have to at least try.

**Mother**: Apologies for interrupting, but dinner is ready.

**ThingPurple**: Oh neat!

**ThingPurple and 6 others are offline.**

**DingusTheSecond** is online.

**DingusTheSecond**: o boy what did that little shit send now?

**DingusTheSecond:**

**DingusTheSecond**: YONAGA WHAT THE FRUck

**DingusTheSecond**: ITS ALWAYS THE OCCULT I SWEAr

**MakiRoll** is online

**MakiRoll**: Kaito, stop screaming and get your ass to dinner.

Chapter End Notes
Sorry for the strange formatting issues on some parts of this! This chapter is also shorter than I would’ve liked respires how long it took to write.

Nicknames:
Akamatsu-Kayayday
Amami-ThingGreen
Chabashira-DEGENERATE
Gokuhara-Gonta
Harukawa-MakiRoll
Hoshi-Smoll
Idabashi-ThingWhite
Iruma-ProfessorThot
Momota-DingusTheSecond
Ouma-ThingPurple
Saihara-ThingBlue
Shinguuji-Kork
Shirogane-Weeb
Tojo-Mother
Yonaga-NotTodaySatan
Yumeno-Magician
Day In The Life of Hell’s Representative

Chapter Summary

In which we finally see what is up with our beloved detective Saihara. Parties thrown, friendships are mended and secrets are revealed in chapter four of Obligatory Chatfic!

TW: Unintentional Starvation, Depression, Suicidal Thoughts and Self-Harm (I am so sorry Sushi, I love you.)

MakiRoll: Back.

DingusTheSecond: wered u go?

ThingGreen: She started doing a victory dance after you said your plant wasn't named after a crush

MakiRoll: I will obliterate you, you fucking cabbage

Chapter Notes

There's a bitter irony in this whole thing.

It's funny, actually. Not the kind of funny that makes your eyes crinkle with laughter, but the kind you hear in the movies when a character is talking about their sorrows and just how funny it is how life treats them. At least in the movies, the feelings aren't real. I sometimes wonder if I was better off, just floating in an ocean of fiction, waiting for something to happen. I wonder if maybe fake hope was greater than real despair. Of course, I'd shake off the thought normally.

But now I can't.

I guess I got a bit off topic there, didn't I? Bitter irony, right? Well, maybe my two points do tie together. I spent all that time searching for the hope of the outside world and yet, here I am, in that world, but not an ounce of hope. I'm like a pathetic, dried up flower. Man, if I use that analogy, we should really appreciate the cacti in the world a bit more. Well, maybe I'm not a flower. I'm no flower expert, but I'm well aware that most of those have kind, gentle meanings. I'm not exactly deserving of that.

Argue all you want, but tell me this. Does willingly sending a friend to their death sound like kindness to you? Does sentencing someone to years of trauma after going through hell sound like gentleness to you? I'm going to feel bad for saying this later, but I'm too irritated to care at this point; if you answered yes to either of those questions, you're either off your rocker or Iruma.

This kind of thinking is what keeps me up for days some times. The feeling of guilt is a nasty one and can lead to even worse stuff. Even if I know what's wrong with me, I can't simply fix it. Still, I can't say a word or get help because A, everyone has their own problems that are way worse than mine ever will be and B, I really don't deserve it. Why? Well, in just about every novel I've read, the antagonist is always defeated one out of three ways. They could be murdered, made to suffer for the rest of their lives, or get turned to the side of good.
I’m hoping I end up with that third option, but no matter what, that villain never gets any sympathy unless they have a sad backstory or something, which I don’t. I’m just Saihara Shuichi, whose famous parents dumped him at his uncle’s house one day and left. That doesn’t lead to murdering your friends. That isn’t worthy for a sympathetic antagonist backstory.

So here I am, moping around on an early Friday morning, hours before my first of many alarms go off. I’m not really sure what else to do. My muscles still ache from training with Kaito and Maki and my head still hurts a bit from Akamatsu lecturing me about my habits and how I need to eat more and sleep less. Little does she know, I don’t even sleep much either, so ha! Why am I even getting worked up over this? I think I’m descending into insanity...

Maybe I should at least try to eat, even if it is four in the morning. Nobody should be up, but I’d at least be able to tell Akamatsu that I ate. That’d make her happy, which is the least I can do after giving her a death sentence she didn’t deserve. If I go down now, I’d be awake before Tojo as well, so I wouldn’t have to pressure her with more work. I’ve seen her the past few weeks. She gets about as much sleep as me and spends most meal times cleaning. She’s overworking herself, but I’m not entirely sure why.

At this point, I’m just wasting time and should get going if I want to get the timing right. I roll out of bed and walk into my bathroom. Even if I can’t sleep, I can still be tired. A good splash of water helps, even if only a little. Next, the hat. I can see it on my bedside table and it almost feels like the garment is mocking me, throwing my failures as human being right into my face more than words ever could. I call it “The Security Hat of Insecurity” in my head sometimes to add insult to injury.

There, now that The Security Hat of Insecurity is on, I’m just about ready to start my day, even if I never really ended the last with any sleep. The doors here are probably new or just really well cleaned due to Tojo’s hard work, so it doesn’t squeak. The walk to the common area was uneventful as well, but the minute I rounded the corner to the kitchen, I ran into a problem in every sense of the word “ran.” I stumbled backwards because one, I was surprised and two, both of us seemed to be in a hurry. Although the lights were off, I instantly knew who it was.

“Hello, Ouma-Kun, sorry for running into you,” I greet him.

I think I’m starting to get what Maki means when she says I apologize too much sometimes, but I think I apologize too little. I never said sorry to the people I need about the things I need to. I’d rather not make this all about me though, not when everyone else has it so much worse. I don’t have to deal with the psychological effects of being murdered or the regret of murdering. In fact, I’d say one of my biggest regrets now stands right in front of me.

Ouma Kokichi. I always saw him as a friend, or at least an acquaintance and yet, I left him to die alone in such a cruel way. Even worse, he could’ve saved us all if I wasn’t so foolish and just believed in him enough to get to know him. What if I just waited one more second before entering my dorm? What if I spent just one more minute with him? How different would things have been if I just tried hard enough? But no, I was lazy, I was—

“Saihara-Chan, your face is inventing a whole new shade of blue!” Ouma snapped me out of my thoughts as he waved his hands around in front of me, reminding me to breathe.

“Sorry, I sort of spaced out,” I explain, trying to catch the breath that I had willed away.

_I wonder what would happen if I held it a bit longer._

Oh god! No, don’t think about that! I see Ouma staring up at me with a face that I can’t quite read. If only I was a detective that could actually understand people rather than just how to ruin
their lives. Maybe he’s thinking about how pathetic I am, that I can’t even hold a conversation without losing it or thinking about death. Ouma’s smart, he can tell.

“Ew, your face is all sweaty, Saihara-Chan,” Ouma cried, making a face at me. “Drink some water and cool off so I don’t have to look at all your grossness!”

With that, Ouma left into the kitchen before I could respond. He was wrong, though. I don’t feel hot, I feel cold and clammy, dizzy and lightheaded. Oh god, I’m going to fall, I’m seeing spots. Why are there spots? Did I not eat yesterday? Oh shit, I didn’t. I’ve never gone a day without eating. I really should’ve actually gone eat when Akamatsu told me to. What the hell happened to my appetite? I’ve barely felt hungry in months and—I’m actually going to faint aren’t I? Oh, there’s Ouma, his face is a funny little dot, great. I feel like I’m vibrating. Am I shaking? I can’t tell. Oh, Ouma is handing me the water. I don’t think I can hold it though. Oh never mind, he’s getting the water in my mouth. I just have to swallow, right? How do I swallow again? Like... that?

My vision begins to clear a bit and I stop shaking just enough to hold the cup and drink the last of the water. My eyes focus back on Ouma and his face is finally something I can actually read. Concern. Well, I guess anyone with half a brain would be concerned if they ran into someone and they almost passed out because they forgot to eat anything yesterday. His face seems to change right after he noticed my eyes on him, which wasn’t long because he seemed to be making sure I was drink all the water, meaning his eyes were on my face. Why did he change his expression? Why does he still try to push everyone away even if the games are over? Why—

“Jeez, you think too much!” Ouma teases, staring at me again with those purple eyes of his. I’ve never really gotten a good look at Ouma’s eyes before. They’re always either darting all over the place, or I myself can’t bring myself to look at them. They’re a nice shade of purple and have the tiniest flecks of gold in them. Someone, I think it was Yonaga, told me that purple and yellow are complimentary colors, but I never thought the two colors matched up until now. However, beyond all that, Ouma’s eyes were dull. Not dull as in boring, but dull as in empty. There was something incomplete about them and—I just realized I’m staring. Uhm...

“Sorry,” is all I can really manage.

“You apologize too much, too!” Ouma states, giving me a critical, yet playful look that only he could pull off. “You do waaaaay too much of everything! Saihara-Chan needs to do, like, fifty percent less of everything!”

I think he muttered something at the end, but I didn’t quite catch it. The fog was starting to come back to my head and he had already spoken as if he didn’t want me to hear what he said. I think he noticed that I was starting to get dizzy again because that look came back to his face. Something, likely his hand, clasped my arm and began to tug on it. Oh—he wants me to follow him? That shouldn’t be too hard... I’m sitting now and the hand is gone. Where did the hand go? Did Ouma just leave me behind to faint? To just be found by a worried Tojo? He really does hate me, doesn’t he?

"Eat."

The words were stern like that one strict teacher who gives essays for homework. I looked in front of me—or at least I think it's in front of me. My head is spinning again. It’s a bowl of fruit. Berries to be exact. There’s also a cup full of random mush. A smoothie. Where the hell did Ouma get a smoothie from? Speak of the devil, he’s glaring at me. What did I do to yo—oh wait, he’s about to force feed me. Alright, geez! I reluctantly start nibbling on a strawberry and the fog in my head begins to clear again, only for it to be bombarded by questions.
“Where did you get the smoothie?” I couldn’t help but be curious. A blender is pretty loud and dizzy or not, I should’ve heard it.

“I dunno, some random freak breaks in down here and makes them every night!” Ouma spoke loudly, but not too loud. “I thought it was Momota-Chan trying to poison everyone, but then I remembered that he’s an idiot.”

As disheartening as it was to hear Ouma degrade my best friend, it was still one of the funnier things I’ve heard in the past few weeks. And so I let a tiny laugh slip. That’s one of Ouma’s good points. One of those tiny things you ignore unless you think about it. Maybe one of these days I could make a list of them and try to lessen the hate on him. So there, point one: Ouma can make light of any situation. That should stop my mind from running out of control for a good while. Maybe I could finally get some rest. Back to what I was saying, though. When I laughed, I think I saw something different in Ouma’s eyes. It was almost a sparkle. A nice one. Maybe I should laugh more often... wow, not eating really messes with your head.

“Do people normally drink all the smoothies?” I ask, trying to ease into the happier atmosphere.

“Mhm! People always drink every last drop!” Ouma hummed. He seemed a bit lost in thought, likely focusing to make sure I ate more.

“Well, I think you make good smoothies, Ouma-Kun,” I respond, hopefully not assuming incorrectly.

“Eh—me?! What do you take me for, a barista?!” Ouma looked sort of offended, but that tiny sparkle was back in his eyes, which told another story.

“Well if everyone always drinks them all, wouldn’t there be none left until the person restocked?” I explained to him, even if he already knew whether I was correct or not. “You came from the kitchen when I got here and you didn’t grab anything, so I figured you were just finishing up cleaning. Sorry if I’m wrong...”

“That’s not fair, Saihara-Chan! Tricking me into slipping up!” Ouma pouted, but his eyes softened a bit before speaking again. “But yea, you caught me. Don’t doubt yourself or else I’ll send my evil secret organization on you! And uh—keep this a secret, got it? If you don’t, I’ll send a hit man after you...”

“No worries, I will,” I oblige, trying to muster a small smile. “Ah, is it—is it alright for me stop eating the berries? Sorry, I just kinda lost my appetite...”

“How? Yea, whatevs,” Ouma waved his hand in a shooing motion. “Better watch out though, Saihara-Chan! I put bombs into like, half of those and they’re going to blow you up when school starts!”

I let myself laugh a bit more and for just a moment, things felt fine. The two of us sat in silence for a bit as Ouma ate the last of the berries. However, I couldn’t help but notice how every so often, Ouma would just glance at me for no reason.

“Is something wrong? Something I did?” I’m not sure why I assumed it was about me right away. Am I becoming self-centered?

“Well, you look half dead,” Ouma snickered, gazing at the clock across the room, “seriously, Saihara-Chan, you look like an emo zombie! Watch out! The zombiemo is coming for you! Grrrrrr, time for a panic at the disco! I’m gonna make your brains fall out, boy! Raaaagh!”
I couldn’t help it when I burst out laughing. I’m not particularly fond of my laugh. Guys always said I sounded like a girl and girls always said I didn’t sound enough like a guy. I personally just thought the sound of my voice was ugly in general, so as you could imagine, even a small giggle would keep me up at night, regretting every decision I made. Either way, the laughter almost felt nice and for the first time in a while, I was relaxed. Although, as that came, so did a strong bout of exhaustion.

“Well, I could definitely go for some sleep now,” I admitted, “but I think if I went to bed now, I wouldn’t be awake until way later. We have school. Plus, I still have to go to Malmart later.”

“Then it’s decided!” Ouma sounded happy, yet mischievous (his normal tone, really,) “you go and catch some ZZZs in that pretty little head of yours and I’ll wake you up before school.”

“... Okay?”

"Ultimate Nightmare Fuel” April 13th, 6:58AM

DingusTheSecond: anyone seen shuichi? he’s missing class

ThingPurple: He’s sick. He’s probably sleeping so don’t go yelling at him.

Kayayday: An oddly calm text

Kayayday: Suspicious

ThingPurple: Of course he’s only sick because he caught me murdering someone last night, so I had to poison him

ThingWhite: There it is...

Weeb: He was supposed to shop for Yonaga-San’s party though...

ThingPurple: It’s all fine and dandy! He just has to rest his pretty little head and he’ll be good as new!

Weeb: Hopefully. I guess it won’t be as fatal as the illness of a certain violinist...

DingusTheSecond: will he still be able to train them?

ThingPurple: Hwa?! Nope, he’d explode if he exercised now, fool!

ThingPurple: Besides, I don’t want Saihara-Chan to catch your stupidity, Momota-Chan!

DingusTheSecond: HEY!

DingusTheSecond: but fine. i’ll lay off shuichi for a bit if he isn’t doing good

ThingGreen: Is he really sick though?

ThingPurple: Quiet, cryptid.

ThingGreen: Understandable have a nice day

<Back to the angsty stuff, sorry!>
I’m pissed at best.

I nearly jumped out of my skin when I realized I woke up at three thirty in the afternoon to a knock on my door. I missed all my classes, which meant I missed work, which meant I was behind, which meant it’d be harder for me to manage Yonaga’s party. Dammit Ouma.

Speak of the devil, when I swung open the door, I was greeted with Ouma staring up with those wide, violet eyes. I think he could tell that I just woke up, but he still smiled. Ouma has multiple types of smiles. Sometimes, when he’s trying to keep a straight face while lying, the corners of his mouth twitch a bit. Other times, he makes an almost demonic face, mainly only when he’s too emotional to do anything else. He also has one that sort of looks like a smirk, which is the hardest for me to read. As for this smile, it was different. It was soft and felt genuine. No analysis needed. Wow, I got off track there... good job, Shuichi.

“Why the long face, Saihara-Chan?” Ouma grinned. Why is he grinning like that?

“Well... you do know what time it is, right?” I muttered, giving him a somewhat aggressive expression. What can I say? I’m pretty pissed.

“Indeed I do, Mister Detective!” Ouma is still grinning that same toothless grin. “But you got like twice the amount of sleep you normally get, didn’t you?”

“... W—well yea, but I missed class,” I couldn’t really come up with a reason to be mad other than that. Why am I even mad about this?

“Man, Saihara-Chan is such a nerd...” Ouma sighs, letting his arms carelessly fold behind his head. “Well, I guess it’s fine because I have notes for Saihara-Chan!”

With that, Ouma pulled out a binder from his bag and snapped it open, grabbing multiple pieces of paper with various symbols and words on them. I reluctantly grabbed them and took a look at the notes. They were shockingly intricate, written in extreme detail and coded to make more sense. It was pretty impressive that he could do all that in one period, especially while listening to teachers speaking.

“I can’t take your notes, Ouma-Kun,” I reject the papers, attempting to hand them back to Ouma, only for him to sway my arm away like a pesky fruit fly.

“Whaaaat! Absolutely not, Saihara-Chan! I won’t allow all my hard work go to waste!” Ouma whined. “Besides! I made two copies because I have a writing speed of like a billion words per second, so I’m good to go!”

I look at Ouma for a moment, trying to scan his face for any sign of a lie. However, I was only met with the same warm smile and spark in his eyes that I saw before. Deciding that he was telling the truth, I accepted the notes, mumbling a quick thanks before Ouma grabbed my arm, dragging me back down to the dining hall, where I was greeted by Kaito and Akamatsu.

“Ah, Saihara-Kun!” Akamatsu smiled brightly, “are you feeling better?”

I can already feel a lump in my throat from the words. I worried her, didn’t I? I decide to take a page out of Ouma’s book. Lie.

“Yes, sorry for worrying you.”

"Ultimate Nightmare Fuel,” April 13th, 16:32
Kayayday: Ouma!

ThingPurple: Yes~?

MakiRoll: What did he do now?

DingusTheSecond: watd he do?

ThingPurple: Rude!

ThingWhite: Rude? Yes. Reasonable? Also yes.

ThingBlue: Did Ouma-Kun do something, Akamatsu-San?

ThingPurple: Saihara-Chan, not you too!

Kayayday: Well

Kayayday: Somebody planted some sort of house plant in the kitchen drain and now Tojo has to move it

DingusTheSecond: HE DID FUCJINF WGAT TO MATILDA?!?!????!!

ThingBlue: Ah, so it’s yours, Kaito-Kun?

MakiRoll: You named it?

DingusTheSecond: YEA, I NAME ALL MY PLANTS, OKAY?!

ThingBlue: His grammar is suddenly much better now that “Matilda” is in danger...

MakiRoll: Did you name it after a transfer student you like or...?

ThingPurple: I smell jealousy~

MakiRoll: SHUT YOUR FUCK UP

DingusTheSecond: NO, IT’S NAMED AFTER MY AMERICAN COUSIN, MATILDA. SHE WORKS AT NASA AND IT’S FUCKING AWESOME

ThingWhite: I highly doubt that it’s scientifically possible to sense emotion based off scent alone, Ouma-Kun.

ThingGreen: Idabashi...

Kayayday: Ouma, you can’t be doing this stuff

Kayayday: It’s not fair to the others

ThingPurple: You have no proof it was me!

ThingBlue: I saw you sneaking in through Kaito-Kun’s veranda, Ouma-Kun...

ThingPurple: Really? I didn’t see you there. Nice try, Saihara-Chan~
ThingBlue: Yea, I wasn’t there, but if you reread your last text, you confessed that you were actually on the veranda. How else would you know if I was there?

ThingPurple: HEY, THAT’S CHEATIng, SAIHARA-CHAN

ThingBlue: Sorry!

DingusTheSecond: SO IT WAS YOU

Kayayday: Ouma, it took Tojo ten minutes to replant it!

ThingWhite: So we’re going to ignore how Momota-Kun’s grammar is suddenly adequate now that plants and the solar system are involved?

MakiRoll: Back.

DingusTheSecond: wered u go?

ThingGreen: She started doing a victory dance after you said your plant wasn’t named after a crush

MakiRoll: I will obliterate you, you fucking cabbage

ThingWhite: Harukawa-San, I prohibit you from killing anyone!

ThingPurple: Whaaat?! You didn’t care when she threatened to kill me! I have, like, every admirable human quality, Keebs! What does Amami-Chan have that I don’t?

ThingWhite: A heart that isn’t full of robophobia!

ThingPurple: G A S P

Kayayday: Oh, that reminds me!

ThingGreen: What the hell did Ouma’s robophobic heart remind you of?

Kayayday: Shut up, Amami

ThingGreen: You wound me

Kayayday: Saihara, could you take Ouma to Malmart with him so he can’t cause more trouble here?

ThingBlue: You want me to bring Ouma-Kun?

MakiRoll: Oh damn

DingusTheSecond: thats rouf man

ThingPurple: Heyyyyyyy! I’m right here, meanies!

ThingPurple: Understandable though. I’ll be in my room, planning all your deaths one by one >;)

Kayayday: Sorry for springing this onto you, Saihara!
**ThingBlue:** It’s fine. I can bring him.

**Kayayday:** Really?

**ThingPurple:** Really?

**ThingPurple:** Kidding! Saihara-Chan’s just nice like that, so I knew he’d take me off your shoulders~

**ThingBlue:** Thanks?

**ThingPurple:** Not enough spaghetti for the regretti!

**MakiRoll:**

**DingusTheSecond:**

**Kayayday:**

**Kork:**

**DingusTheSecond:** wtf wen did u get on?

**Kork:** Ignoring your dreadful grammar, my phone does not automatically shut off, so I never went offline since my last session online. However, I only got here mere moments ago

**ThingWhite:**

**ThingGreen:**

**ThingBlue:** I’ll just pretend I didn’t hear that. Get ready because we’re leaving in about ten minutes

**ThingPurple:** Okidoki!

*Private Messages “Amami Rantaro and Ouma Kokichi,” April 13th, 17:06*

**OumaKokichi:** I need your notes, my beloved Amami-Chan. Pretty please~

**AmamiRantaro:** Didn’t you take your own in class?

**OumaKokichi:** Well yea, but it was eaten by a massive dog. You should’ve seen it, Amami-Chan, it was like five thousand feet tall!

**AmamiRantaro:** And it doesn’t have anything to do with you giving your notes to Saihara because you’re too stubborn to admit he’s your friend?

**OumaKokichi:** Brutal, Amami-Chan.

**AmamiRantaro:** I’m not wrong though, am I?

**OumaKokichi:** I still need the notes!

**AmamiRantaro:** I never took you for the studious type of Im being honest
OumaKokichi: I have no idea what you’re talking about~
AmamiRantaro: Fine. You can pick up the notes later when you get back
OumaKokichi: Yippee!

Ouma Kokichi is offline.

<Take two. Malmart! This portion is quite short, but the part is right after.>

I can feel people staring at Ouma and I. It’s bothering me a lot more than it probably should. I should’ve expected this anyway given that I go to Hope’s Peak, even if I’m one of the less exemplary students. I wonder how Ouma does it—staying relaxed like this, I mean. Would it be weird if I looked at him to see his face? What if he thought I was staring? What if the other people got the wrong idea? Well, it’s better than feeling like everyone’s staring at me. They all seem more focused on Ouma at the moment anyway, so I guess it’s fine.

What the heck?

Ouma’s eyes are in some sort of glare, gazing at any passerby’s eyes he can catch. They’re darting all over the place, more than usual. Is he nervous? Paranoid? It can’t be, right? His paranoia was definitely at it’s worst in the KGS... definitely. The circumstances were worse there and Ouma was under more pressure (A/N OH MY ATUA, I JUST REALIZED THAT PUN...) and stress. Still, I can’t shake the feeling that something’s up with him. Even if I’m wrong, I’m worried for Ouma. I stop staring. If he notices me, he’ll let his guard up and I won’t figure anything else.

His eyes never calmed down.

<It’s hammer time. This part won’t Ben much about Angie, even if it is her party>

After another night of restless sleep, the day of the party arrived. I think it’s for thirty in the morning or so right now. I can hear Tojo sweeping frantically from the crack of my door. I’m getting concerned for her health. I’m no expert, but I think she’s started using makeup to hide the draining color and the bags on her face.

After it’s both a reasonable hour and the sweeping stops, I put on the stupid damn hat and leave. I’m not hungry and probably won’t be for a while, so I start putting up some of the decorations Ouma and I bought yesterday. Lots of blue and yellow. A bit bright for my tastes, but I can’t be that guy.

The afternoon passes fast and next thing you know, Yonaga is walking through the door with Chabashira and Yumeno after a day of doing who knows what. The crowded common area was less than ideal, but I sat in the same spot for a long as I could. I eventually couldn’t take it and went outside for a breather. I would have gone to my room, but I think if I did that, I’d never come back down and as I said before, I’m not gonna be that guy.

However, surprise surprise, Ouma’s there. I’m not complaining, I think it’s actually been nice getting a bit closer to him, but it’s getting almost too coincidental. He’s sitting on a bench a good ten meters away from the dorms, so I had to walk for a moment. When I reached him, he didn’t look at me. His eyes are in that sameness glare again. I sat next to him, but I noticed that he scooted a bit further away from me ever now and then. I don’t think he had anything against me specifically. He talked to me like normal, at least until the end of our conversation, when I could see students walking back to their dorms through the windows.
“Why’d you come out here?” Is what I asked, “I always figured you’d enjoy parties”

Ouma’s next words I didn’t quite understand. I’m not sure if he wanted me to, nor did he expect me to, but if so. Sorry to disappoint! He looked me right in the eyes for the first time that night as he spoke.

“If we’re all so close, they’d get us easily.”

I’m beyond confused as Ouma’s eyes snapped away. Confused as he says something, probably saying he lied. Confused as he walked away. I re entered the dorms, only to be met with Shirogane, reminding me of something I still had to do.

“Shirogane-San,” my voice sounds weak as the words escape my mouth.

“Yes?”

“May I speak with you?”

“Eh? Hm, okay?” She sounded uncertain, uncomfortable even as I looked her in the eyes.

We end up sitting on the couch the next room over. The party already seemed to be cleaned up, almost as if it didn’t exist. He air was tense as I searched for a way to begin. Fortunately, I didn’t have to.

“This is about the other day I’m guessing,” Shirogane mumbles, looking out the window, “you don’t have to explain if you don’t want to. I think I know what happened and it’s okay.”

“N—no, it’s alright,” I insist, “as selfish as it sounds, I just wanted to get it off my chest. I’ll make it quick though...”

Shirogane smiles patiently. It almost pains me given what I was about to say.

“Shirogane-San. You said you were chosen to be the mastermind of the KGS at random after nobody took the role, right?” I begin, already feeling the lump in my throat begin to grow.

“Mhm.” Shirogane nods, still softly smiling. I think she knows, but is still hearing me out.

“But that was a lie, wasn’t it?” My voice is barely above a whisper as I choke out my next words.

“You volunteered after you heard they were picking at random, didn’t you?”

I feel tears pricking at the corners of my eyes. I can’t cry here. I can’t. Not after what I’ve done. Not after what Shirogane went through. Before I try to force more words from my mouth, Shirogane makes things easier, confirming my suspicions from earlier. She knew. And yet she was still there.

“Yes, you’re right,” she assured, taking in a slow breath, “I have a question for you now, Saihara-Kun.”

“You were chosen as the mastermind, weren’t you?”

I can barely nod before the tears start. There weren’t a lot, but it was enough for Shirogane to scoot over, wrapping me in a soft hug. I can feel her smile through the fabric of my shoulder as she thanks me. She thanks me for telling her. Thanking me for telling her that I was the one that threw her life into disaster. That I was the one that gave her so much pain. So much hate from our classmates, even glares from other students who heard about it. She... thanked me.
Thanked... me.

Me.

Why?

I feel something. Anger. It’s swelling up inside if me. I had to leave. I can’t snap at Shirogane. Especially after she greeted me with open arms as I spilled my burdens to her, even as she was holding millions of her own problems. I peel Thebes blue haired girl off me, wishing her good night before bolting to the male dorms. By the time I reach the safety of my room, my breath is ragged. Uneven. I. I can’t breathe. I’m busy. I’m busy thinking about Shirogane. About Ouma. About everyone.

I hurt them.

I did that.

I’m the reason.

I hear their faint screams through my head.

I’m an awful person.

Aren’t I?

No better than a murderer.

Weak.

Cowardly.

Selfish.

If I hurt them so much.

I deserve to hurt, too.

Don’t I?

I snap back to reality from a harsh sting in my wrist. I look down to see my razor, grazing the flesh. It hurts. So bad.

It hurts?

Isn’t that only a fraction of what they felt?

You think you’re better?

That you don’t deserve pain.

I’m gasping for air. I don’t want to do this. Not again.

But I can’t be selfish.

I get to work.

I will try to understand their torment.
The torture I put them through.

I’m lightheaded again, just like the other day when I finally put down the razor. This time, there isn’t Ouma, who will help you even after all the shit he put you through. There isn’t Shirogane, who will hug you as you shed your tears. Its time I made amends. After all, isn’t this what I made them feel?

Alone?

Chapter End Notes

Well that was quite the ride! Now that you finally know what's up with ya boy, allow me to give you some fun facts about this chapter and my inspiration.

-This chapter was originally just going to be about the party and give you a sneak peak at all the character arcs, but then the feels hit me hard because that’s how it be and I needed something to do.
-So yes, I made this chapter as a vent. Hara has always been my comfort character and I figured it’d be a better way to ease you guys into the darker side of the story.
-The whole starvation scene at the beginning of the chapter was not preplanned. It sort of slipped in as I was practicing my writing and I kept it in the final draft.
Exposing Petty Secrets

Chapter Summary

Did you really think we’d make it through a chatfic without the cliche name game? Well guess again. This doesn’t really do much for the plot, so you can skip this chapter if you’d like. This is sort of a cool down to all the angst.

NotTodaySatan: Atua would also like to know what’s happening. They have taken a liking to seeing Amami in social crises~!

ThingGreen: Well tell Atua that that’s not very nice of them.

NotTodaySatan: Atua says “no u!”

ThingGreen: Atua better square the fu

ThingPurple: Wow, I can’t believing Amami-Chan fucking died mid-sentence...

ThingWhite: He’s dead?!

Gonta: Amami kun our you ohkay????!!?!

DingusTheSecond: hes fine yonaga just ran in and through a uno reverse card at him

ThingGreen:

ThingGreen: Well shit.

“Ultimate Nightmare Fuel,” April 15th, 14:36

ThingGreen and ThingWhite are online.

ThingGreen: IDABASHI NO

ThingWhite: Yes!

ThingGreen: WHY

ThingPurple: OwO what’s this? Trouble in paradise?

ThingGreen: OuMa

ThingWhite: As prestigious as our school is, I don’t think I personally think of it as a paradise. Your outlook is admirable for a robophobe!

ThingPurple: .

ThingGreen: .
ThingWhite: ?

Weeb: What’s going on? Do one of you have secret dragon powers and swore their life to the other to serve as their maid?

Mother: Pardon?

Gonta: Wut hapyned with idabashi kun and amamy kun?

ThingWhite: Oh, right! I figured out something about Amami-Kun.

Kayayday: Do tell

ThingBlue: If Amami-Kun’s being this defensive about it though, should you really be sharing it?

ThingWhite: No worries! This piece of information is not what the kids call “juicy.” It’s rather adorable, actually!

ThingBlue: I see. Sorry.

ThingGreen: Adorable?

DingusTheSecond: dude u good? ur face is red i can see it from hear

ProfessorThot: PFFT. OF FUCKIN COURSE IT IS!

Smoll: Watch it. Gokuhara’s online.

ProfessorThot: s-sorryyyyy

Kork: Are my eyes deceiving me

Kork: or did you just stutter over text?

ProfessorThot: MAYBE

ProfessorThot deleted 2 messages.

DEGENERATE: Well? What’s the degenerate’s secret?

DEGENERATE: NOT THAT IM CURIOUS OR ANYTHING

DEGENERATE: I JUST THIUGHT YUMENO SAN WOULD WANTB TO KNOW

DEGENERATE: RIGHT YUMENO SNA?

Magician: Sure?

DEGENERATE: SEE?

NotTodaySatan: Atua would also like to know what’s happening. They have taken a liking to seeing Amami in social crises~!

ThingGreen: Well tell Atua that that’s not very nice of them.
NotTodaySatan: Atua says “no u!”

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ThingPurple: Wow, I can’t believing Amami-Chan fucking died mid-sentence...

ThingWhite: He’s dead?!

Gonta: Amami kun our you okay????!!!

DingusTheSecond: he's fine yonaga just ran in and through a uno reverse card at him

ThingGreen:

ThingGreen: Well shit.

MakiRoll: Guys, shut up. If you want to hear it, let him speak

ThingWhite: Right! Thanks for reminding me, Harukawa-San!

ThingGreen: You leave me no choice...

ThingGreen: I’ll tell them about the Chicken Little thing

ThingWhite: You wouldn’t dare! >:O

ThingGreen: I gotta do what I gotta do

ThingWhite: ... IT’S STILL WORTH IT!

ThingGreen: Damn

ThingPurple: Wow, a two for two secret special!

Mother: You speak as if this is some sort of game show.

Kayayday: So what’s up?

ThingWhite: Amami-Kun has freckles!

ThingGreen: Idabashi cried during Chicken Little!

Kork:

ThingBlue:

Smoll:

Kayayday:

ThingPurple:

MakiRoll:
Mother:

DingusTheSecond:

ProfessorThot:

NotTodaySatan:

Magician:

DEGENERATE:

Gonta: That it?

Weeb: As anticlimactic as that was, I have an idea for a game now.

MakiRoll: Oh hell no

ProfessorThot: damn, bitchy much?

MakiRoll: Well shit

Smoll: No “do you want to die?” stuff?

ThingPurple: Probably wayyy too close to in game Maki-Chan!

MakiRoll: Shut up

MakiRoll: Wait

MakiRoll: First name, Kokichi!

ThingPurple: Shit

**ThingPurple deleted 2 messages.**

**MakiRoll deleted 3 messages.**

Weeb: Did anyone else just conveniently look away from their screen for about twenty seconds?

DingusTheSecond: yeat wat was that?

MakiRoll: No clue. Totally happened to me too, right OUMA?

ThingPurple: How would I know? I don't know you much HARUKAWA-Chan!

MakiRoll: Right, right. Not suspicious...

ThingGreen: And people call us sketchy @Kork

Kork: Indeed. Such fools.

**ThingBlue: Sorry for interrupting, but Shirogane-San, you said you had an idea for a game, right?**
**Weeb:** Yes, thank you Saihara-Kun.

**Weeb:** So I was thinking that it would be fun if we all had our names changed to a fun fact about ourselves and we can guess them. You could send them to me so I can change all the names without making things obvious. You can send me a fact about someone else too, but you aren’t allowed to give them away. I’m not going to use anything that will start trouble, so don’t send those in.

**Weeb:** Plus, this is a chatfic, so we have to do this

**Smoll:** What?

**Weeb:** What?

**Kayayday:** I love it!

**Weeb:** Okay, everyone send in your facts!

**Magician:** y do I feel like u just want to find out r secrets?

**Weeb:**

**Weeb:** aNYWAYS—

**Kork:** I have come to wonder why I’M considered one of the sketchy ones for the second time today...

*Private Messages “Harukawa Maki and Ouma Kokichi,” April 15th, 14:56*

**OumaKokichi:** ;)

**HarukawaMaki:** What the fuck are you going to do?

**OumaKokichi:** I’m gonna do it~

**HarukawaMaki:** dON’T YOU FUCKING DARE

**OumaKokichi:** I hate it as much as you do, but you can’t expect that everyone conveniently looked away. People are gonna suspect shit and I don’t want them jumping to the wrong conclusions.

**HarukawaMaki:** You’re really worked up over this. My answer is still no. They can talk all they want. It’s better than them knowing anything for sure.

**OumaKokichi:** People will probably be stupid enough to think we dated~

**HarukawaMaki:** Ew, shit.

**HarukawaMaki:** Fine.

**OumaKokichi:** Yippy! Momota-Chan’s reaction is gonna be super fun to watch~

**HarukawaMaki:** I may hate you, but I’m not stupidly forgetful. I know your hands are probably shaking right now.

“Ultimate Nightmare Fuel,” April 15th, 14:59

Weeb: Wow, I wasn’t expecting you guys to have so much dirt on each other. I have enough for multiple rounds.

Weeb: HOLY SHIT OUMA, JS THIS ARUE?!

ProfessorThot: what? does that twink secretly have some crazy fucking kinks?

ThingPurple: Shut up, you hormone off switch.

ProfessorThot: wHATatatt

DingusTheSecond: iruma stop moaning!

ThingWhite: That was out of line, Ouma-Kun!

ThingPurple: lol gottum

ThingPurple: But, yea. It’s true. PM them and they’ll confirm it.

Weeb: You don’t sound that proud of it

ThingPurple: wdym? I’m v proud!

ThingBlue: Your typing style changed. You tend to become kind of frantic if you’re uncomfortable.

ThingPurple: Woah! Stalker much?

ThingBlue: Sorry!

ThingPurple: I’ll let it slide for my beloved just this once~

ThingBlue: Thanks?

Weeb: Cute as that was, I’m gonna change the names now. When I do, everyone send a space to the chat so we can see the names.

Weeb: I’m also playing, but I won’t be allowed to guess any names.

ProfessorThot: just get to the fuckin point!

Weeb: Alright, alright!

Weeb changed 16 names

NeverRiddenARollerCoaster:

AlmostAtePoisonIvyOnce:

OnceGotDetentionForSittingWrong:
NeverBeenKissed:
MistookWeedForMintAndServedIt:
FamousParents:
HasADreamJournal:
LookedUpWhatHentaiWas:
ThoughtMinecraftWasAnEducationApp:
ReallyLikesFlowers:
GotStuckInAWashingMachineOnce:
OwnsACoffin:
HidesInTheBleachersDuringGym:
IllegallyGaveKidsTattoos:
WasPaidToWorkAsOneOfSanta’sElves:
TriedToPoisonATeacherWithVinegar:
ReallyLikesFlowers: This is UNTRUE
FamousParents: That’s not nearly as bad as some of these other ones, don’t worry.
ReallyLikesFlowers: Well yea, but still.
WasPaidToWorkAsOneOfSanta’sElves: I’m not ashamed. Easiest 50 bucks I ever made
HidesInTheBleachersDuringGym: Admirable
GotStuckInAWashingMachineOnce: Shirogane-San, we all know that’s you. Take no offense to this, but we all can see you.
GotStuckInAWashingMachineOnce: I’m personally astonished that Sakakura Sensei hasn’t caught you yet
HidesInTheBleachersDuringGym: You seriously all know?

HidesInTheBleachersDuringGym changed their name to Weeb

Weeb: Well that could’ve gone better...
Weeb: Also, Ouma-Kun, I want answers about your fact later.

ReallyLikesFlowers: This one or the one I sent you?
ReallyLikesFlowers: ...
NeverBeenKissed: HAHAHSHHEBEBDH

ReallyLikesFlowers: SILENCE YOU MALLMART BRAND SEX TOY

NeverBeenKissed: HEYY

Weeb changed 2 names

ThingPurple: I blame you, Iruma-Chan!

ProfessorThot: aw shaddup. you like flowers

ThingPurple: AND THAT’S ENOUGH OUT OF YOU

FamousParents: No strange insult? Still, that’s oddly wholesome coming from you.

ThingPurple: hNNNnnnGGSBDuHyl

HasADreamJournal: lol his face is red

ThingPurple: WHY DO YOU SUDDENLY KNOW WHAY EVERYONE’S FACES LOOK LIKE?

OnceGotDetentionForSittingWrong: You’re standing in the doorway to the room we’re in

HasADreamJournal: oh! thyt means ur amami bcuz were the only ones their

OnceGotDetentionForSittingWrong: Yea, that also means you’re Momota. Didn’t take you as the type to have a dream journal

HasADreamJournal: oh damn it

Weeb: I’m having some major Shark Boy and Lava Girl flashbacks

Weeb changed 2 names

ThingGreen: In my defense, it was a substitute and she was a bitch. She gave Iruma detention for reading after she finished her work

ProfessorThot: oh yea! i remember that hag. fucker is probably tormenting children as we speak

GotStuckInAWashingMachineOnce: You two knew each other?

ThingGreen: Yea, we went to middle school together

ThingPurple: The more you know~

FamousParents: Who submitted my name?

LookedUpWhatHentaiWas: I did!

FamousParents: Oh. I didn’t expect that to be you of all people, Akamatsu.

LookedUpWhatHentaiWas: I can’t say your name because I submitted your secret
**LookedUpWhatHentaiWas:** But in my defense. Shirogane was the one who refused to tell me what it was

**Weeb:** Still can’t believe you looked it up...

**Weeb changed / name**

**Kayaday:** How’d you know it was me?

**FamousParents:** I figured only you or Ouma-Kun would know it was me, so I sort of took a shot in the dark.

**ThingPurple:** Me? I was told nothing of you and your famous parents though!

**FamousParents:** Yes, but you act differently towards different people. I noticed earlier that you didn’t respond with something witty when the names were first changed. You typically only act this way towards either me or Amami-Kun, but you also probably picked up on my typing style because I end texts with a period more often.

**ThingPurple:** You are way too into this game...

**DingusTheSecond:** ur face is red again

**ThingPurple:** KAY, DON’T YOU HAVE BETTER THINGS TO DO THAN STALK MY ASS, MOMOTA-CHAN?

**ThoughtMinecraftWasAnEducationalApp:** Okay, so I think it’s safe to say that only Shuichi would ramble about observations like that.

**FamousParents:** I was rambling? Sorry.

**OwnsACoffin:** The excessive apologies only further confirm this.

**ThingPurple:** Hey, you got it right the first time! Now you’re just acting like villains from an anime that’s like a billion years old and only watched by people like Shirogane!

**Weeb:** Hypocrite...

**Weeb changed / name**

**ThoughtMinecraftWasAnEducationalApp:** I think you talked about your parents a bit during training once too

**NeverRiddenARollerCoaster:** A lot of these sort of make me seem boring.

**AlmostAtePoisonIvyOnce:** wht do Saihara-kuns parints do?

**ThingBlue:** They’re in the film industry. Acting and stuff.

**TriedToPoisonATeacherWithVinegar:** Oh! So your parents are performers?!

**ThingBlue:** I guess you could say so.

**TriedToPoisonATeacherWithVinegar:** Awsome!
ThingBlue: Thanks. Which fact should we go for now?

WasPaidToWorkAsOneOfSanta’sElves: U don’t seem that proud of ur own fact

ThingBlue: Well they’re overseas, so I don’t hear much from them.

ThingPurple: Okay, but what would happen if you ate poison ivy for real?

IllegallyGaveKidsTattoos: That could be a new way to collect sacrifices!

MistookWeedForMintAndServedIt: Hello Yonaga-San.

IllegallyGaveKidsTattoos: Hello~!

Weeb changed / name

Private Messages “Bwue’s Cwues,” April 15th, 15:11

Bwue: Thank you for changing the subject. I know you don’t really know everything, but I’m grateful you stepped in to help.

Magwenta: Why do you keep thanking me over tiny things? I’m a Supreme Leader of evil! I don’t have time for this!

Bwue: I am being a bit over the top, aren’t I? Sorry, I guess I’ve just been happy for you lately?

Magwenta: Ew, what are you? Some sickeningly fake soccer mom named Jennifer who spoils her son with whatever is trendy?

Bwue: Sorry?

"Ultimate Nightmare Fuel," April 15th, 15:13

Kayayday: I think I know one of the names!

Weeb: Oh! Which one?

Kayayday: Is the vinegar one Chabashira?

Kayayday: The first thing they asked Saihara about his parents was if their performers and Chabashira told me once that she’s really admires those types of people

Weeb: That’s correct, actually...

Weeb changed / name

DEGENERATE: Nice job Akamatsu-San!!!

DEGENERATE: And let the record show that that creep was totally staring at all the girls!

WasPaidToWorkAsOneOfSanta’sElves: Probably shouldn’t try to murder him tho

DEGENERATE: I see! Your so smart Yumeno-San!
WasPaidToWorkAsOneOfSanta’sElves: O yea I’m Himiko

OwnsACoffin: I didn’t take you for the type to get a job so early, regardless of payment. I suppose humanity is interesting with its many surprises...

Weeb changed 2 names.

Kork: Why did you change my name even though nobody had guessed yet?

Weeb: I didn’t think they’d have to after you talked about humanity

Kork: .

Kork: You present a valid argument. Proceed.

ThingBlue: I know who the Minecraft one is.

Weeb: Fire away!

ThingPurple: Oh? Enlighten me, beloved Saihara-Chan~

ThingBlue: It’s Maki-San. She used my given name earlier and also mentioned training.

ThoughtMinecraftWasAnEducationalApp: F u c k

Weeb changed 1 name.

ThingPurple: I was waiting for someone to expose you! I was the one who submitted it after all!

MakiRoll: I swear to Yonaga’s weird ass god, that you will rue the day you were born, Ouma Kokichi

ThingPurple: Bold of you to assume I don’t already rue the day I was born.

MakiRoll: u h

AlmostAtePoisonIvyOnce: Don’t b angry four being born oma! Your mom is probably a vry nice lady!

ThingPurple: Yes, Momma Ouma was a fucking delight.

ThingPurple: brb gotta pee

ThingPurple is offline.

DingusTheSecond: he walked out threw the front door so hes probably not peeing

MistookWeedForMintAndServedIt: Hello, Gokuhara-Kun.

AlmostAtePoisonIvyOnce: Hello tojo-san!

Weeb changed 2 names.

DingusTheSecond: uve served weed befor?
Mother: Yes. Luckily, the family I was currently serving was very kind and allowed me to continue my services even after mistake.

MakiRoll: Or they’re secretly drug addicts

Mother: ...

Mother: That could serve as a... less fortunate possibility?

Kayayday: Who all is left?

ThingBlue: Idabashi-Kun and Hoshi-Kun.

GotStuckInAWashingMachineOnce: I was hoping you’d forget about me...

ThingGreen: This is the one I submitted^I was the one who let him out

HasNeverRiddenARollerCoaster: I guess mine isn’t that bad

GotStuckInAWashingMachineOnce: I haven’t ridden a roller coaster either, Hoshi-Kun! We should go to an amusement park sometime!

HasNeverRiddenARollerCoaster: First off, I can’t ride most roller coasters anyway because of my height. Second off, you just exposed us both.

GotStuckInAWashingMachineOnce:

GotStuckInAWashingMachineOnce: Oh

Weeb changed 2 names.

Weeb: Okay, I have time for one more round before I have to start getting ready for a convention.

Mother: Will you be eating dinner here or there?

Weeb: There. You can prepare one less serving for breakfast in the morning too. I’m staying overnight.

Mother: Very well.

ThingPurple is online.

ThingPurple: Hey, don’t start without meeeeee!

ThingBlue: Where were you?

ThingPurple: Peeing, remember?

ThingWhite: You were gone for nearly six minutes.

ThingPurple: Fine. I was taking a dump.

ThingGreen: You literally left the building
ThingPurple:

ThingPurple: Hey Shirogane-San, let’s get this show on the road so you aren’t late for your weeb communion!

Weeb: Okay?

Weeb: Remember to send a space right after I change the names.

Weeb changed 16 names

Spent2DaysGettingEveryone’sContacts:

KaraokeStaffRemembersTheirName:

AlmostGot5PiercingsAtOnce:

StealsFromBrattyRichKids:

UsedToBeBestFriendsWithHarukawa:

KnowsMostDisneySongsByHeart:

HitAKidTheFirstTimeTheyDabbed:

SpendsAnHourOnSkinCareEveryDay:

UsedToBeAFurry:

TriedToEatAPineappleWhole:

Doesn’tBreakTheirKitkats:

BoughtOneOfYonaga’sTattoos:

AlmostBlewUpTheirOldSchool:

UsedParchmentUntilAge12:

BeanedOumaWithTheirAlarmClock:

NarutoRunsWhenNobody’sLooking:

UsedToBeAFurry: @BeanedOumaWithTheirAlarmClock?

BeanedOumaWithTheirAlarmClock: Twas a bad morning

Doesn’tBreakTheirKitkats: Is that why Ouma started screeching at three in the morning

BeanedOumaWithTheirAlarmClock: No I think he just does that

UsedToBeBestFriendsWithHarukawa: Okay, but what kind of fucking heathen doesn’t break their KitKats and then broadcasts it to us all?
Doesn’tBreakTheirKitkats: Hey, to be fair, I didn’t submit it. It’s probably Idabashi getting revenge on me

AlmostGot5PiercingsAtOnce: So you’re Amami-Kun?

Doesn’tBreakTheirKitkats: .

Doesn’tBreakTheirKitkats: I walked right into that one, didn’t I?

Doesn’tBreakTheirKitkats changed their name to ThingGreen

NarutoRunsWhenNobody’sLooking: I hate to do this, but I am afraid I am going to have to disown you, Amami-Kun.

TriedToEatAPineappleWhole: holy fuck. tojo is that you?

NarutoRunsWhenNobody’sLooking: Yes. I suppose I made it quite obvious with my speaking mannerisms and motherly jokes.

TriedToEatAPineappleWhole: omfg, she’s accepted her role as our mom

NarutoRunsWhenNobody’sLooking changed their name to Mother.

ThingGreen: Am I your favorite child? :3

Mother: No. You are very independent and spend too much time away from home. Similar issues have arisen with Saihara-Kun, Yumeno-San and Hoshi-Kun. Chabashira-Chan is very excitable and can be a bit of a handful to care for (although from a friend standpoint, it is rather endearing.) The same goes for Yonaga-San and occasionally Shirogane-San depending on the topic of conversation. Iruma-San is a little too vulgar and such language will not be tolerated from her parental figure. Momota-Kun and Ouma-Kun’s bickering makes it rather tiresome to spectate at all times. As for Shinguuji-Kun and Akamatsu-San, they have both gone beyond the need for my care and supervision, but they are hardly seen as my children now. I guess I could say a similar thing for Saihara-Kun as well. That being said, Gokuhara-Kun is my favorite child if you must know.

ThingGreen: Okay wow. Uh

ThingGreen: You forgot uhh Harukawa

Mother: No worries, it was intentional.

SpendsAnHourOnSkinCareEveryDay: Can’t believe I’m saying this, but ouch

Mother: Do not fret. My reasoning for excluding you was not foul.

Mother: Also, you just exposed yourself.

SpendsAnHourOnSkinCareEveryDay: Shit

Mother changed 1 name

ThingGreen: An entire hour?

MakiRoll: sh Ut uP
HitAKidTheFirstTimeTheyDabbed: Thank you for making Gonta you’re favrite!

UsedToBeBestFriendsWithHarukawa: Gonta?

HitAKidTheFirstTimeTheyDabbed: Yes?

StealsFromBrattyRichKids: Wow! Learning a lot about our non-memey friendos~

Mother changed 1 name

Spent2DaysGettingEveryone’sContacts: Soooooo, Shirogane!

Spent2DaysGettingEveryone’sContacts: How’d you and everyone else get admin rights?

Spent2DaysGettingEveryone’sContacts: Ouma and I are the only ones who could change the names

KaraokeStaffRemembersTheirName: Okay, so I know you’re trying to trick me into revealing myself (which seems to have worked,) Ouma-Kun gave me admin rights by the way.

ThingGreen: Based off the “Ouma and I” thing, you’re Akamatsu, right?

Spent2DaysGettingEveryone’sContacts: I guess that sort of backfired then, huh?

AlmostBlewUpTheirOldSchool: If I didn’t already know you were Amami-Kun, I’d guess you were Saihara-Kun based off that analysis.

KaraokeStaffRemembersTheirName changed 2 names

ThingGreen: Thanks bud

AlmostBlewUpTheirOldSchool: No problem!

ThingGreen: Btw, I know you’re Idabashi. You told me about yours.

AlmostBlewUpTheirOldSchool: I did?

ThingGreen: Yea

TriedToEatAPineappleWhole: HOLY fuck keebs. Answers????

AlmostBlewUpTheirOldSchool: IT WAS AN ACCIDENT, I SWEAR IRUMA-SAN.

Weeb changed 2 names

UsedToBeBestFriendsWithHarukawa: Danggg. Didn’t know a goodie two shoes like Keebs had it in them.

AlmostGot5PiercingsAtOnce: Ouma-Kun?

UsedToBeBestFriendsWithHarukawa: HEY NO FAIR! I WANTED TO BE LAST!

Kayayday: Woah, you knew Harukawa?
MakiRoll: Sadly, yes. We weren’t friends though.

Weeb changed UsedToBeBestFriendsWithHarukawa’s name to ThingPurple

Weeb: I was hoping for more shock than that...

ThingPurple: Yea guys, what gives!

UsedParchmentUntilAge12: I would have to assume that nobody wishes to risk revealing themselves.

Weeb: Yea, I guess that’s makes sense....

BeanedOumaWithTheirAlarmClock: O wait Ouma is out so he can justify expose me. He didn’t submit mine

ThingPurple: That still hurts, Yumeno-Chan!

Weeb: You guys!

Weeb changed BeanedOumaWithTheirAlarmClock’s name to Magician

BoughtOneOfYonaga’sTattoos: I’m fine with being exposed the tattoo looks badass

StealsFromBrattyRichKids: Awww, thank you~!

Mother: Yonaga-San, please do not steal from anyone.

StealsFromBrattyRichKids: Whoopsies!

Weeb changed StealsFrombrattyrichKids’s name to NotTodaySatan

ThingGreen: What did you get for your tattoo?

BoughtOneOfYonaga’sTattoos: the solar system duh!. it’s on my shoulder blade

UsedParchmentUntilAge12: That would mean you’re Momota-Kun.

BoughtOneOfYonaga’sTattoos: uhhhhhh well your shinguuji

Weeb changed 2 names

Kork: If I may ask, who did you know it wasn’t me?

DingusTheSecond: well you always carried a stack of it with you to class

Kayayday: You guys knew each other before Hope’s Peak?

Kork: Yes. Primary and middle school. We used to be quite close actually.

DingusTheSecond: really? dont remember that well...

Kork: Figures...
DingusTheSecond: ?

Weeb: Did anyone else know each other before high school?

ThingPurple: Oh! Maki-Chan and I have been with each other since age eight!

MakiRoll: Okay, first of all, given names. Second of all, no shit.

NotTodaySatan: Angie went to middle school with Chabashira for a year after Angie transferred from the island before high school!

KnowsMostDisneySongsByHeart: Yes! Tenko remembers that!

ProfessorThot: bitch u just revealed urself

USEdToBeAFurry: So it’s just Saihara and I?

AlmostGot5PiercingsAtOnce: Saying that just revealed us both, but yes.

Weeb changed 3 names

Weeb: And the winner is.... Hoshi-Kun because he made it far both rounds!

Smoll: Sweet

Weeb: Okay, gotta go!

Weeb is offline

ThingPurple: Soo... Piercings, Saihara-Chan?

ThingBlue: Yeaa...

ThingWhite: So like Amami-Kun’s?

ThingBlue: I just found piercings attractiveee.

ProfessorThot: So basically u wanted to give amassi a suc?e?

ThingBlue: NOOOO I JSUT SHOUFH THEY WERE ATTRACTIVE

DingusTheSecond: If my sidekick is into dudes, I’ll support him!

Kork is offline

ThingPurple: Hey, why the sudden vanishing?!

DEGENERATE: Duh! It’s almost time to get dinner ready. I’m gonna go help Tojo-San!

DEGENERATE and 2 others are offline

ThingGreen: You thought I wasn’t attractive?

ThingBlue: JUST THE PIERCINGS, I SWEAR. I’M SORRYYY
Not too long after exiting the chat room, Rantaro stared absentmindedly at his wall, coated with maps and posters and shelves of souvenirs. His fingers rapped against the wood of his desk as he let out a sigh. Something had been eating away at him. Bigger than his confusing feelings towards Keebo, bigger than the subtle admission to a former crush Saihara just talked about. Bigger than anything.

The slide of the door to his veranda snapped Rantaro out of his own head. Turning in alert, prepared to attack, he was greeted with the wide, violet eyes of Ouma Kokichi. Yelping a quick greeting, the small boy wandered over to Rantaro’s dresser, rummaging through the top drawers that held accessories and such. Despite not having anything to really hide in there, Rantaro still found himself grabbing Kokichi’s wrist. The boy jerked the hand away like it were on fire and the room was filled with suffocating silence.

“What are you doing?” Rantaro dared to ask, not entirely sure if he wished to know the answer.

“I’m checking to see if you have one of those piercing kit thingies,” Kokichi admitted, surprisingly not putting up much of a fight. Was he really that shaken up just from being grabbed?

“Okay, well you could’ve just asked,” Rantaro sighed, turning to reorganize the drawers. “I do have one, though. What do you need it for?”

“I’m gonna poke everyone’s eyes out and stack them on the needle like a kabob!” Kokichi exclaimed, earning a disapproving state from the taller male. “Fiiine! I’ll spare your eyes, Amami-Chan.”

“I’ll probably have to pierce your ears for you. It’s not really a do it yourself kind of thing unless you have experience,” Rantaro explained, completely ignoring Kokichi’s previous statement. “I can do either a helix or a lobe. Might learn more in the future.”

“Helix is like the top part of your ear, right?” Kokichi asked, still docile as if preparing for something.

“Uh, yea...” Rantaro muttered, raising an eyebrow at the strange behavior.

“Alrighty, let’s go with that one! Those are cool looking, right?” Kokichi grinned, gaining some of his typical spunk. Maybe an attempt to trick Rantaro.

“Looking to impress Saihara-Kun, are we?” Rantaro teased from over his shoulder as he searched the drawers for his kit.

“Nonsense! People must try to impress me! Not the other way around!” Kokichi protested, the pink on his ears betraying him. The comment had no malicious intent seeing as Rantaro didn’t know anything for sure.

“If you say so.”

“Hey! Why don’t you just go away and pierce Keebs’ ears instead!” Kokichi poured with some scrambled attempt at a teasing tone.

“That makes absolutely no sense,” Rantaro deadpanned, suppressing a chuckle himself. He got the message through.
“Be silent, peasant and pierce my ears!” Kokichi hissed.

Complying, Rantaro extracted the kit from his dresser. He begrudgingly sat down properly in his desk chair, only to give up, have Kokichi sit there instead, then sit down cross legged on his own bed. Quickly, Rantaro got to work on cleaning the needle, polishing the thing until it shone. It wasn’t until he was finished when he noticed the ragged breaths each pint through his ears.

Looking up, Rantaro saw Kokichi’s face. His skin was paler than normal and looked sickly and Rantaro could see the faint shine of sweat running down the boy’s face. His lips were parted slightly as uneven breaths heaved from his lungs. As for his eyes, they were wide, trained on the needle in Rantaro’s hands. It wasn’t too slim, but pointy enough at the end so it could puncture the ear.

Just like an arrow.

It took Rantaro a moment to remember what Maki had mentioned in the chat. Shot twice with a crossbow. Poisoned. Crushed by a hydraulic press. Shot twice. What the hell was Kokichi thinking? With quick thinking Rantaro reached out, only to retract his hand. Too much pressure may remind him of the press. Despite being on the verge of a panic attack, Kokichi seemed to refuse to move, almost as if he was scared of being seen, even with his expression on display to Rantaro.

“Ouma-Kun, can you hear me?” Rantaro finally spoke, knowing it was the best he could do. “Give me a sign.”

Even in his current state, Kokichi mustered up a smirk before gasping out the words, “hit me baby one more time.”

“Damn it, Ouma,” Rantaro chuckled, deciding it was safe enough to pat the boy on the head a bit.

Neither of them spoke for a while as time passed. Worry coursing through both parties. Soon, Kokichi’s breathing settled. Rantaro had put away the needle at some point, knowing it’d be better.


“Yea,” Rantaro responded. “Traveling can scare a kid sometimes. You ever have any situations like that at the orphanage? That’s how you knew Harukawa-San, right?”

Kokichi allowed a look of shock to travel across his face. He wasn’t expecting Rantaro to say anything after the mention of his sisters. He was hoping to escape the conversation, and yet he found himself digging deeper.

“Whaaat?! Obviously not! All the children were so under my influence there was like, nothing happening at all!” Kokichi exclaimed, “well, unless I did it. Wouldn’t want things to be boring.”

“Yea, you’re right,” Rantaro agreed, still slightly concerned, “I can get you some water if you want.”

“Water?! I only drink the finest carbonated drinks, I’ll have you know!” Kokichi claimed.

“Alright. Two cups of water coming right up,” Rantaro grinned before getting up.

“Nope,” Kokichi muttered.
“One’s for me, dumbass,” Rantaro responded.

“Rude,” Kokichi huffed, finally letting a smile slip.

And thus, the first name game day came to an end.
Woes of the Gentle Giant

Chapter Summary

The class insomniacs (+Kaede) are making peaceful conversation until an unexpected addition gives them more trouble than they bargained for.

Don't hate me for what I'm about to do

"Ultimate Nightmare Fuel," April 21st, 1:06 AM

Smoll: Who all's awake at this ungodly hour?

ThingPurple: Howdy!

Smoll:

Smoll: Anyone else? (Please)

ThingPurple: Rude!

ThingGreen: Here

ProfessorThot: WHAT'S UP FUCKERS

ThingPurple: WHY DO YOU HAVE MY PHONE?!

ProfessorThot: FUCK YOU THAT'S WHY!

Kork: You two are worrisome. I'd say tiresome, but if that were the case, I would be asleep by now.

ThingBlue: I think Tojo-San is dusting again. We need to help her soon, guys.

Kayayday: What's this?

ThingPurple: Gasp! A newcomer?!

ThingBlue: Sometimes, if someone can't sleep, they message the chat and everyone else who's awake typically responds. Hopefully that's a good enough explanation.

Kayayday: I see

Smoll: So what's got everyone awake tonight?

ThingGreen: The usual.

ThingBlue: ^^^^
**ThingPurple**: Planning a way to kill everyone

**ProfessorThot**: im TRYING to catch my beauty sleep

**ThingPurple**: Dang, how long has it been since you've slept then?

**Kayayday**: Ouma!

**Kayayday**: I was cramming because I think we're gonna have a pop quiz tomorrow

**ProfessorThor**: booo! Basic!

**Kork**: Once again, I have lost track of time while reading.

**Gonta**: Gonta can't stop thinking about how he fail everyone in the simylater by killing iruma-san and Gonta hasn't been able to sleep because he feels awful about not being good to his friends and now Gonta isn't sure if he deserves friends and if friends would be better off if stupid Gonta didn't do anything

**ProfessorThot**: 

**Smoll**: 

**ThingGreen**: 

**Kayayday**: 

**ThingPurple**: 

**ThingBlue**: 

**Kork**: 

**Gonta is offline**

**Kork**: Well that can't be good.

**ProfessorThot**: no shit Sherlock

**Smoll**: Everyone meet me outside, behind the dorms. Don't let Tojo see you because unless it's life threatening, we don't want to put any work on her plate.

**Smoll and 6 others are offline**

<Oh Atua, what have I done?>

It took around fifteen minutes for everyone to gather. Sneaking past Kirumi wasn't an easy task and when Miu finally made it to the back of the dormitory, she looked completely winded. After taking a quick head count, Ryoma moved his arm to reach for where one of his candy cigarettes was normally resting between his lips, only to awkwardly retract it after realizing nothing was there

"Okay, I guess this everyone," Ryoma began, "so I gathered all of you here today to help out Gokuhara."
"Then why'd you have us do that ninja bullshit around Tojoke?" Miu panted, "we coulda just gone to his dorm."

"Already checked," Ryoma answered, "he's not there."

"What's your plan then, Hoshi-Kun?" Kaede asked, face oddly serious.

"Well before we go out and find him, I think we need to figure out the root of the problem," Shuichi spoke up, "if we go up to Gokuhara-Kun with no idea what to say, we could potentially make things worse—" everyone was silent, thinking about the idea "—o—or not! I'm not forcing a —anything on to you guys! Sorry..."

"Not bad," Ryoma flashed the boy a small smile, a rare thing to see, "but you still have a ways to go if you keep doubting yourself like that. Hopefully everyone brought out their phones. That text is our only piece of evidence."

**Investigation, start!**

"Gonta can't stop thinking about how he fail everyone in the simyulater by killing iruma-san and Gonta hasn't been able to sleep because he feels awful about not being good to his friends and now Gonta isn't sure if he deserves friends and if friends would be better off if stupid Gonta didn't do anything"

*Truth Bullet #1: "fail everyone in the simyulater by killing iruma-san" Gonta must feel like he's made a huge mistake in the simulator and it links to his murder of Miu.*

*Truth Bullet #2: "Gonta hasn't been able to sleep" Gonta's problem has been keeping him awake and due to the use of past tense, this could've been going on before tonight too.*

*Truth Bullet #3: "he feels awful about not being good to friends" Gonta feels bad due to harming people he holds dear through his actions.*

*Truth Bullet #4: "Gonta isn't sure if he deserves friends and if friends would be better off if stupid Gonta didn't do anything" Gonta thinks that his actions were awful enough to make him undeserving of our friendship.*

**Verdict:** Gonta has been feeling guilty about murdering Miu in the simulation for an extended period of time and it snowballed into his outburst.

"Guilt..." Rantaro muttered to himself, "poor dude."

"Guilt is surely one of the more complex, yet terrifying emotions," Korekiyo commented, "just another way humanity continues to be interesting, is it not?"

"We need to talk to him..." Kaede concluded, an oddly intense loom crossing her magenta eyes, "knowing that he's going through this and just leaving him just doesn't feel right."

"You're right, Akamatsu-San," Shuichi agreed, clearly thinking of something, "but we need to be methodical about it."

"Too many people will make him feel bad. He'll probably feel like he kept us awake," Ryoma added, "I say we split into groups."

The seven of them sat there for a long while, devising a plan. Each minute that passed felt like agony, everyone full of the unwanted knowledge of their kindest classmate laying who knows
where, feeling progressively sadder. Ryoma seemed to be the most determined to find a solution. Shuichi had his ideas, but the shorter boy always threw in a few facts about Gonta that required a few tweaks in each plan.

"I've gotta admit, Hoshi-Kun," Rantaro spoke, "I don't hate this part of you."

Ryoma gave a soft hum, "this is about Gokuhara, not me, remember?"

In the end, the group had developed the best plan they could before the thought of their friend's despair became too much to remain inactive. For starters, six people would be split into groups of three. The remaining person would have to stay stationed near the entrance of the dormitory, keeping watch for both Kirumi and Gonta himself in case he was making his way back.

"Okay, but before we get to groups," Shuichi began. "Sorry for being off topic, but Ouma-Kun, you've barely said a word this entire time. Are you okay?"

Attention immediately snapped to the purple haired boy, who was standing a little bit away from the rest of the group. He looked lost in thought, but you could tell by the strained look in his eyes that he knew that everyone's eyes were on him. Breaking out in a cold seat, Kokichi looked away from his classmates.

"I..." Kokichi gasped, uncharacteristically quiet and slightly terrified, "... I don't wanna."

"Don't want to what?" Ryoma egged him on, eager to get on with the search for Gonta.

"I don't wanna go," Kokichi choked out before attempting to force any sort of lie back into his deadened tone. "This just sound mega boring, right? I'm a supreme ruler of evil, aren't I? People suffering means nothing to me."

"So you're just going to leave Gokuhara-Kun out there on his own?!" Kaede cried accusingly, anger surfacing into her voice, adding a nastier edge to her words.

"What the fuck?" Miu muttered absentmindedly.

"That's low, even for you," Ryoma growled, "if you're not going to help out, then just go away. You've still got a ways to go until you learn to be a friend. At least give us a reason."

A strange look crept on to Kokichi's face. It was blank, but screamed out in distress. "I already told you, jeez! I said I don't want to~"

Korekiyo, Rantaro and Shuichi remained quiet, witnessing the whole ordeal. The three of them all seemed to know better. Korekiyo noticed the slightest trembling in the boy's hands. Rantaro's mind danced around with similarities to just the other night with the needle. Shuichi could just tell by the look in his eyes, violet irises flaked with gold, down cast and coated in pain.

"Besides," Kokichi whispered as he turned on his heel, "do you really think Gonta would want to see the person who wasted his life?"

All Kokichi was met with was silence.

"Exactly. I'm going for a walk. I'm not in the mood to be scolded by you guys or Tojo-Chan."

"Wait, Ouma-Kun," Shuichi mumbled before turning to the others, "I'm going to talk to him, okay?"
"No," Rantaro objected, "I think he'd want to be alone right now. Besides, we have something serious to attend to first."

Shuichi stood there for a moment, conflicted, before making his way back to the others. Nobody else spoke as Kokichi slowly grew further and further away from the remaining six of them. A mixture of concern and disgust from the two halves hung in the air as they got around to sorting out the groups. Rantaro was initially going to be the watchman, but was swapped out for Korekiyo after everyone realized he'd probably let the person pass anyway is they were nice enough. Knowing what they're up against, that being the most polite person anyone had met, the other being the most kind, the six knew the green haired boy wouldn't last long. As for the groups themselves, they were now split unevenly into group one with Ryoma and Rantaro and group two with Miu, Kaede and Shuichi.

"If any of us finds him, send something to the chat before approaching him," Ryoma instructed, "that should keep us from all going at the guy at once."

"Yea, yea, whatever," Miu mocked him, "let's just go and find the golem already."

"Iruma-San, this is serious!" Kaede exclaimed, lightly flicking the slightly taller girl in the arm, "be nicer."

"I-I-I'm sorryyyyyyyyy," Miu whined, averting her gaze as she crumbled.

"I don't have time for this..." Ryoma scowled before setting off, Rantaro following shortly behind him.

"Okay, so doe either of you know where Gokuhara-Kun goes in his free time?" Kaede asked, trying to get some sort of lead as to where to go first.

"Why the fuck would I know?"

"Sorry, no."

"Ah, geez!" Kaede sighed, looking around her as if Gonta would pop up at any moment.

"Why don't you check the classroom" Korekiyo pitched in, leaning idly against the dormitory exterior wall. "I may not know Gokuhara-Kun as well as Hoshi-Kun may, but I presume that he'd find some sort of comfort in a familiar area."

"Good point, Shinguuji-Kun," Shuichi approved, hand moving to his face the way it does when he's brainstorming, "Hoshi-Kun and Amami-Kun went a different direction, so I don't think we have to worry about wasting time."

"So," Miu added, "classroom it is! Boo yah!"

Kaede let a chuckle slip at the other girl's antics, but she did her best to keep a frustrated expression. Soon enough, the three of them made their way to the direction of the looming Hope's Peak Academy building. At night, the brick structure looked like a haunted mansion you'd find in a children's horror movie. The clear sky offered enough light to see through the grim atmosphere, allowing quick navigation.

"Jesus fuck," Miu cursed, "it's cold as shit out here."

"You should've brought a jacket then," Kaede instructed. "Here, take mine. I need it back after though."
Miu slipped the thin white jacket over her arms, doing her best to hide the embarrassment creeping into her expression. If anything did show, the other two made no signs of noticing. At this point, the three had mad their way to the school's main entrance. As usual, the large iron gates had been closed, but it didn't matter seeing as they were all already within the school's property.

"Do you think we can even get in at this hour?" Shuichi worried, extracting his student ID card from his pocket, "I know we only have a curfew for being on school grounds, but I don't know if we're even supposed to be out here."

"Don't be such a goodie two shoes!" Miu grumbled, whipping out her own ID and scanning it before Shuichi could reach the card reader, "see, it still unlocked!"

"I see, sorry," Shuichi said sheepishly.

As expected, the halls were empty, making each footstep sound like a wrecking ball. Only being first years, they only had to go up a couple flights of stairs before reaching the classroom. Unsurprisingly, the door was closed. After a brief discussion, it was decided that Kaede would be the one to enter first. Shuichi might have trouble comforting Gonta and Miu was just Miu. Taking a deep breath, Kaede slid open the door, leaving the other two's line of sight. It didn't take long for Kaede to return, a disappointed look on her face.

"Nothing," Kaede reported.

"Damn it," Miu hissed, "what now?— N—not that I have no clue where to go next."

"He's feeling guilty about Iruma-San, right?" Shuichi ventured, "maybe we should check the inventor lab?"

"Great idea, Saihara-Kun!" Kaede praised.

"Get a room," Miu muttered bitterly, hugging the white jacket closer to her body.

"What was that, Iruma-San?" Kaede asked, looking innocently over her shoulder.

"I said 'we better zoom','" Miu lied. "Jeez, Bakamatsu, learn to listen..."

"Hey, you're the one walking two paces behind us," Kaede cried defensively, "come on, we need you to tell us where your lab is so we can get there faster."

With that, Kaede took Miu's hand, tugging her up to speed with her and Shuichi. The latter looked at the pair for a moment, their hands still interlocked. Well aware the two weren't romantically involved, Shuichi left out an almost amused huff, a ghost of a smile dancing on his lips. A comfortable silence enveloped the group as they continued onwards with the determination of true ultimates.

After about ten minutes of misunderstood directions from a flustered Miu, the three of them made it to the Inventor's Lab. Once again, Kaede was the one to open the door, and walk in. However, she once again retreated from the room in a matter of seconds, the same expression on her face from before.

"All there was was a pink haired girl sleeping at one of the computers," Kaede explained.

"Oh yea, Nanapee," Miu confirmed.

"I say we try the track," Shuichi suggested. "During gym class the other day, I remember
Gokuhara-Kun telling me about finding some chrysalises out there. I think he'd like being near something like that."

Unable to come up with any other course of action, the three of them made their way back out of the building. The air had grown slightly colder, and the moon had moved further down the horizon. Hope's Peak Academy's gym was right behind the main building, the gym in the bottom left of the grounds and the gardens on the top left.

"Do you remember where Gokuhara-Kun found the chrysalises?" Kaede pondered, scouring the large field in a useless attempt to find something so tiny.

"Uh, yes," Shuichi assured, "it was around the gardens. Top left."

"Aw geez! That's far..." Kaede whined.

"Suck it up," Miu snapped, hands on her hips.

Kaede spared the other girl a glance. Her normally shaking irises had grown steady, trained on the other side of the track. Due to the inconvenient placement of trees, Kaede knew they'd have to go all the way over in order to check for their classmate. She wasn't used to Miu being serious like this, so Kaede couldn't help but smile a bit.

"You're right," Kaede agreed.

"Course I am," Miu boasted, "now let's get a move on, virgins!"

After Shuichi muttered something to himself about vulgarity, the three of them began running. Given how lengthy the track was however, they all ran out of breath about three quarters of the way through. Kaede was mediocre, Miu tried too hard and wound up sprinting and running out of stamina and even after training with Kaito, Shuichi was slower than both of them despite his better endurance. They ended up walking the rest of the way.

"Jesus Christ, Gokuhara better be out here," Miu panted, too drained to throw in any insulting nicknames.

The three of them spent a minute or two checking behind every last tree in that's part of the track. After the first round, the triad probably already knew that they wouldn't find their classmate there, but fueled by hope and a bit of desperation, they continued on.

"Damn it!" Miu swore before grumbling unintelligible nonsense under her breath.

"What no—" Shuichi began, but was quickly cut off.

It was the sound of rustling leaves. Too loud to be from wind. Turning around, the trio looked around for a moment for the source of the noise. Then, their eyes fell upon Gonta, sitting with his back to them deep within the garden. Miraculously, the boy didn't seem to have heard them during their search. The three spent a moment just staring at what they should've noticed a while ago until something seemed to catch Shuichi's eye.

"You guys go," Shuichi said, already in motion, "I'm gonna go take care of something."

"The fuck kind of ominous sentence is that?" Miu questioned, "fine, you can't go play with yourself and we'll do this!"

"That's not—never mind," Shuichi deflated, exiting around the garden.
With that, Kaede and Miu walked forward to the gate to the garden, which was closed. Gonta probably took the front entrance. It was closer to the dorms after all. It wasn't until she had one hand on the gate that Kaede noticed that Miu was coming too, rather than just her.

"Step aside, Bakamatsu," Miu ordered.

"Iruma-San!" Kaede cried, standing in front of the gates "are you sure you can handle this on your own?!"

"Shut up, cow udders," Miu growled. "I can bet ya a million yen that the best person to talk to the big man is me, got it?"

Kaede was silent for a moment, hesitant on whether she should let the most foul mouthed human she had ever met go on and comfort someone. It was a gamble, that's for sure. However, after racking her brain for a moment, Kaede sighed, nodding and stepping aside for her friend. Although, before Miu could leave her sight, Kaede called out to her.

"Hey!" Kaede shouted.

"What now?!

"Nothing, it's just... I'm proud of you, Iruma-San."

"Cut the sappy shit, I've gotta go."

The inventor snickered at the other blonde, but her smile was thanks enough. As Miu rounded a corner, Kaede made sure to send assurance to the chat that the situation was under control. The garden was a rather secluded area during the off hours, but it was beautiful nonetheless. The tall brick walls were flooded with healthy vines and gave off the vibes of something you'd see in a fairytale. There, sitting on a bench, was Gonta, looking at his hands.

"Oi, big guy!" Miu yelped before softening her tone a bit. "How you holding up?"

"Iruma-San?" Gonta whispered, "Gonta is so sorry. Very very sorry!"

The gentle giant stood up, eyes glossy with tears that soaked the bottoms of his glasses. Miu almost recoiled from the sight, quite saddened herself. Even with the confusing enigma that is her personality, someone as innocent and kind as Gonta being brought to tears was heart breaking.

"It's... it's alright, bud," Miu assured, somewhere in between her docile and aggressive self. A middle ground, one may say.

"But it isn't!" Gonta bawled, "Gonta is the reason Iruma-San is hurting! Gonta is the reason everyone is always mad at Ouma-Kun and say mean things to him!"

Miu had expected Gonta to be upset over killing her, but Kokichi? Miu didn't care for the small boy in particular, but she didn't exactly dislike him. She may be vulgar, but Miu at least understood that while he planned her death, she had done the same for him. Neutrality was what she owed him at the very least.

"Ey, the way people treat Ouma has nothing to do with you!" Miu responded, not using an offensive nickname as her own way of respecting Gonta's emotions. "Plus, do ya really think the gorgeous girl genius would be pouting over something like that?"

Miu can pride herself over the fact that everything she just said was, in fact true. She's never been
the type to dwell on what could've been, one of her truly good traits. Sure, anything too tight on her neck would be uncomfortable, but it wasn't anything life changing. Everything negative that ran through her head was detached from the wretched game, but that was something for later, long after this storm begins to clear.

Gonta remained silent for a while, something still rattling through his head, rooted in place like the ball on those cheap ping pong games you buy at the dollar store. Miu could hear it. See it. Feel it in the boy's gaze, which rested on his bare feet. Unable to find what these unsaid words were, Miu opted for silence until the deep green haired boy was able to take the time to form the words himself.

"... But don't you and Ouma-Kun hate me?" Gonta whispered, shedding his third person speaking mannerisms for just a moment. "Don't you hate me for bringing your lives to... to shit?"

When Miu had gone to the garden without Kaede, she had the idea that this would be nothing but words of regret and a pat on the back. However, here she found herself taking reluctant, yet steady steps towards the man who had held the weapon that had ended her life. She found herself wrapping her arms around his shaking form. She found the very arms that had strangled her until her blood ran cold wrap around her. Miu knew she didn't know Gonta very well. She knew his birthday, that he loved bugs. She didn't know if a hug said more than words ever could to him. Not the things Ryoma knew.

"I'm only gonna say this once, so listen carefully, kay?" Miu said softly, not entirely sure how to form the words until they rolled off her tongue. "If you think for one minute that I don't think you're one of the nicest motherfuckers in the country, I vow that I'll kick my own ass. And I might not know what the fuck is going through that twink's mind a good seventy percent of the time—" Miu's mind returned to the scene from earlier "—but I won't hesitate to kick his ass too, got it?"

The feeling of Gonta nodding against her shoulder was enough of an answer to Miu. With her sense of duty wearing off, Miu suddenly became very aware of her position. Now she was just sitting in the middle of the school garden in the dead of night, clinging to a boy twice her size. She didn't feel awkward though. No need to throw in a joke. To shrivel up her willpower in a matter of seconds. Because in that moment, Miu knew that she was right where she needed to be. Saving Gokuhara Gonta from his own despair.

Meanwhile, somewhere at the front entrance to the garden, violet eyes peered at the two of them, conflicted emotions running through the owner's troubled mind. With his face finally deciding on a sad frown, Kokichi turned away, choosing to ignore the bitter thoughts of his own discontent.

"I thought it was you," a soft, slightly feminine voice interrupted Kokichi's thoughts.

Throwing on a cheeky smirk like an actor to a mask, Kokichi spun around to meet the golden eyes of Saihara Shuichi. Kokichi's own eyes were rimmed with red a slightly puffy, but Shuichi didn't comment on it, knowing it would do more harm than it would good.

"I—uh," Shuichi hesitated, "thank you."

"For what?" Kokichi tested, tilting his head in a childish manner.

“You rustled the leaves so we would find Gokuhara-Kun,” Shuichi answered.

“Oh, right, I did do that,” Kokichi admitted, not bothering with a lie as a frown returned to his lips.
“I think it was very kind of y—” Shuichi started before catching a glimpse of the smaller boy’s face, “uh. O—Ouma-Kun?”

“Hm?”

“You’re crying.”

Kokichi put a hand to his face, horror settling into his thoughts as he was met with a wet surface. Wild eyes flickered around desperately like prey searchingly for a method of escape. Realization crossed Shuichi’s face before he reached out, grabbing Kokichi’s arm. The boy in question violently flinched, but the hand remained on his forearm.

“W—wait, I won’t pry, I swear,” Shuichi reasoned, causing Kokichi to relax the slightest bit, “j—just don’t run away again.”

Kokichi’s eyes continued to dart around, but it looked more like he was searching for something now. After deciding something, the purple haired boy returned his gaze to Shuichi.

“Just let go of my arm,” Kokichi mumbled, not bothering to add any sparkle to his words.

Doing as he was told, Shuichi released Kokichi’s arm. The blue haired boy then took a seat on the ground, back against the wall. Not entirely sure what else to do, Kokichi did the same, but sat at least a foot and half away from the other boy. He had stopped crying quickly after Shuichi brought it to his attention, but the taller boy could see that his eyes were still shining with tears. A beat passed before either of them spoke.

“Can I use your phone again?” Kokichi asked, quickly adding, “I need to send a confirmation to nuke Saturn out of existence and I’m suspicious that the FBI is watching my digital contacts.”

Shuichi looked at the other boy. He remembered last time when Kokichi had taken his phone to apologize to Miu. Was he that afraid of people seeing the nice part of him? Shuichi knew that Kokichi knew that he’d realized what it meant if he wanted to use the device and he couldn’t help but feel the slightest hint of pride that Kokichi had trusted him with that, even if only little. Shuichi shoved the feeling down though as he nodded, typing in his password before handing the phone to Kokichi.

Private Messages "Gokuhara Gonta and Saihara Shuichi,” April 21st, 2:13

SaiharaShuichi: Gokuhara-Kun, please don’t ever think that Ouma-Kun doesn’t love you. I know it’s a difficult time for you right now, but we’re all here for you and we all will be there to support you when you’re in trouble. You have no idea how thankful Ouma-Kun is for you and how much he appreciates you for always believing in him and going in for the greater good. Thank you, Gokuhara-Kun.

GokuharaGonta: Thank you gonta feels a lot better now though

SaiharaShuichi: That’s good to hear.

GokuharaGonta: Gonta loves you too ouma kun

SaiharaShuichi: I’m not Ouma-Kun?

GokuharaGonta: really? Sorry Gonta jumped to conclusions because in the rewatching we had to do at the reasearch center showed that you didn’t think that what ouma kun did was very good.
Ouma looked sad after you said mean stuff to him. Gonta knows because Gonta knows what Ouma kun looks like when he's sad

**SaiharaShuichi:** I'm still getting around to apologizing. Hopefully that time will come. *I probably make Ouma-Kun pretty angry because of it.*

**SaiharaShuichi:** Oh, and Gokuhara-Kun, before you leave, I have to tell you something.

**GokuharaGonta:** Yea?

**SaiharaShuichi:** You're smarter than people give you credit for.

*Saihara Shuichi is offline*

*Saihara Shuichi deleted the conversation*

“Here ya go!” Kokichi sprung up from his spot on the floor, acting like his normal self all of a sudden.

“I—I thought you were staying,” Shuichi reminded.

“Yea, but then I changed my mind,” Kokichi chirped, a sudden nasty edge creeping into his voice, “bye bye Saihara-Chan.”

Kokichi walked away, leaving a dumbfounded Shuichi sitting against the wall. He didn’t immediately return to Kaede at the back entrance. He sat there for while, thinking about what he could’ve done in that moment.

*He probably made Ouma-Kun pretty angry because of it.*

<Please tell me at least one of you guys caught that.>

**“Ultimate Nightmare Fuel,” April 21st, 6:22**

**ThingWhite:** There is no excuse for being up that late, even if it is the weekend!

**ThingBlue:** I’m sorry.

**ThingWhite:** You should be!

**ThingGreen:** I’m sorry too

**ThingWhite:** It’s fine, you had good intentions and you helped out a friend.

**ThingBlue:** Am I a joke to you?

**Kayayday is online**

**Kayayday:** Iruma

**Kayayday:** My jacket?

**ProfessorThot:** FUCK OFF IT’S COMFY
This chapter may seem a bit fillerish and it kind of is, but it's meant to serve as a comparison for later chapters.

Idabashi Keebo lived life with an agenda. Everyday begins at exactly six in the morning with his single alarm and a minute of stretching. He dresses properly in their school issued uniform before brushing his teeth, washing his face gently with soap and water and leaving his neatly decorated room. He helps Kirumi with breakfast, but usually ends up squeezing orange juice for sixteen exhausted children. He yells at Kokichi when it's necessary, sometimes when it's not, and prepares the same cup of black coffee for Shuichi, commenting on his eye bags. It's the same and he's content with that.

Amami Rantaro lived life doing god knows what. Everyday begins anywhere between two in the morning and six twenty, when his fourteenth alarm finally rouses him from sleep. He rejects the blazer on his uniform and rolls up his sleeves before taking five minutes brushing his teeth, another ten applying skin products to his face and leaving his clean, but cluttered room. He sometimes helps with breakfast, but typically just takes a seat at the counter to make small talk. He chuckles at Kokichi's antics and pats Shuichi's back when he chokes on his too hot coffee. It's random and he's content with that.

No matter what though, at exactly seven every morning, Keebo finds himself standing outside the dormitory, waiting impatiently for Rantaro. No matter what, Rantaro always gets there after Keebo and no matter what, Rantaro always has a reason for his tardiness. The stories are always true, from prying Himiko out of a cabinet with the reluctant help of Tenko, to a bird bursting through the window. No matter how mundane, Rantaro always makes them so ridiculous sounding that he coaxes at least one chuckle out of Keebo, even while he's doing their best to sound angry.

Today, the day began at five fifty for Rantaro, when his first alarm began to blare in his ears. He took a moment to lay in his bed, feeling bad for his neighbors, who are given the pleasure of listening to a grand total of fourteen alarms every five minutes in the span of under an hour. Rantaro reached the conclusion that that was why Ryoma and Kokichi were always awake earlier than him, only to remember that the walls in the dormitories were nearly soundproof. Not taking any time to mourn the five minutes he'd wasted, Rantaro grabbed his uniform, exchanging it for his pajamas.

By the time Rantaro slipped the last of his rings onto his fingers, the clock read six twenty. It was a slower day, he guessed as he grabbed his bag and slipped out the door. The third floor of the dormitory was nearly empty save for Maki, who already slipped away from Rantaro's view before he could greet her. Giving a huff of amusement, Rantaro followed suit, wandering down two flights of stairs before reaching the first floor, where the kitchen and common area lay. Most of the class was there. Himiko wasn't, but that's to be expected and Gonta was absent as well.

Rantaro's mind slipped back to that night. After getting the text from Kaede, he and Ryoma had gone to the gardens themselves. They passed an angry Kokichi on the way and found a distressed looking Shuichi at the front entrance. Neither of them asked any questions, too caught up in the sight of the giant boy and Miu. He's glad things worked out, but he couldn't help but still be worried for the boy in question. Rantaro knew that such extreme guilt wouldn't just go away instantly as if it never existed.

"Good morning, Amami-Kun," Kirumi greeted from over her shoulder, "breakfast will be ready in
about five minutes. Please, take a seat."

The counter had five stools. The only other people who regularly use them other than Rantaro and Keebo are Shuichi and Kokichi. Tsumugi will occasionally slide in here and there when she's not in the mood to sit in the main dining area. As of right now, only the former two had opted to sit there today. Shuichi was resting his head in his hand as he read a large book with tiny words as Kokichi switched between trying to balance random objects on the other's head, reading the book with him, or looking at Shuichi's face in confusion.

"Keebs is in the pantry," Kokichi said as soon as he heard the scrape of the stool on the floor, "they said they were getting coffee grounds for my beloved Saihara-Chan, but I think they're just oiling their joints so they can go like five billion miles a second and murder us all!"

"Please don't call me that," Shuichi muttered, cheeks pink and golden eyes not leaving his book.

"Call you what?" Kokichi teased, staring innocently at the other boy.

"You know what I meant," Shuichi deadpanned, eyes still not leaving the leather bound book. "Oh, this part's exciting, look."

Kokichi, who was in the process of forming crocodile tears, stopped and peered over Shuichi's shoulder. Sure enough, the smaller boy's eyes lit up a bit and a smile passed his face. Shuichi spared him a glance, giving his own smile of satisfaction before returning to his book. Rantaro found himself smiling at the display as well. He'd never really paid much attention to the pair's antics in the morning, more concentrated on talking to Keebo. Is this what they did? Shuichi giving Kokichi interesting parts of his book while the latter fidgeted around? It was oddly endearing when Rantaro remembered the hesitant, cold boy and the defensive, loud boy from the KGS.

Moments later, as Rantaro watched a snickering Kokichi balance a plum on the brim of Shuichi's hat, Keebo finally returned to the kitchen with a strong smelling container of coffee grounds. Immediately, the white haired boy took notice of his friend across the counter as he set up the coffee machine.

"You're up!" Keebo almost cheered as the dark liquid began to pour into the pot, "coffee today or no?"

"Coffee sounds good right now, thanks," Rantaro grinned.

Keebo routinely got to emptying the steaming pot into two mugs. Instantly, the white haired roboticist slid one to Shuichi, not bothering to add anything to the bitter liquid. However, as the detective began to down the drink, Kokichi asked for a cup as well, despite his constant mentions of distaste towards coffee. After reluctantly agreeing (he was well aware the cup would likely go to waste) Keebo finished up Rantaro's mug before filling another for the smaller boy, who claimed he wanted it black.

"Aw, yuck!" Kokichi helped as soon as the dark brew passed his lips, "what the hell, Saihara-Chan, how do you drink this stuff!? Your tastebuds are probably rotting or something."

"Don't waste it," Shuichi sighed, ignoring the other's comment, "here, I can add some stuff to it." With that, the blue haired boy took the mug from the shorter's hands.

"Amami-Chan! Saihara-Chan is trying to poison me!" Kokichi cried, "I can't believe my beloved has betrayed me... I—I'm gonna cry!"

"I—I'm not going to poison you!" Shuichi sputtered, "I'm just adding some cream and sugar to it.
I—is that alright?"

Kokichi let out a hum in response, a look that neither Rantaro of Keebo recognized passing his
face, "yea, whatevs," he responded with a generally indifferent tone. "I've already used, like, half of
the world's poison on you, so I suppose there's no need to worry."

Rantaro chuckled along with the two of them in the careless way he does, but he couldn't help but
notice the way Kokichi peered into the mug when he thought nobody was watching. Did he really
think it was poisoned? However, both Keebo and Rantaro remained blind to the way Shuichi
constantly tugged at his sleeves before the rode up too far on his wrists. The same couldn't be said
for Kokichi, but the supreme leader chose to stay silent, taking another sip of his overly sweet
coffee to hide his stolen glances of the other.

It was a matter of seconds until Kirumi called everyone in for breakfast. Himiko has been roused
from her slumber—likely by Tenko—and sleepily sauntered in behind the other girl, who was
obviously walking slower to keep on pace with the redhead. Gonta eventually made an appearance
as well, giving frantic apologies for oversleeping. It took about five minutes for the kitchen to clear
out, leaving the four boys to their own devices. Typically Kirumi would already be at the counter,
cleaning dishes, but someone had miraculously convinced her to go to the dining room to eat.

"So, how'd you sleep?" Keebo asked after finishing a mouthful of toast.

"Pretty good, actually," Rantaro smiled, "I woke up at the first alarm today."

"Ah, just right!" Keebo praised, "I'm glad you didn't oversleep."

Of course, Rantaro never mentioned the days when he woke up at ungodly hours in the morning
for reasons he would rather not say. The topic never came up for starters, but the idea of worrying
Keebo irritated Rantaro to no end, resulting in the holding of his tongue. Instead, the two of them
decided to engage in a conversation about how much they think beautiful photos of nature are
edited before being sent out into the world.

Before anyone could read the clock, it was five past seven and Keebo was standing outside, his
expression having already deteriorated into one of neutrality rather than one of disappointment. At
last, Rantaro exited the dormitory, a smirk of suppressed laughter etched onto his features. Keene
didn't hate the look, in fact he thought it was sort of cute, which confused the roboticist. Thinking
your friend's face is cute was a confusing thing after all. Keebo quickly shrugged off the feeling
before addressing his friend.

"What's today's story?" Keebo quizzed, brow raised expectantly.

"Shirogane-San lost her keychains," Rantaro hummed, "she said that she couldn't leave without
her waifus."

"What even is a 'waifu?" Keebo muttered, a small laugh leaving his lips nonetheless.

"I see, so you're a husbando type, huh?" Rantaro joked, although the slightest glimmer of hope
managed to force its way into his tone.

"What?"

"What."

Private Messages "Dumb and Dumber," April 25th, 7:08
Dumber: Heyo

Dumb: I'm standing not even two feet away from you. Texting seems unnecessary.

Dumber: Yea?

Dumb: I can also hear you chuckling, even if you're trying to hide it (which I can also see.)

Dumber: And?

Dumb: I guess I'm already texting you as well, aren't I?

Dumber: I knew you'd cave

Dumb: What's that supposed to mean?

Dumber: Oh, no offense. I'm just saying you're nice enough to go along with my weird ideas

Dumb: I see. Sorry for assuming.

Dumber: It's alright

Dumb: I think I'm going to go to the researching lab with you today.

Dumber: Sweet

Dumb: I found this really amazing place and I wanted to look it up for more information. You should go there for your first trip!

Dumber: I already have a plan for my first trip and I'm going there after I get settled in. I still would like to see the details. It must be really good if you're recommending it

Dumb: I can give you a more in depth description when we get there.

Dumber: Sounds godhegngjrdnff

With that, Rantaro ran straight into a bench, causing him to tip over a bit and effectively slam his face against one of the armrests. After recovering from the initial shock, Rantaro could briefly make out the sound of Keebo legitimately laughing a bit. The rare noise was enough to make the green haired boy smile like a idiot and for pink to rush to his cheeks. Luckily for him, his face (which still hurt) was on the armrest, giving the adventurer some time to calm his expression before sitting up. However, the roboticist's expression quickly morphed into one of worry after catching sight of the other's face.

"You're bleeding!" Keebo exclaimed, looking around frantically for something to stem the flow of blood from the taller's nose, "uhm—here! It may not be the most effective method if the flow speeds up, but it should still last at least long enough for you to make it to the nurse!"

"I doubt this is serious enough for me to need the nurse," Rantaro reasoned but accepted the Kleenex, trying to ignore the lingering feeling of their fingers brushing. "It was just me being clumsy and not paying attention. No biggie."
"Nonsense!" Keebo insisted, "it is important to think about every possibility! For all we know, it could be broken."

"I guess you're right," Rantaro mused, humorizing the other, "we can stop by there on the way to home room if it's that important to you. I don't wanna make us late though."

"Your well-being is far more important than attendance," Keebo claimed, poking a pointing finger into the other's direction. "The blood's already filled up that tissue. I recommend you throw it out and I give you a new one."

Rantaro gave a small nod of agreement before tossing the bloodied tissue into a garbage can the pair had passed on the sidewalk. Keebo extracted another Kleenex from the package, but rather than handing the item to the other like he did before, the white haired boy took the other's face in one hand, using the other to press the tissue to the still bleeding nose. Keebo was too concentrated to notice Rantaro, who had frozen and who's face had gone bright red. Only when the second tissue had filled up did Keebo remove his hands, giving another tissue to Rantaro to use on his own.

"Ah, quite a bit of time has passed," Keebo commented, "I know it was my idea to begin with, but we're gonna have to hurry if we want to make it to the nurse."

"Huh—oh, right," Rantaro replied, still slightly dazed.

The two of them quickly made their way to the looming building that is their school. However, in Keebo's mind, he couldn't help but wonder what had compelled him to take the other's face. Was it a friend thing? Dismissing any sort of ideas, Keebo returned his attention to Rantaro. Although the other boy was also racking his own brain, thinking about his warm face, the feeling of Keebo's hand on his cheek, the joy he feels from the other's laughter. Unlike the other boy, Rantaro did come to a conclusion, but he would once again prefer not to say.

**Private Messages, "Dora the Explorer," 7:32, April 25th**

Dora: Yo

Boots: We're in class!

Dora: It's homeroom

Boots: I guess you're right. Also, when did you change the names?

Dora: On the way here, but that's not the point

Boots: And what is the point?

Dora: I think we should invite Ouma to sit with us at lunch

Boots: Doesn't he sit with Shirogane-San?

Dora: She sits with Yonaga, Chabashira and them at the other table now

Boots: I see. I'm all for it, but I'm concerned about how the others will react.

Dora: I think Saihara's already tried to get Ouma over here, but he decided to be stubborn about it. The dude's too nice for his own good sometimes and so he backed off. He also probably got permission from the others beforehand so we shouldn't have to worry about it
Boots: Okay then, so it's decided?

Dora: Yep

When lunch rolls around, Keebo and Rantaro always walk together. If the former had come from the engineering lab, the two would be accompanied by Miu, but seeing as Keebo had spent the morning in the researching lab, they were alone. The air buzzed with conversations of beautiful greenery and street lamps that lit the roads like stars. The pair of them were both smiling by the time they reached the cafeteria and caught sight of purple hair that stuck out every which way.

"Ah, Ouma-Kun!" Keebo exclaimed, "you're just who we were looking for."

"Little old me?" Kokichi gasped in the middle of a faux swoon, "I'm flattered that a pre ripened cabbage and Wall-E are seeking my presence!"

"We want you to come sit with us," Rantaro got straight to the point as Keebo sputtered accusations of robophobia.

"Now why would I want to come with you guys?" Kokichi pondered, twirling a straw through his can of soda, "I have all this space to myself!"

"Yes, but you're alone," Rantaro deadpanned, folding his arms and raising a brow.

A strange look passed Kokichi's face as if he'd remembered something awful. It was a strange look on the liar. His purple eyebrows knit together and equally shaded eyes squinted as he gnawed on his bottom lip. Rantaro was about to apologize or at least ask what was wrong, but Kokichi was faster, twisting his face into a smirk, the supreme leader spoke.

"I'm not alone, silly!" Kokichi laughed, "I got Yasuhiro-Chan with me, see?!"

Rantaro and Keebo cast a look down to the end of the table. There sat a girl with skin so pale, she matched that of a vampire. Her bangs we perfectly angled to both frame her face and show off her large golden earring. The rest of her black hair was pulled into two pigtails that spiraled down in a drill like fashion. Her red eyes glared back in the direction of their end of the table, but it was directed towards Kokichi rather than the other two boys.

"Take him, please," the girl ordered in a voice coated in a thick accent that despite years of traveling, Rantaro couldn't place. "Also, don't get the wrong idea. My name is Celestia Ludenberg —" Celestia shedded the accent for a moment before growling her next words "—got it?"

After a moment filled with hasty agreements and Kokichi's laughter, the three of them made their way to Keebo and Rantaro's table. Neither of them really know what made him change his mind, but he claimed it was because he thought it was less boring after the two shows up. However, Rantaro couldn't help but think it had something to do with whatever made Kokichi make that face from before. Not wanting to cause any trouble, Rantaro didn't comment on it, but the image of the loud, defensive boy he knew in the game was starting to come back to him. The second the trio reached the table, Kokichi pounced in the spot next to Shuichi, grinning up at the other.

"O—Ouma-Kun?!" Shuichi gasped, nearly jumping out of his skin.

"That's Akamatsu's seat," Maki murmured from across the table.

"Oh no, that's fine. We can just scoot down?" Kaede suggested as she walked towards the others, lunch tray in hand. "I'm just happy he's finally sitting with people."
"Man! You guys keep talking about Yasuhiro-Chan like she's a ghost!" Kokichi shouted, but the words seemed more directed over his shoulder than towards the others.

It didn't take long for the others to understand why when they heard a sharp exhale, followed by the words, "My... name... is... Celestia Ludenberg, god dammit!"

The majority of the cafeteria went quiet, quickly followed by laughter, mainly led by Kokichi. The purple haired boy quickly broke into a coughing fit, which convinced Maki to let a smile slip.

"I'm surprised Ishimaru-Kun didn't go over there," Shuichi observed.

"Well duh!" Kokichi boasted, "Yasuhiro-Chan orchestrated Ishi-Chan's death in the game."

The table went silent at the mention of the KGS. The topic was something of taboo in the class. The only people who really talk about it freely without a strain to their voice are Kokichi, Angie and occasionally Shuichi. Even then, Shuichi only uses it as an expression of regret and chooses his words carefully. Angie also never seems to bring up the darker aspects of that dreaded simulation. The subject was proven to even be too much even for Kokichi as ghosts of guilt traced his expression so faintly that only Shuichi could catch it.

"Jeez, what's with the long face everyone? Shouldn't you be happier for my appearance at your pathetic table?" Kokichi pouted. He was about to whip out the crocodile tears when he noticed the looks on the other's faces. "Anyway, anyone up for a game of Bullshit?"

"A—a game of what?!" Shuichi cried.

"Bullshit," Kokichi repeated, "Saihara-Chan's so sensitive to swears that it's barely even cute anymore!"

"I'll play," Rantaro replied, realizing that Kokichi was making an attempt to recover the carefree atmosphere from before.

"Same here," Kaede chimed in, coming to the same conclusion as the green haired boy.

The group barely touched their food. If you were to ask any one of them, they'd say it was because they were too caught up in their game of bullshit (dubbed "BS" by Shuichi and Keebo,) which turned out to be more fun than any of them thought, but in reality, their stomachs had been filled with bitter memories from their old virtual lives.

<Before we go to this next portion, here is a chart of where everyone sits at lunch.>
The tables are circular, but the seats are sort of like a bench so they're all connected. They can get
Just like in the morning, Rantaro and Keebo walk back to the dorms together. Their conversation from earlier was cut short, so they picked up where they left off. As the conversation droned on, Keebo couldn't help but notice how much the other's voice put them at ease. When he was unable to make a connection, he returned his focus to Rantaro, whose eyes were on him.

"You okay?" Rantaro asked.

"Ha? Oh—yes! I'm alright," Keebo responded, "just lost in thought is all."

"Oh, alright," Rantaro muttered, but his voice noticeably relaxed.

The ready of the trip back to the dorms was spent in silence, but this time there was no clock to mock them. There was no awkwardness. No empty space. It was comfortable and warm, wrapping them both in each other's presence. Even with the sound of their class mate's chatter in the back ground, the two found themselves on their own little world.

After dinner, the two found themselves in Keebo's tidier dorm, studying. It was a typical activity the two of them found themselves doing. Discussion ranges anywhere between math formulas and cat videos. There was no upcoming tests or anything, so the conversation quickly derailed into one about which of their classmates would survive on a deserted island.

"Saihara-Kun might make it," Keebo decided, "he'd be smart enough to find a way to get help and even then he could find resources."

"Yea," Rantaro agreed, "the same goes for Harukawa-San. I'm not sure if Iruma-San would though."

"I think she'd do just fine," Keebo argued, "she might not act like it, but she's plenty smart. She could probably make an invention that'd get her in touch with the main land or something like that."

"Random question," Rantaro trailed off, "do you—you know—like Iruma-San?"

"Hm?" Keebo took a moment to process the other's words, "hwa?! Of course not! I mean no offense to Iruma-San, but I'd prefer has a friend rather than a lover, honest!"

"Whoa there," Rantaro chuckled from over Keebo's sputtering, "I believe you."

"You do? Well, I guess you aren't Ouma-Kun, so of course you do," Keebo calmed down.

"Yea, I guess I'm not," Rantaro grinned, "we got way off topic, didn't we?"

"I guess so," Keebo sighed, "we could go downstairs to the common room if you'd like. I know it's almost time for me to help with dinner, but it'd be nice to talk to the others for a bit."

"Alright, let's go then," Rantaro obliged, gathering up his finished homework and putting it in his bag.

The two made their way to the common room in the same comfortable silence from before. When they reached their desitination, they found Kokichi sitting on the coffee table with a confused looking Shuichi (nobody knows how Kokichi convinced him to sit up there,) teaching him some sort of card game. Kaito and Maki were sitting on the couch, switching between channels.
"Hello everyone," Keebo greeted.

Kaito and Maki responded only with a simple nod of the head. Kaito seemed too caught up in whatever was playing on the television and Maki was just always indifferent at best. Shuichi gave a quick hello before focusing back on Kokichi, who didn't bother with a response at all until the pair of them took a seat by the coffee table.

"Oh, forget go fish!" Kokichi shouted, startling Shuichi into dropping his cards, "we have enough people to play bullshit even though those two meanies on the couch rejected me!"

"Well I've had enough of your bullshit," Maki seethed before casting a look at the clock, "I'm going to help with dinner and actually do something productive. Idabashi, you coming?"

"It's five already?" Keebo wondered before confirming his suspicions with a glance at the clock, "I'll be there in a moment."

Maki swiftly left the room, leaving a dumbfounded Kokichi who gasped out, "She... she just made a pun."

"The pun was an attack on you though," Shuichi responded.

Rantaro tube d our the conversation as Keebo left the room. He couldn't help but smile as he collected memories of the day's events. Even his bloody nose and the remembrance of the game he thought ended his life all felt worth it for the happiness he had. The same could be said for the white haired roboticist as he entered the kitchen, ignoring Maki's confusion and Tenko's prejudiced accusations. Deep down, both of them knew the reason why.

Because Idabashi Keebo and Amami Rantaro lived life near each other. It's happy and they're more than content with that.

*Private Messages "Got Em," April 25th, 17:02*

3: You changed the names again?

<: Nope. What even are these anyway?

<:

<: Oh

3: What?

<: It's nothing

3: Does it mean something bad?

<: No

3: Want to change them back?

<:

<: Nah

3: Okay. I'm going to get back to helping Tojo-San.
Alright. See ya

3 is offline

"Bro, your face is red again," Kaito commented from the couch, "that's been happening a lot lately. You sure you're not sick or something?"

"Momota-Chan, back at it again with the creepy facial expression psychic powers," Kokichi spoke, waving around his voice as imitating a ghost in a cheesy campfire story.

"I'm alright, thanks," Rantaro assured, waving his hand dismissively.

Kokichi looked at the taller boy from his space on the coffee table. It took a moment, but a look of realization crossed the boy's face, almost instantly replaced by a smirk. Rantaro could already tell what the other was going to say before he could so much as open his mouth to speak.

"Saw the names, did you?" Kokichi teased, "I hope you know I worked really hard on them!"

"What names?" Shuichi quizzed from across the table.

"Simply put, my beloved, I snatched Amami-Chan's phone and left him a little gift," Kokichi explained with a proud look in his eyes, "show him, Amami-Chan!"

"Ouma-Kun, you shouldn't tease Amami-Kun anyway. You already know it doesn't work," Shuichi lectured, "even if it is about his crush."

"M—my what?" Rantaro stuttered, honestly cut off guard. A rare thing to force from the usually level headed boy.

"It worked!" Kokichi cackled, tipping off the table and onto the floor, "at long, long last, I've done it."

"Nah, the credit goes to Shuichi," Kaito denied, "you barely did shit."

"I—I'm so sorry. I—I just assumed a—and uh," Shuichi panicked and you could see the soul leaving his body.

"No, no, no, i—it's fine," Rantaro insisted, hands raised and palms facing out in a defensive manner.

He never denied it though.

Okay, another chapter is out! As I mentioned earlier, this chapter is meant to serve as a comparison to later on, so I'm sorry for the lack of action. Hopefully I'm not moving too fast with Amamibo's relationship. I'm always open to hearing everyone's thoughts and opinions. With that out of the way, as always, thank you for reading!

Chapter Eight: Festival on the Lonely Hearted (Preview)

Hope's Peak Academy's first year classes are invited to speak at an upcoming festival. However, when circumstances leave two classmates at the dormitory, they find themselves having a much needed conversation as they reflect on their past. In other words, we finally find out about the broken mess that is Maki and Kokichi's friendship(?)
Festival For The Lonely Hearted

Chapter Summary

Maki and Kokichi have a much needed talk.

TRIGGER WARNING: Mentions of suicidal thoughts and actions, references to child abuse, and bullying.

"Ultimate Nightmare Fuel," April 28th, 5:20

Kayayday: iM only gonna say this once because I'm not as patient as Saihara and he's half asleep right now

Kayayday: wHERE THE HELL IS YUMENO?!

DEGENERATE: I GOT HER

Weeb: For the readers who are currently confused about what's going on, allow me to explain. Our class has been invited to a festival a few cities away. We have to get on the bus before 5:30 and so Akamatsu-San over here is frantically trying to get everyone together before it leaves.

MakiRoll: What are you even saying half the time?

ThingBlue: LET ME REST DARN IT

ProfessorThot: even in a grumpy sleep deprived state, the cuck won't even say "dammit"

ThingGreen: The more you know (don't call Saihara a cuck though)

Weeb: That's weird, he said it in Chapter Three: Atua's Local Malmart...

ThingBlue: I'm sorryyyyyyyy

ThingPurple: I can't believe I have to miss the adorable enigma that is Saihara Shusleepi

ProfessorThot: PFFFFT

Weeb: Ouma-Kun and Harukawa-San won't be in attendance. Neither of them got their forms signed.

MakiRoll: Why would I even want to go to the stupid festival?

ThingPurple: Plus it's kind of hard to get the parental permission sheet signed without any parents...

Smoll: Ahem

ThingPurple: Well you see, Hoshi-Chan. You're actually a decent enough human being that
people want you as their child, thus giving you foster parents.

Smoll: Couldn't you just go to one of the adults at the orphanage? I might've only been there for six months, and I'm not sure how they do things at your place, but I think they count as a guardian because they're responsible for you.

ThingPurple: I'm a rogue. I have no one. I need no one.

ThingBlue: The bus is leaving in two minutes or something. If you're not on it's not my problem.

Kayayday: Saihara!

ThingPurple: I'm a rogue. I have grumpy Saihara-Chan. I need grumpy Saihara-Chan.

ThingBlue: What?

DingusTheSecond: wait omas an orphan?

MakiRoll: No shit

Kork: Ouma-Kun claimed to be Harukawa-San's former best friend. They obviously spent a good portion of time together in order to achieve this.

MakiRoll: You're not wrong, but just let me clear up that we were NOT best friends

ThingPurple: Ouch Maki-Chan! I-I thought we were b-best frieeeebd

MakiRoll: Oh dear god help me

Kayayday: The bus is about to leave

Kayayday: We'll be back tomorrow morning

Kayayday: And please, don't kill each other

MakiRoll: No promises

ThingPurple: No promises~

ThingBlue: I guess you've both rubbed off on each other after all this time, even if you don't want to admit it.

MakiRoll: End my suffering

Kayayday: Geez you guys!

Private Messages "Bwues Cwues," April 28th, 5:30

Bwue: Ouma-Kun, I want to ask you something.

Magwenta: Yes! Of course I'll marry you!
**Bwue:** I wasn't going to ask you that!

**Magwenta:** Aw man, really? And here I thought I really stole Hagakure-Chan's talent...

**Bwue:** You can't just steal someone's talent.

**Magwenta:** Alright, I guess you caught me. What's up?

**Bwue:** I want you to talk to Maki-San.

**Magwenta:** Talk to Maki-Chan about what? Furbies?

**Bwue:** Ouma-Kun.

**Magwenta:** About the excessive amount of stuff she uses on her skin in the morning?

**Bwue:** Ouma-Kun.

**Magwenta:** About how she's the reason me and Momota-Chan died?

**Bwue:** I'm sorry for making you uncomfortable, but I think you guys need to talk things out.

**Magwenta:** Now what makes you think I'm uncomfortable?

**Bwue:** Based off how fast you're typing, you're sort of acting frantic. Plus, you're trying to push me out of the conversation by angering me.

**Magwenta:** Jesus

**Bwue:** Sorry.

**Magwenta:** What did you mean when you said we needed to talk things out? Technically, nobody in the world would have to speak and we'd still be somewhat alive.

**Bwue:** Well, I know it's really not my place to say anything, but you used past tense when you talked about your friendship with Maki-San. I can tell you guys haven't discussed what happened in the game and I'm guessing that's when things started to fall apart with you two. I just think it'd be nice if you guys at least understood each other.

**Magwenta:**

**Magwenta:** Fine. I'll think about it.

**Bwue:** You will?

**Magwenta:** Yea, but don't be surprised if nothing happens. She hates me already, which I guess I can't blame her for, and honestly, I also have trouble looking in her direction most of the time.

**Bwue:** I wasn't expecting that. Thank you for being honest with me though. I mean that.

**Magwenta:** Whatever. Just didn't think it was necessary to lie right now is all.

**Bwue:** Ah. So you will talk to her, right?
Magwenta: I'll try.

Bwue: I'll take it.

Magwenta: You better! If you don't, I won't hesitate to torture you until you agree to my terms!

Bwue: Then it's lucky for me that I do agree. I have to go now. Good luck with Maki-San.

Magwenta: Bye bye Saihara-Chan~

<Writing that made me super happy. Ouma finally trusted Saihara with the truth! Well, he was sleep deprived and emotionally exhausted at the time, but it finally happened!>

Kokichi stood on his veranda, leaning on the railing as he stared out at the empty sidewalks. This had become a habit of his and he had no clue how long the spring breeze had been sweeping through his hair. The sun had set by now and Kokichi had long since realized that he still had Yerba to speak to Maki. In fact, the boy hadn't even made any action to commit the deed he told Shuichi he'd at least attempt that morning. Sure, Kokichi could simply state it as a lie, but that proposed a problem. As stupid as it sounded as the thought surrounded Kokichi's brain, he felt bad disappointingly the detective.

Finally building up the nerve, Kokichi entered the dorms once more. He had to walk through the kitchens, common room and Maki's room before finally locating the assassin. The girl was sitting idly on the rooftop, similarly positioned to the say Kokichi was moments earlier. The moment the door clicked open, Maki stood up, red eyes glaring at Kokichi, not a single noise lost on her trained ears. After catching sight of the other however, Maki's shoulders tensed, but she sat back down and looked away.

"What do you want?" Maki growled, the words nearly lost by the wind.

"How narcissistic of you, Maki-Chan! You just assumed that I went all this way just to talk to you," Kokichi accused, "for shame, Maki. For shame!"

"Didn't you though?" Maki asked, raising a brow.

"Well, yeal!" Kokichi responded, "but just know that you should never assume! After all, it makes an ass out you and me."

"You're giving me a headache," Maki sighed, "just get to the point and go away. I don't want to talk to you."

"Ow," Kokichi pouted, taking a seat across from the other girl, "anyway... I think we have to talk about our real memories."

Maki was silent for a moment, "why?"

"Well duh!" Kokichi exclaimed, but was at a loss for words, "we have to understand each other, okay?"

"Shuichi put you up to this, didn't he?" Maki muttered.

"Course not!" Kokichi lied, "I love going up to people and having deep conversations with them all the time! Jeez, and here I thought we were buddies, Maki!"

"Son of a bitch," Maki hissed, "he tried to get me to do the same thing earlier before they left.
"You're more stubborn than I am. How the hell did he manage to convince you?"

"That Saihara Shusleepi is one smooth talker lemme tell ya," Kokichi smirked

"Whatever," Maki grumbled, rolling her eyes "I'm not gonna talk. Especially not to you."

"We have to at least try, Maki," Kokichi reasoned, "or else you're just a bitch."

"Shut up," Maki glared.

"Harsh!" Kokichi gasped, "we can start small, okay?"

"You're being oddly insistent about this," Maki observed, "I guess there isn't much stopping you when you get like this, is there?"

"Nope!" Kokichi cheered, "so let's begin with this. We're two people who hate each other."

"Yes," Maki agreed, albeit confused, "you're going to be honest here, right?"

"As honest as I can be," Kokichi promised, a smirk betraying his words.

"Right," Maki murmured, "let's go way back to when we first met, okay? We can work from there."

Maki sat in a chair, a bored expression tracing her angular features. She was thinner, not as much muscle built up on her frail frame and her hair only went to her mid back. She hadn't entered her training yet and despite only being seven at the time, there wasn't a single child in the room that was older than her. They all scrambled through the room as Maki watched with a look of disinterest and a twinge of either amusement or annoyance. Even then she seemed to be colder than most.

Maki's attention was quickly brought to two of the caretakers. They stood by the door and seemed to be in a deep conversation. Trying not to seem too curious, Maki sauntered over in their direction, acting as if she were just reaching for a book on the nearby shelf. Not seeming to notice the small girl walking over, the two of them continued speaking the same hushed tone as before. Unfortunately, Maki was only able to catch a few words before they ended their conversation and went through the door. Confused, Maki uttered the words to herself.

"Let's go get him...?" Maki's voice was higher than it was now and sounded slightly like a growl because she was trying to make it sound deeper than it was, but it still had the same melodic tone.

Before her mind could travel too far, the door swung open again, revealing one of the same caretakers from before. She was a short, plump woman with eyes that always swam with pity and concern. Those eyes scanned the room with a look that Maki couldn't recognize. Concentration. It wasn't until the woman's gaze landed on Maki did the look go away and back to the same watery pity from before.

"Ah, Maki! Just who I was looking for," the lady bumbled, a sweet smile tracing her pink lips, "we—uh. Well, we have someone we'd like you to meet."

With that, the door opened once more. This time there was the other caretaker, a man who stood tall at nearly twice Maki's size and wore thick lenses glasses that always slid down the bridge of his nose. Behind him was Kokichi. He was smaller than Maki was, barely scraping past three feet.
and looked like he wouldn't make it anymore than forty pounds (18 kg) on a scale. His hands trembled violently and lifeless purple eyes darted around anywhere but at a living person. Even Maki found the look pitiful.

"Hello again, sweetie," the woman greeted, "this is Maki. would you like to introduce yourself?"

Her and the man stared expectantly at Kokichi, who's attention was immediately grabbed at the sound of voices. One of his shaking hands raised to play with a lock of purple hair that messily sprung out at the sides. Maki observed right away that voices scared Kokichi and chose to hold her tongue. A moment passed until the he finally realized that everyone was waiting on him and nobody missed the small flinch and nearly immediate answer they received after.

"O—ouma Kokichi!" Kokichi yelped.

Maki was confused by the gesture. She wondered why the boy in front of her was terrified of disobeying. As a child, Maki naturally had a lot of questions, even if her past made her not want to know the answers. The list went on and on the more she looked at Kokichi. Why was he so scared? Why are his hands shaking?

Why are there so many bandages on him?

"Good job," the tall man praised, moving to pat Kokichi on the back. However, one look at the boy's fearful face made him retract his hand, "uh, what do you say we go introduce you to the other kids?"

Despite the look in his eyes, Kokichi nodded, but a sudden flash of worry crossed his face as the two walked away and he quickly turned over his shoulder and shouted, "n—nice to meet you, Maki!"

"He's weird," Maki deadpanned with the kind of honesty only a child could have, "all squirmly and stuff. It's dumb."

"Well, he's..." the lady trailed off, "he's had a tough time, Maki. He's only your age, you know?"

Maki didn't answer. Normally she'd grumble at the woman for using the phrase "only your age" as if she were a baby. Maki didn't like being treated like a child. That dislike was drowned out though by conflicting thoughts on Kokichi. And his shaking. And his bandages. And his flinching.

The next morning, Maki found Kokichi at breakfast. He had the same empty look and the sound of other people talking got his eyes flickering around more than normal. Reluctantly, Maki made her way over to where he was sitting. If anyone asked, she'd make the excuse that he was sitting in the same place she normally did and she didn't feel like moving. In actuality, Maki was excited, albeit hesitant to finally talk to someone else her age, even if he could barely manage to squeak out five words. She wasn't prepared for what happened next.

"Ah! H—howdy do, Maki-Chan!" Kokichi greeted, face twisted into a fearful smile that looked more forced than anything.

"What happened?" Maki immediately asked with that same brutal honesty from before, "you were all freaked out yesterday."

"W—was I now?" Kokichi stuttered, an uneasy expression settling across his pale face, "I was hoping you'd forget about that..."

"Well if it makes you feel any better, at least you confused me just now," Maki added, "I almost
"Really?!” Kokichi exclaimed, fascinated with the response, "p—perfect! That means I—I'm getting better!"

"What?” Maki was beyond confused now, brows knitted together as she watched the boy.

"Th—that's a secret!” Kokichi snickered, moving his shaking hands to rest behind his head, "I—let's just say y—you're never gonna ever even r—remember the me f—from yesterday!"

"So you're throwing away your personality?” Maki questioned, not realizing she had been caught up in a conversation that typically only therapists have.

"Not e—exactly..." Kokichi explained, "I'm just... h—how do I put this? Making the one I have be—better?"

"That's weird," Maki mumbled, picking at her food, "besides, the stuttering and shaky hands don't really help."

"Hmm, I'll work on it!"

"Course you will."

"You were pathetic to me," Maki admitted.

"Well I wasn't before we entered the game," Kokichi argued, "that means little old me succeeded~"

"Okay, I'm not talking about that damn simulator, okay?” Maki snapped, "that's where I draw the line."

"Fine, fine," Kokichi agreed, "even though that's where everything got all fucked up, I guess we can just talk about why."

"Fine by me," Maki answered, "I do have one question about the KGS though."

"Fire away," Kokichi said absentmindedly, fidgeting around with his hands.

"I... I don't remember you acting much like you do now in the real world," Maki began, "you weren't as fidgety as you are now. How much did you actually remember in there?"

"My family life was fabricated," Kokichi explained, a bitter look passing his face, "it was still sucky, but nothing insane. That's probably because I requested to alter that memory before they could see it. All I remembered from the orphanage was meeting DICE. I think that they had to cut out some of our memories so we wouldn't remember each other."

"You never told me about your family," Maki observed, "it's sort of obvious they weren't good people, but what did they do?"

"Nuh-uh! You have to reach level one hundred to unlock my tragic backstory!” Kokichi stated, but Maki didn't miss the sudden look of surprise and discomfort, "a—anyway! I have a question for you now Maki!

"When did you stop thinking I was pathetic?”
Maki was always in charge of the other kids. They went to her to be lulled to sleep when nightmares messed with their heads. She was always asked to play the mom in house. She always tried because even a five year old could understand that not everyone was treated with kindness in their lives. However, there were some issues. There was this group of kids. Nine of them to be exact. They sat in the corner of the dining hall all day until curfew and Maki had never seen even a ghost of a smile on their faces. The youngest was a little girl with caramel hair who had only just turned four and the oldest was a boy with wild red hair that was only a few months younger than Maki.

Maki never bothered with them. She had heard their stories from the caretakers as she hid behind shelves and underneath tables. They were so horrid every time Maki replayed them in her head that she felt like she was the one in need of a lullaby. One was raped. One had watched their parents get murdered. One was nearly sold. One was held hostage and never rescued. One was left on the streets. One had lines carved into their body. One was used for drug testing. One was screamed at until their ears bled. One was treated like a slave.

They were deemed lost causes by the rest of the kids. Even the caretakers had stopped trying to get them pumped. Maki would sometimes try to sit with them, but was dragged back to play before she could make any progress. Their hollow eyes haunted Maki like dead trees and empty shells. She eventually stopped trying too. However, one morning, about a month after Kokichi had entered the orphanage, Maki came down to breakfast and saw that none of those same kids were in the room. It was strange because there were always at least two of them down to help with setting up the tables.

Maki got her answer as soon as she entered the playroom. There they were. All nine of them sat at a round table holding cards. Maki immediately recognized a head of purple hair sat in between a guy with a scabbed face and blonde hair and a girl with sleek, pink hair. Kokichi was reading the instructions on the back of the box out loud, but his head snapped up immediately at an unfamiliar sound. He can act as carefree as he wants, but he won't fool anyone as long as he kept doing that.

"What's going on?" Maki hesitated, "did you already eat breakfast?"

"Yep!" Kokichi chirped, setting down the box and picking up his own cards, "wanna join us?"

"N—no. No thanks," Maki declined, still in a state of disbelief, "I need to go eat breakfast."

It wasn't a lie exactly. Maki did, in fact, have to eat. She stumbled back through the door of the playroom, fighting the urge to look over her shoulder. She ate breakfast without Kokichi before walking back in, hoping to not be caught by any children in the mood for playing. Maki grabbed a book that she could barely understand the words to and took a seat not far from the table with Kokichi and the other nine kids. She only took her concentration off the ten of them to flip the page, adding to her facade. They were still playing the card game and even then, Kokichi was the only one who was really talking.

Maki was shocked to hear the voices of the others, who she'd only heard one or two words from in her time at the orphanage, slowly begin to trickle into the conversation. They sounded dull and hoarse from lack of use, but as time went on, they brightened and became clearer. They sounded like children again. Not the broken people that life dumped on their doorstep. Maki forced down a smile and began to actually read the book in front of her to distract herself from the unfamiliar feelings of happiness creeping into her head.

"Uno!" Kokichi cheered "you better watch out before I—I beat you guys again!"
"No way!" The girl that Maki remembers was the one who lived life being screamed at and cried, "I have a green two everyone! Don't let him use it!"

"Wha—?! That's cheating!" Kokichi whined, "well, I guess I have to work with this..."

Idle chatter went on as they played around the table again. By the time they reached Kokichi, the color was blue and the number was four. He became progressively more disappointed as he drew more and more cards, but he still laughed. The rest of them laughed. Maki couldn't hold back her smile this time for two reasons. For starters, she had never heard any of them, not even the other kids in the orphanage, laugh like them.

She also smiled because she knew Kokichi's last card was actually a wildcard.

"Me losing at UNO made you stop thinking I was pathetic?" Kokichi gawked, "also, I totally saw you spying on us."

"No, your back was to me!" Maki deflected, "and yea. I knew those guys for years and never could talk to them. You were barely there for a month and you changed their lives. What the hell did you even do?"

"Talked to them like normal people," Kokichi claimed as if the answer were simple, "you guys kept acting like they'd blow up or something if you said something wrong. Nana-Chan, for example, had trauma with loud noises, but she shouted right back at me. I just make sure I don't go overboard. So does the rest of DICE."

"I guess that's where we went wrong," Maki admitted, looking away, "it's my turn to ask a question."

"When did you start to not like me?"

Maki was twelve now. She had started training and nobody knew. Not even Kokichi. She sat in homeroom, threading her hair between her fingers as she stared out the window. She had grown it long and was now pulled into her trademark style. The teacher wasn't there yet and Kokichi was probably hanging out with DICE. A good portion of them were a year behind them, and those of them who were in the same year weren't in the same home room has Kokichi and Maki.

The assassin was pulled from her thoughts by the sound of rustling in the seat next to her, where Kokichi sat. She turned to talk to him, only to be greeted with a disgusting sight. Five kids, all varying shapes and sizes, had crowded around the boy's desk. They each had markers, permanent ones, and were scribbling cruel words on Kokichi's desk. Suggestions of suicide. Jabs at his family. Nobody had said anything about his past, but the concept from a rumor was enough to seem real.

"Wh—what are you doing?!!" Maki cried, not as cold as she was before.

"Wanna join?" A girl who wore her uniform provocatively and who's voice slurred out into a growl that made even Maki's nosebleed crinkle in disgust.

"Hell no!" Maki rejected, "clean that up now!"

"What's wrong?" A guy with a sturdy build teased, "he's a fuckin asshole anyway."
Kokichi had a bad reputation, obviously. An eleven year old's pride was easily crushed and replaced with resentment for it's destroyer. Kokichi's pranks did this and he did not hold his punches. The pranks were harmless in the view of the teachers and so the purple haired boy never got in trouble for them. At least not from them. The kids with the biggest egos were never amused and had plenty of resentment to go around. They threw around ugly words and cruel gestures. The actions always bothered Maki more than they did Kokichi.

"That doesn't give you the right to do—well, that!" Maki growled, fists clenching at her sides.

"Really?" The girl slurred, "well then what are you gonna do to stop us, twig?"

Maki couldn't help it. She jumped at the largest one of the kids and rather than using her training, she kicked him where it hurts. She'd never had a personal grudge with one of her targets, so she didn't make them to suffer before going in for the kill unless instructed to. The others were on her in an instant, but she was still stronger. She had pinned one on the floor and had all three boys collapsed in pain by the time Kokichi walked in.

"Whoa! What's this?" Kokichi cooed, "silly Maki! What did you do?"

Despite the innocence in his words, Maki saw a look in Kokichi's eyes that she wouldn't have seen even on that fearful boy she met six years ago. It was anger? Betrayal? Hurt? Even now, Maki couldn't place it. Then she realized it. The cult probably went to Kokichi too. Asked him to become one of their workers. He probably saw Maki easily take out five people and only get out with a few scratches. Maki knew Kokichi was smart enough to figure it out.

Of course, Maki back then was blinded. Full of rage. Full of adrenaline. She dropped the final kid to the ground and hung her head as Kokichi got a good look at his desk. Maki wasn't sure when, but someone had left a vase with a single white flower in it. Maki watched in silent horror as Kokichi removed the flower from its container with a blank expression. After a moment, Kokichi grabbed the vase and dropped it near the pile of pained kids. Placing his bag over the hateful words on his desk, Kokichi grabbed Maki by the arm before guiding her out of the classroom.

"Where are we going?" Maki asked, voice weaker than she would've liked it.

"The nurse. You have a gash in your arm," Kokichi replied, voice oddly stern, "I have to find the teacher first. You don't think those guys will say anything, right?"

"No, they're too prideful to admit they got beat up by 'a twig.'" Maki murmured, "Why?"

"Well, in my story, you guys were walking into the room in a line," Kokichi explained, "then, because you're so clumsy, you trip and run into the vase. Everyone else runs into you and falls on each other, which is why they're in so much pain. You get the most damage because the glass cut you."

"Not bad," Maki praised, "you can let go of me though."

Kokichi soon found the teacher and the two of them gave her the fake story. She seemed to buy it and got back to doing whatever she was before. She didn't seem too concerned about the other students. The two of them then made their way to the nurse's office to retrieve bandages. The nurse was already working on another kid, so she trusted the two of them to wrap Maki's arm themselves.

"I can do it myself," Maki insisted, swatting Kokichi's hand away.

"If you say so," Kokichi said. The phrase would normally be accompanied by a smirk, but something seemed to be holding him back.
Maki was able to properly clean the cut on her own, but fumbled around with the bandages for a moment, trying to get them to stay on her arm with only one hand. Of course, she wasn't successful and the roll fell pathetically to the ground. Typically, Kokichi would respond with some sort of quip, maybe an 'I told you so!' but instead he just grabbed the roll of the ground and wordlessly wrapped Maki's arm.

"You're acting weird," Maki deadpanned, "is it about your desk?—" she then lowered her voice "—I can beat their asses again—"

"No," Kokichi cut her off, "no... no hurting people, okay?"

Maki could barely manage to nod.

<In Japan, if a student passes away, a flower is placed on their desk. However, if the student is still alive, the gesture basically means "I wish you were dead," or "go die.">

"I knew you took that job the minute I walked in there," Kokichi whispered, face blank, "I didn't want to admit it back then, but after the game and knowing your ultimate, I can't really deny it."

"I thought we said we weren't going to talk about the simulator," Maki muttered, trying to take the heat off of her.

"You lied about it too," Kokichi continued, "you know I—"

"Hate liars? Yea, I know," Maki groaned, "don't act so mighty though, you're just as bad."

"I know," Kokichi agreed, "gonna have to be more specific than that, Maki."

"Fine," Maki complied.

"That lying of yours is exactly what made me start to hate you."

Maki knew something was wrong. Kokichi had to spend most of homeroom scrubbing obscenities off his desk and had enough flowers to make a bouquet. Maki could see him eating less and the bags under his eyes getting darker and darker. She never said anything, too caught up in training and too scared of Kokichi finding out about her assassin work. Maki was thirteen now, Kokichi fourteen.

One day Maki came back from training to the orphanage feeling different. It was early in the morning, around four, so nobody was normally up, but there was something off. A single bathroom light was on, the door swung open so the light blanketed the room like a veil. Maki slowly crept up to the doorway, the image inside covered by the slab of wood hanging on its hinges. She made a small wish to herself that it was just one of the younger kids who didn't understand basic courtesy such as closing the door to the bathroom.

That wish went up in flames quickly. Maki entered the bathroom to see Kokichi sitting on the floor, legs curled to his chest and arms limply hanging one his sides. His head was in his knees, making his face invisible to Maki, so she still had a sliver of hope that the worst hadn't happened. Maybe he was just tired and took a nap.

That was shot down by the empty pill bottle nearby.

"Shit," Maki hissed, moving quickly to check the boy's pulse.
She grabbed her phone from her pocket, panicking already. She had dealt so much with death already and yet she's frozen at the sight of her friend on the floor, his pulse growing weaker and weaker. The ringing lasted far too long for Maki's taste until the operator picked up. She gave them the most information she could before her throat closed up. The location and situation was enough.

She spent the time it took for the ambulance to show up calming her breath. She felt light headed. Hot and cold at the same time. Sweaty. It was almost like her first kill, but the circumstances made the feeling ten times worse. This time she knew the life that was about to end. This time it was personal. The sound of sirens woke up a couple of the lighter sleepers, including three members of DICE. Ignoring their questions, Maki picked up Kokichi (who was startlingly light) and carried him to the ambulance.

Maki spent the entire way to the hospital with her eyes trained on the boy in front of her. The doctors were already working on him in the back of the ambulance. Occasionally, they'd ask her a question. His relative height and weight. Stuff like that. Maki didn't care though, too concentrated on Kokichi. She knew she was partially at fault. She didn't pry enough. Wasn't Kokichi the one who deflected all her questions though? Her worry was replaced with irritation. Why didn't he say anything? Is this what lying has done to him?

>Please don't hurt yourself guys.

"You hate me because I tried to kill myself?" Kokichi snapped accusingly, not bothering with a lie, "what the fuck?"

"No, you idiot!" Maki objected, "I hate you because you're a hypocrite!"

"What does that even mean?!" Kokichi cried.

"You kept going on and on about how you hate killers, then you go and let you and your fucking lies nearly kill you!" Maki shrieked, "Then it happens again—" Kokichi opens his mouth to object "—don't even try. There's no way in hell that I'd buy that you just had a sore throat. Nana told me about it and you have a faint scar on the side of your neck. I won't bother with the bullshit because no one's around, but you were my best friend. Don't go destroying yourself with your lying shit!"

"You do that every day," Kokichi spat, "don't you think about the families of the people you kill? Even if they seem like an awful person, there's almost always at least one person who would cry at their death."

"I know that," Maki muttered, "I'm sick of this, so I'm telling you this. I'm trying to change my ultimate to the ultimate bodyguard."

"Wow, what an improvement!" Kokichi cheered, venom in his voice, "killing people in a way that makes you seem like a good person!"

"Not that kind, dumbass!" Maki rebutted, "not all bodyguards are like what you see in video games. I want to protect people now. You happy?! I'm not gonna be a killer anymore!"

Silence.

"Oh," was all Kokichi could say at first, "well, if you're going to try, than I guess I have to as well, don't I? I can't promise you anything though."

"Alright," Maki responded, "how about this... be a little more like the tiny dumbass who played UNO with nine other dumbasses."

"Hey, don't go dragging DICE through the mud," Kokichi whined, "but okay. I'll try to be at least ten percent like that tiny dumbass."

"Good," Maki sighed, "and uh... you haven't tried... that again, right?"

Kokichi hesitated, "once, why? Is little old Maki-Chan worried about me~"

Maki didn't say anything. She just stood up and made for the entrance. Kokichi was confused for a moment until the girl turned around to face him again.

"We should probably go eat," Maki instructed, "if Tojo realizes there's the same amount of food in the fridge she'd freak out."

"Since when have you cared about Tojo?" Kokichi questioned.

"Since when have you been so honest with me?" Maki shot back.

Kokichi looked like he realized something and looked around the rooftop as if searching for something.

"There aren't any security cameras up here if that's what you're looking for," Maki assured, "I sort of figured that Shuichi would put you up to this so I came up here just in case. I didn't want anyone to catch our stupid past."

"Yea, and if you tell anyone about this, I'll tell them all your embarrassing secrets," Kokichi threatened.

"Shut up and let's go."

I'm sort of nervous about how I handled the concept of suicide in this chapter, so if you had any large issues with that, please tell me.

And to explain Kokichi's honesty in this chapter, he was stuck with a person he had such a low opinion of that he didn't even care about whether or not she hated him. Also, he didn't want to disappoint Shuichi by failing. If you have any suggestions for improvement, I would appreciate it if you told me.

If you have any additional questions about the chapter, feel free to ask!

Chapter Nine: And For Her Next Trick (Preview!)

Something is up with one of class 79-C's students.... that's all I can really say though. Whoops.
And For Her Next Trick

Chapter Summary

Somethings up with the loli.

There was a two hour period in the dorms where time stood still. From two in the morning to four in the morning, nobody ever left their dorms. Not even Kirumi went to clean. That doesn't mean people can't be awake. In these hours, Rantaro sometimes woke up on one of his more random days or, more often than not, someone had been awakened by skin crawling nightmares that nearly always traced back to that awful game everyone tried so hard to force into the back of their minds.

It took a month for anyone to change this (save for the incident with Gonta) and even then, the figure was hardly noticed as their bare feet stumbled down the stairs at half past three. The darkened common room nearly missed the absence of one of its many throw blankets that Kaito and Kaede wouldn't stop buying. The figure wrapped the fluffy item around them like a cloak before collapsing on one of the couches. They didn't close their eyes though. Even as they blinked with exhaustion, the figure spent the entire night flipping through channels and trying to work the coffee machine.

"Yumeno-San?"

The figure, now identified as Himiko, snapped her head around to face the intruder. It was four thirty in the morning so there were only so many options. Of course, Himiko didn't know that. She was always in bed by eight and asleep for hours. She was dead to the world until then, not worrying or caring about who and who wasn't awake in the early hours of the morning. Somewhere in her muddled thoughts, Himiko had begun to space out, too dead on her feet to remember why she had turned around to begin with. She didn't realize she was falling until she felt herself being caught and realized her nose was inches from the tiled floor.

"Nyeh!" Himiko gasped, thrashing around in panic, resulting in her savior dropping the small girl to the ground. The landing was softer than expected and the cold surface felt nice on Himiko's face, which had grown warm after spending an hour underneath a heavy blanket.

"A—are you okay?" The voice panicked, and Himiko could already tell who it was even in her sleep deprived state. The nervous undertones of their words and excessive politeness gave them away, "s—sorry! I—I guess I caught you off guard, d—didn't I?"

Himiko didn't respond as Shuichi hesitantly extended a hand to her as she lay on the ground. She fumbled around for a moment because she had fallen on top of the blanket wrapped around her, successfully trapping the redhead until she was conscious enough to squirm out of its grasp. She sheepishly took Shuichi's hand, but missed and got his wrist. He flinched with pain and the surface beneath the sleeve felt odd, but Himiko was too tired to remember. She dusted herself off after regaining her footing and grabbed the blanket as well, fanning it out before wrapping it back around her small frame.

"What are you doing here?" Himiko asked, not in the mood for small talk and chatter. She wasn't in the mood for anything other than sleeping at the moment, really, but she was strongly against trying that.
"Huh? Oh—well, I couldn't really sleep," Shuichi admitted, his worry from before starting to wear off, "normally Ou—" he paused for a moment, but Himiko still understood whose name he was about to say. If she really thought about it, she could remember the sound of light footsteps, only to be greeted with the smallest glance at a lock of purple hair that was gone faster than it appeared when she turned around "—there's someone else down here around this time. I like talking to them. It doesn't feel like I'm interrupting them... so y—yea. What about you?"

"Couldn't sleep either," Himiko shrugged, but she could tell by that look in the taller boy's eyes that he knew it was a lie. It wasn't a matter of what she couldn't do, but a matter of what she didn't want to do.

"I see," Shuichi mumbled, deciding to play along with the lie anyway. Four thirty wasn't really the time to talk that sort of thing anyway, "uh, were you... were you trying to the coffee machine? I can help you with that. I'm as good as Idabashi-Kun or Tojo-San are, but I can try."

Only bothering with a nod, Himiko slid behind the counter and onto one of the stools. Shuichi worked silently on the coffee machine with an odd amount of concentration. Himiko never noticed how quiet the other ultimate was most of the time. His steps were barely noticeable as he walked to the pantry and as he shut the door, he turned the handle so it wouldn't slam. She guessed that she just concentrated more on the times he began sputtering in embarrassment. The times he shouted across the courtroom during the trials that guaranteed the death of at least one of Himiko's classmates.

Himiko shook the last thought from her head the best she could, but it still lingered in the same bitter way it always did. The very thing she wanted to remove from her head was front and center, twirling in a hideous dance that made Himiko's blood boil. Suddenly, the hum of the coffee machine was too loud, making a crashing noise as the boiling liquid swam down. It sounded like that stupid hydraulic press in that stupid video. Shuichi's questions about her preferences in taste began to sound like accusations and interrogations for a truth she didn't know. She wanted it to stop. She wanted it to go away.

"Shut up!" Himiko snapped, head flying upwards to glare at the first thing that met her eyes. The rational part of Himiko's brain told her to apologize, feeling guilt over the fear that had seeped into Shuichi's eyes, but the rest of her mind was foggy. It begged for sleep, but Himiko wouldn't give in. She wouldn't let her head play twisted scenes from the game she wanted to drown out so badly. She wanted to scream more. Yell her hatred to the first person she saw. But the rational part of Himiko's brain wouldn't allow that. She didn't want to yell. Yelling would mean something was wrong. It would mean that her worries were worth more than her friends' worries were. Himiko's rational side pleaded to not yell at Shuichi again, not wanting to hurt the boy who stuck with her throughout the dark game, but the rest of her mind knew that it'd be inevitable if she stayed any longer. So Himiko did the best thing she could in that moment and left.

Shuichi spent the rest of the night watching television without really watching it.
"Ultimate Nightmare Fuel," May 2nd, 1:54 (Woah, time travel!)

Weeb: Yes, I am part of the insomniac gang guys. My absence in the Chapter 6 incident was intentional though for plot purposes. Having half the class out and about was just plain unreasonable.

DEGENERATE: I know why you weren't there! Don't lie when breaking the fourth wall Shirogane-San! That's something only a degenerate would do!

Weeb: Can we not talk about that now please? I'm just plain uncomfortable being exposed over the chat is all...

DEGENERATE: Fine, I'll bring it up again in seven chapters, okay?

Weeb: I guess that's better than nothing.

ThingGreen: I only understood that first sentence

DEGENERATE: We weren't talking to you!

ThingGreen: Woah there pal, relax

Kork: So I suppose it's just us four tonight, correct? Chabashira-San, this is your second time here if I'm not mistaken, so you should understand the situation.

ThingGreen: Ouma out on his veranda right now, but I don't think that counts

Kork: So will he be on soon?

ThingGreen: Don't think so. When he does this he's normally out there for a while. Don't really know what he thinks about when he does that, but he never looks too happy

DEGENERATE: What a weird dude

Kork: Yet another interesting aspect of humanity.

DEGENERATE: Silence degenerate! I'm still shunning you for killing me and Yonaga-San!

Kork: And yet here you are, talking to me. Do you understand the true art of shunning people? I'll have you know that I'm an expert at shunning people. I did it for years with kids at my school.

Weeb: Something tells me that your old backstory was a little bit off.

Kork: Don't ever talk about that monster you knew in that god forsaken simulation. Got it?
Weeb:

ThingGreen:

DEGENERATE:

Weeb: Of course.

Kork: Apologies for that.

Weeb: No no no! It's alright. I should be the one apologizing. It was just plain stupid of me to bring that up. I of all people am not in a position to mention the simulation, aren't I?

ThingGreen: If you're ever upset about what happened in there, you do know it's alright to talk about it, right?

DEGENERATE: He's not wrong...

ThingGreen: Aw shucks

DEGENERATE: I will Neo Aikido you into Wednesday!

ThingGreen: It is Wednesday though

DEGENERATE: Would you just be quiet for a moment?!!!?!!

DEGENERATE: Anyway! The degenerate has a point. Just because you had a different experience doesn't mean you don't have the right to emotions. In the end, none of us really got out of there aright. All that matters is that we are able to move forward

Kork: I've never really seen much of this part of you. It's... interesting.

DEGENERATE: Rude! Keep talking that way and I'll care even less about your feelings!

Kork: What happened to shunning me?

ThingGreen: Time and place, you two

DEGENERATE: Don't tell me what to do you degenerate!

DEGENERATE: I'm just saying what I think

Weeb:

Weeb: Thank you guys, really

Kork: It's nothing. It's what we truly believe.

DEGENERATE: YOU DID T EVNEN SAY ANYTHING!!!!?

Kork: You can believe in quotes that aren't your own.

Weeb: I thought everyone hated me though
**ThingGreen:** We can't really speak for everyone, but you're not a bad person in our eyes.

**Kork:** Yes, we understand that the circumstances had been unfortunate in your case and it'd be even worse to be bitter towards you because of something you had no control over.

**DEGENERATE:** You're still the same awesome girl we know and love!!! The person you were in the simulation doesn't define you.

**Kork:**

**DEGENERATE:** I'm still working on it, okay degenerate? It's gonna take a bit longer. I know I sound like a hypocrite, but that's just how it is.

**Kork:** And thus, your shunning. Although I understand.

**DEGENERATE:** Good.

**ThingGreen:** I don't think I say this enough, but I really am happy that we all have a chance to be friends.

**Weeb:** Same.

**Kork:** It is always nice to have a second chance.

**DEGENERATE:** I'll admit that the class felt quiet with even one person missing, even if they were a degenerate.

**Weeb:** I'd like to propose a toast.

**ThingGreen:** We're underage.

**DEGENERATE:** Let her have this!

**Weeb:** Thank you Chabashira-San.

**DEGENERATE:** No problem <3

**Weeb:** To second chances. On three.

**Weeb:** 1

**Weeb:** 2

**ThingGreen:** To second chances!

**Weeb:** I-

**DEGENERATE:** To second chances!!!!!

**Kork:** To second chances.

**Weeb:**

**Weeb:** Screw it.
Weeb: TO SECOND CHANCES!

<Tenko's character is underrated. I see so many people writing her as a man hating lesbian and nothing more and it makes me sad. Writing this segment made me smile. I hope it made you smile too.>

The storm in Himiko's mind didn't clear when she absolutely had to change into her uniform. The clothing was uncomfortable because it didn't quite fit her right. Himiko wasn't considered in need of a custom uniform, so she was just given the smallest size they had and called it a day. The sleeves of the blazer still slid down to her knuckles when she buttoned it up the whole way, so she had to roll them, which just makes her arms look lumpy when she checked it in a mirror. Normally, Himiko would let the small irritation slide, but her mind weighed down on the thought, sticking it there longer than it should because the exhaustion was so heavy on her brain.

Exhaustion trapped countless other troubles in Himiko's head as she made her way to breakfast. Her door was jammed again. She stubbed her toe. She left her bag in her dorm. The sun was too bright in comparison to her dark room. By the time the magician reached the kitchen to receive her food, she had become the equivalent to a ticking time bomb. She ignored Kirumi's greeting as she piled a little bit of everything into her plate, not really knowing or caring what it was she was grabbing. She doubted she'd end up eating much of it anyway. She'd almost made it out of the kitchen without any incidents, but life had other plans.

"Heya Yumeno-Chan, you've got yourself a tiny feast there," Kokichi smirked.

Himiko didn't know much about Kokichi. She knew what he looked like and the fact that he was a liar. Lies. Himiko was sick of lies. Lies are what killers hid behind in the trials. Lies are what Himiko was nearly convinced made up her entire being. She didn't hear the rest of what Kokichi, too caught up in forming her next words. She wanted them to hurt. She didn't want them to hurt Kokichi in particular. She wanted them to hurt lies. The evil lies that made things too complicated and bitter.

"Stop saying stupid stuff," Himiko growled, venom in her words, "when are you going to stop hiding behind your stupid lies just because you don't want people to see your stupid feelings?"

The rational part of Himiko's brain was screaming at her, begging her to apologize for saying these things. She knew there was nowhere to run. She had to go to school and she was too far in to feign illness. Kokichi seemed to be in shock at her words. Himiko had taken a shot in the dark when coming up with what to say, too caught up in her emotions to really remember what she had even spat out at the victim of her yelling. Shuichi was sitting next the supreme leader, eyes trained on his book, but if Himiko were in a proper state of mind, she'd be able to tell by his pursed lips and shaking hands that he wasn't really reading it.

"Uh, Yumeno-San," Keebo hesitated, speaking with a cautious tone as if Himiko were a feral animal, "I think that was a bit uncalled for."

Himiko looked at the roboticist, who seemed to shrink a bit at whatever face she was making. She hated that caution in his voice. It was just like the same fear Himiko and all her classmates had to feel in that simulator. Would Keebo have used that tone if he were still a robot? Himiko pondered the possibility the best she could in her heavy mind. She realized that he probably wouldn't. He could only read patterns in mood and analyze them, right? If he were a robot still, Keebo wouldn't have made the comment that made Himiko's stomach churn with guilt, combined with the tone of fear. However, even with her mind all muddled, Himiko wished she could take back her next words as soon as they left her mouth.
"You were better as a robot."

Himiko had her eyes trained on the white haired boy in front of her, but she could feel the eyes of the other three boys on her. Shuichi gave up on pretending to read and Kokichi no longer bothered trying to fake his facial expressions. It took Himiko a moment to regain her bearings as she looked at the other three's reactions to her disgraceful words. Rantaro's eyes had darkened and were pulled into the most bone chilling glare Himiko has ever seen. Kokichi still looked like he was in shock, but it was now mixed with disgust as his eyebrows knitted together. Shuichi's hand twitched when Himiko's eyes landed on him. His eyes were on the floor and full of worry. Worry for Himiko. Even after what she said, Shuichi still managed to find a reason to think it was necessary to be worried. That look and thought is what allowed the rational side of Himiko to successfully take control for a moment, she made her way to the dining hall, but turned around for a moment.

"I—I'm so sorry..." Himiko spoke barely above a whisper before turning on her heel and going to sit with the others.

The only seat left was in between Miu and Tenko, who had likely saved it for Himiko. Even though a lot of things were doing a great job of getting stuck in her mind, the sentiment removed some of those bitter thoughts. Himiko spent the next couple minutes in relative peace until she did another thing she’d regret. Miu reaches over and grabbed a handful of Himiko's blueberries. Himiko has no reason to be angry. She didn't like blueberries anyway. They were always either too sour or too sweet and yet, as Miu swiped them from her plate, it felt like something inside of Himiko had snapped. It had nothing to do with the simulator. At least not as far as she was concerned. The words that bit the air were sickening and made Himiko want to puke at the sheer atrocity of them.

"Stop being a pig and get your hands off my food!"

Himiko froze and so did everyone else. The entire table's eyes were on her and everything went quiet. She could feel the stares from the kitchen. Everyone knew Miu had issues with body image. She always ate smaller portions of food than everyone else and even admitted that she wanted to be thinner. She never did anything drastic though, so nobody minded that she was cutting back a bit. She was still perfectly healthy as she was. Himiko clamped a hand over her mouth before pushing back her chair. Miu didn't say anything. She didn't shrink at the insult. She did shout obscenities. She just stared at her plate. Himiko grabbed her bag and whispered the same apology she did earlier. She took the long way to the dormitory entrance because she didn't want to pass the kitchen. The glares she'd receive would surely break her.

Takumi (Hijirihara Takumi is the teacher for anyone who forgot) was already in the classroom when Himiko arrived. He didn't seem to care about her presence and hid back under his podium to grade podiums. She was thankful for this and took her seat to sort through her thoughts. She pulled a book from her bag and began to read, hoping to take her mind off everything that's happened. She felt herself begin to nod off and couldn't stop the familiar feeling of sleep as if tried to engulf her. However, the redhead snapped up at the sound of the classroom door shutting. Keebo and Rantaro walked in and the taller boy got one look at the roboticist's downcast eyes before steering him to his seat, not sparing Himiko a glance.

Checking the clock, Himiko realized there was only five minutes until class began. Her mind was still heavy, but no longer covered in irritations. However, Himiko felt as if she shouldn't move. She knew that the tiniest of things would make her snap again. She didn't know what it was about anymore, mind too jumbled to sort out the reasons for her anger. Deciding it was better that she didn't remember, Himiko sat there, staring blankly at her desk, forcing her eyes open. She didn't know what she was going to do when class began, but her mind could barely even form a thought.
She didn't know how she was going to face her classmates later on. All she knew was that she
couldn't fall asleep. Himiko only had that idea left in her mind as the bell rang.

Himiko's peers gave her looks as they filed through the door with varying amounts of emotion.
Shuichi's was full of fear and concern whereas Kaede's was full of hurt and disapproval. Himiko
didn't pay attention to any of it though as she focused on the only solid thought in her mind. Stay
awake! Home room was a blur and Himiko believes that one or two people had tried to talk to her,
distracting her from her task. In her distorted mind, Himiko decided to place their actions with
anger, that they were purposely keeping her from her one single thought, forcing her mind into
unconsciousness. The irritations were growing back and Himiko had forgotten they were there to
begin with.

Himiko had a pop quiz in both first and second period. Her foggy head chose to believe that her
teachers had done this on purpose. They'd done this to ruin her. Obviously, that wasn't the case, but
when your mind is that heavy, even the tiniest of ideas can get trapped in your head. Himiko's
irritation built up a little more, but the tiniest sliver of her rationality that was still awake kept her
from snapping in the middle of class. Her list of irritations still grew. Shirogane’s humming,
Korekiyo clicking his pen as he waited for everyone to finish their quiz.

Korekiyo. Himiko didn’t like the boy. That was obvious though. No matter what was going on
with him, Himiko never stopped seeing the boy as the killer of her best friends. She saw him as the
reason why they flinch when the breeze tickles the back of their neck. Himiko sat next to the kid in
class, so she of all people should see the empty look in his eyes and the way he fidgeted with his
mask. Himiko understood that his mind was a bit far away, but she couldn’t feel sympathy for him.
She didn’t want to. Accepting the fact that the person who ended two perfectly kind lives was
hurting and in need of comfort wasn’t easy. The fact that Himiko knew that she’d have to
acknowledge this eventually irritated her every time it crossed her mind.

Thus another large addition to her list of irritations.

Rationality forced Himiko to sit away from her usual table. The sight of Korekiyo in that moment
would snap her for sure. The table was empty. Not that Himiko noticed. Exhaustion still weighed
on her mind with the strength of a lion, so her vision went fuzzy if she didn’t concentrate enough.
Surged on by the hope that eating something would give her at least a bit of energy, Himiko
separates her chopsticks. Not that she remembers it, but her decision to leave breakfast early, while
it was her best course of action at the time, really didn’t seem to work out in the long run. After
getting a few mouthfuls of food, Himiko got to work on clearing her mind. She knew that she’d
surely snap at the next person who crossed her vision if she didn’t. Sadly, Himiko wasn’t all that
lucky and the person she never wanted to hurt took the seat next to her.

“Yumeno-San,” Tenko didn’t have a lunch tray with her or anything. She probably went right
over to the redhead after entering the carlfeteria, “are you alright?”

Himiko didn’t want to say anything. The little energy her food provided helped her remember the
cruel words she had uttered to her classmates just that morning. She didn’t want to do that to
Tenko. Not after everything. Himiko’s irritation turned to something different. Panic. It was her
brain’s way of telling her to get the aikido master away before the nasty anger returns to claim her
emotions. She wanted to speak now. She wanted to use this emotion before it was too late. Before
the anger came back and hurt Tenko just like how she hurt Shuichi. And Kokichi. And Keebo.
And Miu. She tried to force the words out, but she could feel a lump begin to form in her throat.

“G—go away,” Himiko choked out, her vision growing blurry.

Tenko said something, but Himiko couldn’t understand it. Her mind was so, so heavy. She no
longer wanted to save Tenko from her ugly words. She wanted Tenko to just go away. Away from
Himiko and her heavy mind and her ugly words. She didn’t want anyone to see it. She didn’t want
to speak about them. She didn’t want to think about them. She didn’t, she didn’t, she didn’t! Her
mind suddenly wasn’t so heavy. In fact, it was light, she could see and feel her thoughts slipping
away. She had grown so concentrated on her panic and getting Tenko away, that she had let go of
her one solid thought. Stay awake.

“I don’t want you he—!” Himiko couldn’t finish the sentence before she choked on her words
again.

Tenko finally seemed to register that the girl in front of her was having a panic attack. Fear settled
into her features and her mind went blank when she thought about things to do. She couldn’t just
leave Himiko there, right? Having no better options, Tenko stood up and went to her table, where
everyone looked up at her with expectant looks of a report on Himiko. As the girl explained the
situation as fast as she could, the majority of their faces fell. However, one person in particular
stood up. Korekiyo.

The two of them made their way over to Himiko, who had her head in her arms and seemed to be
hyperventilating. Tenko asked them no questions, mainly out of discomfort. The anthropologist
gazed at the girl with disdainful look that made Tenko feel like smacking him. However, she had
no time to do so when Korekiyo began to mutter something to the girl who lay limp on her seat.
Whatever Korekiyo has said, however, was lost on Himiko, who refused to lift her head. Tenko and
Korekiyo both realized that it was likely because of the person who was speaking to her.

“Well, what are we supposed to do?!” Tenko cried, frantically checking Himiko.

“Wait! You shouldn’t touch someone while they’re in a state of panic,” Korekiyo instructed, but it
was too late.

Tenko turned Himiko’s head to the side so her face was visible. A few others from their class had
gathered around the commotion. Kaede, Tsumugi, Gonta and Kaito all stood with the two as they
took in Himiko’s expression. Nobody noticed how her breathing had begun to return to normal, to
concentrated on the problem at hand.

Himiko has fainted.

Writing this chapter felt like a fever dream and I’m sort of worried I got a bit too repetitive. I
managed to get this chapter out pretty quickly though. I’m sorry if any of you got mad at
Himiko. It’s going to happen again next chapter, but I hope you guys will bear with me.

As always, if you have any questions regarding the chapter, feel free to ask! Thank you for
reading.

Chapter Ten: The Mage’s Closing Act (Preview!)

This chapter takes place in Himiko’s point of view where we get to understand her actions and why
she’s acting the way she is. She continues to snap at her friends with bitter remarks. However, an
unexpected helper comes to her rescue.
The Mage’s Closing Act

Chapter Summary

Himiko’s still salty and says a lot of very mean things: The sequel

Something to note is that I remembered Angie uses given names no matter what her relationship with the other character is, so if you're confused about that, here's your answer. Also, Himiko says the word “stupid” a lot.

I stood in a dark room that smelled funny. Sort of like my basement, I don't know. It's cold though and I don't like it. I know this scent and this temperature and of course, that's when the chanting begins. I'm back in the seance room, dragged there by my own stupid head. I know that Chabashira is right there. She's under that cage and awaiting her death. Only I know that part though. Well, me and Shinguuji. Stupid, murderer Shinguuji. I head the thud and I know Chabashira was dying. I want to move and help her, even if it's hopeless. I want to shake Shinguuji until he turned back time. My magic doesn't work here though. I can't move and continue chanting that stupid song with stupid Shinguuji.

I hate it so much that I have the words still stuck in my head because every night, it plays over and over and over. I know the exact moment that Shinguuji drives the sickle into Chabashira's neck, but I still can't move. I can't stop singing the song and Chabashira can't be stopped from dying. I always cry out at the sight of her body underneath that stupid cage. Stupid Shinguuji always tells me to get off the stupid circle, and even though I know better and know it was all part of that... that asshole's plans, I can't say anything. I hate it I hate it I hate it. I always wake up after I'm stuck staring, dumbfounded, at Chabashira's corpse even though my mind knew every little detail of her death. From the time to the motive. I. Hate. It.

Only tonight was different. I needed to to sleep a little longer and I didn't stop dreaming after Chabashira's lifeless form crossed my vision. Then things started to change. The candles went out again, but it didn't sound like Ouma or Saihara had made a move to extinguish the flame. Darkness melted through the room and into my head. Everything was foggy and I was beginning to hear white noise screaming through my ears. The darkness closed my throat and I no longer felt. I heard a cry of pain that could only be Saihara. Then Ouma. Stupid freaking Shinguuji Korekiyo killed them, didn't he? I'm next, aren't I? Then Shinguuji screamed. He's dead too. Who's there then? Iruma? Harukawa? Keebo? Momota? Gonta? Shirogane? Then I heard another scream. It's mine. I didn't feel it though. It probably tore my throat to shreds without my magic.

I woke up in a cold sweat. I was in a dorm, but it wasn't mine. I could tell by the punching bag with Ouma's face taped to it that it was Chabashira's. She wasn't anywhere in sight though. I'm glad for that I guess. I don't want her to worry. She has her own things to go through. I only dreamt about being murdered. What goes through her and Yonaga's minds? How do they sleep? Why am I the one who's making a big deal out of things when they're the ones who really lived the experience? Chabashira's bed is warm and I'm still sleepy, but no way am I going to go back to the twisted land of memories. If I'm not sleeping, my magic can still fight back!

I don't run into anyone on my way back to my dorm. I don't remember much about before falling asleep other than the fact that it was lunch and I had a crushing weight on my chest. Crushing. Just
like the press. Bones ground into nothing. No! That's exactly what I don't want to think about, dang it! No murder. No crying. No game... no fear... no anger... no more... I just want to sleep again... and feel safe.

"Ah, Himiko~" a voice. One I knew from that game. That stupid game!

Can't it just go away? I don't want it! It hurt my friends. It ruined my life! I just want to wake up one day without it hurting. I want to not be afraid of going to sleep and waking up with no more Chabashira. No more Yonaga. Is that too much to ask?! I want Tojo to not feel like she has to wear herself thin to clean a stain that isn't there. I want Keebo to not compare himself to the robot we knew in there. I want Ouma to stop lying because of what happened. Why the hell did we sign those fucking papers?! All I want is for Yonaga, who stood in front of me, to not feel like she had to depend on Atua just so she can go through the day without fucking breaking down!

"Atua's screwing with your head!" I cry. I want her to let go of that hell, even if I couldn't, "how you feel isn't about him, it's about you!"

That's... that's not what I should've said, was it? Everything slows down as I realize how much my head was racing before. Why did I do that? Yonaga's standing in front of me. I've never seen her frown up until now, but the expression didn't look good on her. Her snow white bangs forbid me from looking her in the eye—not that I wanted to, nor would I ever wish to in that moment. The downward curve on her lips looked foreign and barely noticeable. A thin line.

"Atua doesn't like it when people such as yourself don't believe in him," Yonaga snapped, but I could tell she was trying to force her normal cheery tone into her words. I don't know how she does that. Maybe it's magic, "Angie came to bring you to dinner, but you can find your way with you magic, right~?"

Ouch. Yonaga sounds a lot more like Ouma when she's mad. She turns on her heel, a white ponytail swishing violently in my direction. I've noticed that one of her pigtails always seemed to rest behind her shoulder, covering the back of her neck. That's because of the game. I can tell because I checked with a spell. Just another thing that stupid, murdering, Shinguuji did to her and Chabashira. I think I lost myself for a moment because Yonaga's already halfway through her meal when I get to the kitchen.

"Good evening, Yumeno-San," Tojo smiles at me in such a kind way that it calms me down the slightest bit, "I hope you are better after the events that occurred during lunch. It is lucky that Shinguuji-Kun knew how to handle the situation."

What? It comes back to me. Shinguuji did help me, didn't he? Murdering freak Shinguuji. What does he want? Does he want to kill me? Send me to his sister? He says he wasn't involved with her, but was that a lie? I don't know what's a lie anymore, but I know what can't be a truth. The truth is that Shinguuji Korekiyo, murderous monster, could not have both killed two amazing people, only to turn around so quickly. He couldn't have been that monster I knew and then he'll me, right? I don't want to be—no. I can't be wrong about this. The nightmares are all a sign. The things that he's done will never be excused.

Tojo asks me if I'm alright and then I realize me chest is starting to grow heavy. I make the bad thoughts go away the best I can by piling food onto my plate. Tojo apologizes for the tiny spread because she had to help out someplace else beforehand, but I don't care. My mind is stuck on stupid Shinguuji. Why is everyone acting like he did nothing wrong? I sit at the counter instead of in the dining hall. There's almost always another chair unless Shirogane is sitting there. Shirogane... she makes me mad, too, but nothing compares to that evil man. I don't want to see either of their faces, so it's better to just sit with the four from earlier.
I end up next to Saihara. It's probably for the best because he's the least likely to get angry with me. Of course, dear definitely isn't much better. They're all almost done eating anyway, so if I can just make it through this, it should be fine. I can go to my room and spend the rest of the casting an anti-sleep spell on myself. It's considered a hex by most, but it's the best I can hope for. It's going well. Saihara speeds up his eating and finishes shortly after I sit down. Even though he looks like he's gonna puke, he excuses himself and Ouma follows shortly after. Amami and Keebo don't wanna talk to me though.

I'm struck with bad luck when everyone exits the dining room. Including Shinguuji.

My heart starts pounding and I can feel every little thing wrong with the world slowly slip into my brain at the sight of him. I'm angry. I only thought this level of anger was possible in movies, books or under the influence of a powerful spell. I want this to hurt. I want every little word to make him know what he's done. And so, I stop holding back all my anger because this time, I'm counting on it.

"Shinguuji!" I'm still lightheaded and sleepy, but it'll do, "I wanna talk to you."

His lips move from under his mask, but before he can say anything, I cut him off. He doesn't deserve to speak.

"Who do you think you are?!" I scream and all eyes are on me. Perfect, "how dare you just waltz in here like nothing ever happened in the game—" people look away. No no no. "—Don't be such babies! Look at him?! Don't you remember what he did?!—" I'm crying now, but it's fine "—he's a murderer! He's a god damn freak! Why don't you guys see that?!"

Shinguuji doesn't look like he's going to say anything so I feel pride. I stunned him into silence. I'm about to continue, but someone has the audacity to cut me off.

"Leave Shinguuji alone!" Momota of all people comes to his defense. I guess they did go to school together before, didn't they?

"No!" I'm not gonna do that. No way, "What's wrong with you, Momota?! Why do always take the side of murderers. You did the same thing with Gonta, remember?!

I don't even feel remorse when Gonta shrinks a bit and Hoshi pulls him away, giving me an ugly look. What does he know? I'm not wrong. I spend some time going over the problems that crossed into the real world. His creepy note taking. His mutter. Shinguuji being the coward he is, has Momota do his bidding as we argue back and forth and back and forth and back and forth —

"Stop! Both of you!" It's Akamatsu this time.

"No way, she insulted Shinguuji!" Momota is starting to sound stupider and stupider the more he speaks.

"He deserves it!" I explain and go over my reasoning again. I get the same rebuttals and we're stuck talking again until I feel myself being lifted from the floor.

"Yumeno-San, calm down," Chabashira says it just loud enough that I can hear it over the pounding in my head.

"I'm doing this for you and Yonaga though! Let me do this and you'll never ever have to see that degenerate again!" I reason with her, but she just keeps pulling me away from the scene. "I thought you were against men! Especially ones that kill you!"
"Yes, but no one deserves to be treated that way!" Chabashira snaps at me. She's never raised her voice at me, so I'm quiet for just enough time for her to speak some more, "so I'm getting you to your room weather you like it or not and you're going to chill!"

I find myself kicking and screaming as Chabashira tries to drag me to the stairs. I'm low on mana though because of my lack of energy, so I can only do much. She still eventually has to ask Tojo for help. She quickly agrees before grabbing my ankles, keeping me from flailing my legs around as Chabashira held me by my underarms.

"Go away, Tojo!" I yell. I don't want to chill. I have more to say, "no matter how much you do, it's not going to erase what you did to Hoshi!"

Tojo purses her lips and that's what makes me realize it. I had hurt everyone by hurting Shinguuji. Does that mean everyone's happiness is connected? That by insulting one, you're insulting all? I think about it. Momota. Gonta. Chabashira. Tojo. Because of my screaming, I had hurt them all. Because of my yelling earlier, I hurt Saihara. I hurt Keebo. Iruma. Yonaga. Even Ouma, I think. I got Akamatsu, Hoshi and Amami mad at me even if I didn't shout at them. Was it worth it? All for the sake of revenge that, when I thought about it, might not have been necessary to begin with?

I don't have time to ponder the question when I'm laid down on my bed and drift off.

<This begins in Himiko’s perspective before switching to third person for the sake of you guys being able to pick up on the things Himiko doesn’t. I still refer to the characters the same way Himiko does though. Apologies for any confusion!>

This time, I'm not in the seance room. I'm sitting on the rubble of what used to be the academy. Saihara and Harukawa are there too. Unlike what actually happened, we aren't talking. It's almost as if we were waiting for something. Help, maybe? Perhaps word got out through Keebo that the three of us are alive and in need of rescue. Another thing that was different was the fact that when I turned my head, the one attached to my body moved. This was me. I was there in that moment with no clue what was to come next.

At least when Himiko was stuck in the seance room, she knew what to expect, but this was different. Suddenly, everyone was standing in front of them, smiling. Their bodies were solid. This was a happy dream. Harukawa is already running for Momota with tears streaming down her face. Saihara was smiling so wide as his legs give out beneath him. He's too overcome with emotions to speak. Himiko gets to Chabashira and Yonaga the best she could without tripping on the rubble. She tried to wrap them in a hug before Shinguuji can get to them. Her arms phase through them though and she can’t grab onto them.

Suddenly, she sees a flash of pink in her vision. Amami has a flower of blood dripping from his scalp. Shirogane's hands were soaked with his blood, but she quickly takes Akamatsu's hand. She wipes the blood on her white sleeves before anyone can notice. Then a noose comes to wrap around Akamatsu's neck. She isn't dragged away, but the dead look in her eyes as she stares directly at Saihara was enough to give the desired effect. Saihara has regained his footing and was trying to untie the rope from her neck. Soon, Akamatsu's body blossomed with spots of the pink substance, splattering in all directions. However, nobody shows any signs of being hit other than Saihara, who now hand her blood soaking his fingers and Shirogane, who still had streaks of Amami's blood. The rest of the group stands still.

As Akamatsu and Amami stop moving, Shirogane continues down her path. She hands everyone their Kubzpads. They’re jumbled around just like before. Saihara, Harukawa and Himiko don’t get one, but Hoshi’s figure phases through Harukawa and suddenly her arms and legs are littered with marks. Battle scars. She goes stiff and seems to be trying to say something, but she can’t.
Everyone’s standing in two lines just like the scrum debate. Akamatsu and Amami sit by and watch, but their faces say nothing. Then, Himiko’s greeted with an odd sight. Ouma’s there, standing in the crossfire of both sides, sticking his arms out in a protective manner towards no one in particular. Keebo says something and Gonta drags Ouma away. Tojo walks up to Hoshi and he goes slack. Bubbles rise from his mouth and some of his flesh is torn away, leaving the same skeletal frame Himiko knew. Blood stains Harukawa’s fingertips. Tojo ducks behind me for a while until Saihara moves, forcing her out. Tojo’s gloves slowly rip apart and her body becomes littered with cuts. There’s a creaking noise and she slumps over as if her spine had been snapped. She is still standing, just like everyone else, but her blood once again comes pouring out, only to further stain Saihara and Shirogane’s hands.

Himiko’s starting to understand what’s happening and looks away, but then her body begins to move against her will. Shirogane is presenting the motive again. Then Yonaga begins to swiftly move. She picks up the still forms of Akamatsu, Amami, Hoshi and Tojo with Himiko, Keebo and Gonta following closely after. Shirogane and Chabashira aren’t far behind them, but neither seem all that interested. Yonaga props them around in a circle as she tries to make it look as if they’re alive again. Their vacant gazes work with her hands as they twist their expressions into smiles. Himiko suddenly feels cold and finds herself in the grasp of Shinguuji, Yonaga standing next to her. As much as she wants to, her body doesn’t allow her to fight back. It doesn’t know what’s happening. Shinguuji has a mist surrounding his head. He doesn’t look that happy underneath. Blood flows from Yonaga’s neck and Himiko already knows what’s about to happen. Chabashira frees her from Shinguuji’s grasp in exchange for her own body right before a thud is heard and blood freely streams from a wound no one could see. Blood finally makes it to Himiko’s hands as she just stands there. Shinguuji’s eyes shed tears of blood, the mist takes over his body and I can no longer see him. Even then, with so little blood, the pink fluid still makes it’s way to Shirogane and Saihara’s arms.

Himiko’s crying, but it’s not acknowledged as Iruma seems to shift the world around her. She crosses through a barrier with Ouma and suddenly, the two are in the virtual world. Their real bodies sit idly nearby with everyone else. However, Iruma in the real world stood up and went to Momota, placing the poison in his hands. Iruma in the virtual holds up her fists, ready to fight when the Ouma from the real world looms over them. He carefully maneuvers Gonta’s virtual form, which was strung up like a puppet and forces him to stand behind Iruma. However, the strings break free and Gonta makes a move of his own, watching Iruma’s face turn blue. Even with no blood, the liquid stains both of their hands. Real Ouma and virtual Gonta return to the real world and try to paint over everyone else with Iruma’s blood. Afterwards, virtual Gonta disappears, leaving the real Gonta oblivious to the blood on his palms. Slowly, Saihara goes around, wiping the blood left by Ouma and virtual Gonta off of everyone’s faces. When he reaches Momota, he refuses to let Saihara touch him.

Eyes soaked with tears, Saihara, walked over to Gonta, showing him the blood staining his fingers. Despite Momota trying to wipe the stain, Gonta walks away from the group. Ouma clings to Gonta though, eyes streaming with tears as bee stings rise on Gonta’s skin. When a large burst of blood shot from Gonta’s stomach, it got Ouma right in the chest, still making it onto the hands of Shirogane and Saihara. The detective reaches out to hug Ouma, but he runs away, pushing Gonta’s body worthless and painting bright patterns on his face with the blood. It was as if he thought it was a blessing. He drew pink lines down his face so nobody could see him crying. Saihara glared at the boy before saying something that only the two of them could hear. The moment the words come out, blood seeps through Saihara’s hands, but he doesn’t notice.

There’s barely time to move when Ouma and Momota disconnect from the group. Panicked, Shirogane shines the flashback light onto the remaining survivors. Himiko sees Shirogane and Ouma fighting. He pushes her down and she walks away with a bitter expression. She sees herself
handing the crossbow to Momota, but the piercing gaze of Keebo can be felt on her back. An arrow wound appears on Ouma’s arm and a drop worth of blood coats Momota’s finger. Harukawa bursts into the scene and another arrow wound appears on Ouma’s back and a purple haze comes to rest over his head. Stepping in front of Ouma, Momota gets a similar wound and the same haze. Terrified, Harukawa took off, fresh blood dripping off her arms. Harukawa returned with a bottle of antidote. She reaches for Momota, but Ouma’s faster. He takes the antidote and pretends to wash away the haze from his face. Harukawa runs away, trying to hide the pink substance on her hands. Of course, only then does Ouma lift the purple haze from Momota, all while his own grew darker and darker as life drained from his eyes.

The other surviving students sat around the pair with a blank face. Ouma wandered over to Shirogane and slid her eyes shut before continuing. They weren’t truly there, but they were all part of the crime. Ouma pulled out a bucket. It was full of his own blood. He offered it to Momota happily, only to be immediately rejected. Ouma set down the bucket before moving to Harukawa, who sat with her eyes closed. Ouma took her by the wrist and dragged her to Momota. He pointed to the haze over his head and tipped the bucket until the liquid nearly fell onto Harukawa’s head. Panicking, Momota took the bucket, soaring the other boy a suspicious look. He spoke a few words and got a few answers before Ouma began crying. The tears washed away the patterns he had drawn on his face with blood. The smaller boy hastily made efforts to swirl the patterns back onto his skin, but Momota was faster and tossed the bucket into the air.

No living person missed being hit by the blood of Ouma Kokichi.

When the blood cleared, both boys were hidden beneath the jacket of Momota. Shirogane lifted the garment, revealing both of them lying on the floor. Even though Ouma’s body lay lifeless, there was no way to determine whose blood soaked everyone up to the wrist. Harukawa made her point with the arrow soaked in Momota’s blood, standing in front of the two students that lay on the floor. Saihara, pushes forward by Shirogane, came to a different conclusion. It took a while, but eventually everyone was ready to claim the blood as Ouma’s. Then Saihara saw something. He saw the tear streaks that cut through the blood on Ouma’s face and he saw the patterns decorated onto Momota’s features. Without thinking, he claimed the blood was Momota’s. Shirogane didn’t buy it though and she dragged Momota to his execution. However, before any new wounds could sprout from his body, blood streamed from his mouth, his body weakening. He and Ouma, who was now on his feet with a smaller blood trail from his lips, took the jacket and left. Everyone mourned the blood of Momota Kaito. Nobody cared for the blood of Ouma Kokichi.

Saihara exposed the blood that ran up and down Shirogane’s arms in a thick layer. He stared at Ouma’s face for a moment, clearing more of the patterns that blocked his visions. Himiko, Harukawa and Saihara watched as Shirogane’s blood finally splattered. Keebo gave them one last smile before flying away. The only death that held no blood. With that bitter thought hanging in Himiko’s mind, the bloodied bodies of their classmates slipped away.

<Okay, I’ll admit. I had a lot of fun writing that...>

I’m never sleeping again. I could do it. I think I’d rather die than see that again. Ever. It’s dark out. Nine o’clock. I don’t know what do. What can I do after that? Coffee keeps you awake, right? Saihara drinks it all the time. I should try drinking that stuff.

What did the blood mean in there? In my literacy classes, my teachers always told me about symbolism, but it was always hard to stay awake through it. It was a pain. Guilt. That must be it, right? Every time someone did something wrong, they got blood on them. I remember how much blood was on Saihara’s hands. It went up to his elbows and soaked his shoes. It must’ve smelled awful. Can you smell in dreams? I’ll ask Keebo about that after I apologize to him and... and...
How come Saihara is so guilty?

We both survived, didn’t we? Don’t we have to be the strong ones? Why is it that he is allowed to be such a sad sack when I’m stuck over here sacrificing everything. I can’t even sleep anymore! No... no thinking like that. Remember earlier? We don’t want to hurt anyone else! Be happy! Just like Chabashira wants you to. Besides, Saihara’s nice, isn’t he? He’s smart. He’s good with people. He’s not as loud as everyone else.

He feels guilty when he has no right to.

Tea. That should help! Tojo drinks it and Tojo is always relaxed. Then these thoughts might go away. Perfect. And my yelling earlier probably put a human repelling curse on me, so there’s no risk of me being mean. I put on a fuzzy robe I got from Chabashira. I sorta miss my old hat, but there’s no way I’m ever going back to it.

I’m not guilty Saihara.

Stop!

Speak of the devil, I find Saihara when I exit my dorm. He’s talking to Ouma.

I can’t help what I say next.

“Saihara!” I shout, “stop being stupid!”

“Wh—what?!” Saihara yelps.

“Why are you just sitting around feeling sorry for yourself?!” It makes no sense to me, which just makes me angrier when I say it, “don’t you know what they’re going through?! Even Ouma is allowed to cry, but not us!”

“I—“

“We never had to go through any of that garbage they did!”

Saihara’s grabbing at his wrists with his bottom lip between his teeth. He looks in pain? Whatever.

“How dare you feel guilty for anything that happened in there when everyone else has to deal with death and—“

“I—I know that...” it’s barely a whisper when he says it. Something about it makes me feel awful. He speaks once more before hurrying out of sight, “I—I’m so sorry.”

I’m left there. With Ouma. I need to apologize, but there’s a lump in my throat that won’t let the words form. I don’t have to say anything because Ouma does.

“What... wh—what the fuck is wrong with you?” it comes out as growl and the genuinely angry tone makes his voice nearly unrecognizable.

His eyes are squinted and finally stopped looking all over the place. Being under that glare of him feels different from his creepy expressions. I’m genuinely terrified.

“Why would you just waltz up to someone—especially someone as nice as Saihara—a—and just... well, do that?” There’s a venom in his voice.
I’m at a loss for words. Ouma’s not lying, either. Or is he? I don’t know. My throat is dry and it hurts to swallow. What have I done?

“I—I’m sorry,” I mutter, but I know I’m gonna end up like this again. It’s never gonna end.

Ouma’s quiet for a moment, but his next words are suddenly much more enthusiastic, “wow, you really think that I, a supreme leader of evil, would buy such an obvious lie. Just go away, Yumeno-Chan! I don’t wanna see your ugly face anymore~”

- 

As Himiko obeyed, walking down another flight of stairs, a figure crossed her path. Kokichi made eye contact with the other person and realized almost instantly that she had heard the end of his and Himiko’s dispute.

“I thought you said you were gonna be nicer,” Maki sighed, “what happened to the old you?”

“I made no such promises, Maki!” Kokichi denied, smirking, but he quickly mouthed the words ‘I had to.’

“Why do you do that?” Maki asked.

“Do what?”

“You’re always acting like there’s someone watching you,” Maki pointed out, “it’s dumb.”

“I do not,” Kokichi cried defensively before leaving the conversation the fastest he could, “anyway, bye-bye~”

- 

I found myself outside. I don’t like it much out here. It’s always got too many noises and wasn’t as peaceful as everyone said it was. Just another lie, I guess. Things were going fine as I tried to clear my head, but of course, someone had to go and ruin it.

“Yumeno-San,” Shinguuji of all people say, “I wish to talk to you. Although I suppose I understand if you are opposed to speaking with me.”

I have to think about this. I guess I don’t have much of a choice, do I? I know there were more people downstairs before I left. They’ll just be angrier with me if I push him away, won’t they? I don’t want to upset people again. Stupid logic and empathy. I sigh and adjust my hat, only to remember it was no longer there.

“Fine, what do you want?”

“ Well, actually—uh, may i sit?—“ I nod “—thank you,” Shinguuji sits on the ground with me, but not too close. Why does he have to be respectful? “Anyway, as I was saying. This is more about you than it is about me. If you couldn’t already tell, I’m referring to this evening.”

“Nyeh,” I mumble, “yea, what about it?”

“The point I wish to address here is when you said that I’m acting like nothing happened,” Shinguuji started, “you said that and yet you’re guilty of the same deed.”

“I’m what?”
“You aren’t allowing yourself to speak of your issues with the game,” Shinguuji explains, “you fear upsetting your friends, who have completely different coping mechanisms to you. So, your frustration erupted, resulting in emotional turmoil in the form of numerous nightmares and easy agitation.”

“Do you have an actually topic here or are you just trying to pick apart my brain?”

“I’m getting to that!” Shinguuji’s voice raises in pitch for a moment before returning, “So as I said before, you’re acting as if nothing’s gone wrong for you, so you’re concentrating on other’s flaws and misfortunes. If you couldn’t already tell, that’s not a good approach.”

“Who are you to tell me what to do?”

“I’m well aware that I am not a therapist, nor am I a psychiatrist,” Shinguuji reasoned, “however, I do know people. I know that we aren’t that different—“

“I am nothing like you!” I snap, “how could you even say that?!”

“I wasn’t finished,” Shinguuji deadpanned, “one key difference between us is the fact that I’ve at least tried to come to terms with what happened. I’ve at least tried to move on from you. This isn’t to say I’m superior to you, but this may be a decent starting point to self improvement.”

“I know that, but I can’t!” I tell him, “are you stupid?! Every time I try to sleep, I have to replay you murdering my best friend.”

“Ah,” Shinguuji doesn’t know how to react, “then why don’t you just talk it out. Getting your emotions out on the table is a great way to sort them out.”

“No,” I object, “didn’t you hear yourself when you said I didn’t want to hurt people with my problems? You weren’t wrong!”

“I see,” Shinguuji mused, staring off into the distance, “well then. If you fear hurting people you care for, why don’t you just speak to me. Someone you don’t care for.”

“That’s...” I try to come up with a flaw in that.

“You’ve already begun anyway,” Shinguuji observes. That’s when I realize it.

“You’re different than you were in the game,” I say, “it’s making it difficult to hate you...”

“I think a lot of us were changed in that game,” Shinguuji admits, “it’s likely due to memory alteration.”

“Your memories were altered.”

“Yes, of course. I thought I brought this up already.”

“...”

“Are you ready to talk?” Shinguuji asks, picking at the grass.

“... Fine,” I agree, “I’m gonna be talking about your trial though. Is that alright?”

“I thought we were doing this because you didn’t care about me.”

“Shut up!” I yelp, “so, yea... after waking up, I noticed that Chabashira and Yonaga are always
covering their necks, which is how they were both killed. And... well, they both... well, y’know, are so collected. The there’s me! I... I only made it less than a third of the year and I’m screaming at people!”

“Go on.”

“A—and they’re both still putting up with me,” I mutter, tears gathering in my eyes, “why though? Th—they’re clearly in... in p—pain, but they won’t... they won’t say anything!”

I can’t help but begin to sob as Shinguuji watched awkwardly. I don’t remember much else of what happened for a while other than Chabashira leaving the dormitory. She brings me to her room and I just hold on to her. Even if she’s won’t show me where it hurts, I want to help her. I fall into my first peaceful rest in weeks with Chabashira’s heartbeat reminding me that there’s still life.

BONUS SCENE:

I look down at Yumeno. She looks so peaceful and happy. Of course, that makes me happy too. Who wouldn’t be happy over this? Of course, I can’t stop thinking about how the degenerate back there was the one to help out this little slice of heaven. Why him instead of me? I shouldn’t be complaining. I’m not complaining. I still can’t shake it though.

Is the way that I think wrong?

Hello again everyone! I hope you enjoyed the chapter. The ending was a bit more rushed than I would’ve liked it, but I think it turned out alright in the end. Just a few things I’d like to clear up though.

I know my way of writing in Himiko’s perspective was a bit too serious for her character, but I was trying to set up a melancholic atmosphere. If you have any ideas for improvement, please comment them.

I am aware that this is literally called Obligatory Chatfic, and yet I didn’t have any group chat moments this chapter.

Also, as Shinguuji mentioned before, a lot of the class altered their memories, which slightly altered their behavior in the game. This doesn’t exactly mean their past was unfortunate, but this should clear up most of the slightly OOC actions (especially in the case of Kokichi and Korekiyo.) I guess it wouldn’t hurt if I listed all the characters with fabricated in game pasts, by a lot of them were only to block out memories of another in game character:

-Rantaro (kind of? It’ll make more sense later on also erased memories of Miu.)

-Keebo (his memories are basically the same except for the fact he was a robot.)

-Maki (only erased memories of Kokichi.)

-Angie (only erased memories of Tenko.)

-Tenko (only erased memories of Angie.)

-Kaito (only partially meant to memories of Korekiyo.)

-Korekiyo (only partially meant to erase memories of Kaito.)
-Miu (only partially meant to erase memories of Rantaro.)

-Kokichi (only partially meant to erase memories of Maki.)

-Shuichi

-Ryoma (he isn’t on death row, but his family was still murdered.)

Chapter Eleven: Encore (PREVIEW!)

In the aftermath of Himiko’s yelling, the class takes time to enjoy each other’s company. However, new issues arise due to problems brought up by Himiko’s foul words. Overall, it’s pretty wholesome and makes up for the sever lack of chatting in these recent chapters.
Chapter Summary

The day after Himiko’s breakdown.

"Ultimate Nightmare Fuel," May 4th, 1:14

MakiRoll: Who all's online?

ProfessorThot: since when have you been the one to ask that, Harutwatwa?

MakiRoll: Quiet

ThingWhite: I finally come to see what this is all about and Amami-Kun isn't even online.

ProfessorThot: Ohohoho? want to go out with the adventurer do we?

ThingWhite: NO, I SWEAR I DONT

MakiRoll: Pathetic. At least be subtle about it

ProfessorThot: says the one who's all over Momothong.

MakiRoll: HEY

ThingWhite: yOU GUYS IM TELLING THE TRUTH

MakiRoll: Because I don't want to keep talking about stupid stuff, does anyone know where the others are? There's normally more here.

ThingWhite: If it helps, a couple hours ago, Chabashira-San passed by me with Yumeno-San. I think they went to Chabashira's dorm.

ProfessorThot: They're totally getting it on (if you know what I mean!)

ThingWhite: No. I do not know what you mean.

MakiRoll: If you tell him, I will pinch the sensitive part of your arm that hurts like hell.

ProfessorThot: Oookkay. you don't have to be so specific, jeez

MakiRoll: Have any of you seen Kaito or Shuichi since ten? Neither of them showed up for training

ProfessorThot: "Training"

MakiRoll: Oh for fucks sake
MakiRoll: No. Stop

ProfessorThot: FINE

ThingWhite: I'm not sure about Saihara-Kun, but I know that Momota-Kun was talking to Shinguuji around that time. Shinguuji-Kun left the building a bit before Yumeno-San and Chabashira-San went upstairs, but Momota-Kun seemed to be watching whatever was happening outside.

MakiRoll: I see. Thanks I guess

ThingWhite: No problem.

MakiRoll:

MakiRoll: Can I say something?

ThingWhite: Of course!

ProfessorThot: YES, GIMME THE GOSSIP

MakiRoll: NEVER MIND

ProfessorThot: WAIT NO! I WONT TELL I PROMISE

MakiRoll:

MakiRoll: Okay. You can't tell anyone either, Keebo

ThingWhite: I won't.

MakiRoll: So I'm worried about Shuichi and Kaito. Well, I was always sort of worried about Shuichi, but it's worse than normal? I don't know, he's been acting off for a while now. Like how he's been SUPER sensitive lately. I yelled at him this one time and he literally jumped away from me. Kaito's been being kind of weird as well. He's not as upbeat as before and it's getting annoying. I don't like it.

ProfessorThot: Honestly? Same here

MakiRoll deleted 5 messages

ThingGreen is online

ThingGreen: See? I knew you were a softie

ThingWhite: Oh hello Amami-Kun!

MakiRoll: What the fuck. WHERE DO YOU KEEP COMING FROM?

ProfessorThot: THAT'S WHAT SHE SAID ahahahahAHAAAAHA

MakiRoll: I hate you all. So much.

<Even in what's supposed be a fluffy chapter, there are still angsty undertones in my writing. Dang
Shuichi was the last one to the kitchen. He had slept in as he remembered Himiko's words to him the previous night. The feeling was only worsened when he saw the notification for Maki's text before she deleted it. She's worried about him. Shuichi felt awful at even the implication that he was responsible for Maki being worried. He slumped down in his normal seat at the counter before slumping his head into his arms. His wrists still stung from just hours before.

"Hey! Saihara-Chan!" Kokichi cried, tilting his head in attempt to see the other's face, "helooou? I dunno what to tell you, Amami-Chan, he's gone."

"Wouldn't that be nice," Shuichi mumbled without taking time to process his words.

"What?" Kokichi deadpanned. He had caught the words, but seemed to want some sort of confirmation of them.

"I—I said," Shuichi hesitated before thinking of something, "I said that I've already said hello twice."

"Hmmmmm?!" Kokichi hummed, but he saw through the lie, "Saihara-Chan is making me think that I'm deaf or something. Well, whatever. I'll just have my slaves hear for me I guess..."

Kokichi slumped his arms, still trying to crane his neck so he could see the other's expression. Shuichi, not wanting to hurt the other, eventually caved and turned his head to look at the other. His golden eyes were half lidded and looked sleepy or far away. He did his best to smile at the other boy, but he stopped after quickly realizing the gesture made little to no sense. Still, he remained oblivious to Kokichi's cheeks going pink and turning away.

"Geez, Saihara-Chan, what's with that face?!!" Kokichi sputtered, "if you keep being cute like that I'll have to kill you, you know?!"

"Wh—what?!" Shuichi yelped, face turning red.

"That was a lie," Kokichi responded lazily, resting his arms behind his head, "but you stopped thinking about what Yumeno-Chan told you for a moment, didn't you?"

"I... a—actually, yea. Yea I did," Shuichi realized, "thanks."

"Wha?! Why are you thanking me?!!" Kokichi waved away the other's appreciation, "it only lasted for like, two seconds before I brought it up again."

Shuichi sat up once more and gave a real smile to Kokichi. The other boy stiffened at the sight before turning away. The detective didn't dwell on it as he extracted his book from his bag. He stated grimly at the corners of the cover, where the book was beginning to fray a bit. He finally ate a bit of the food Kirumi had left him before beginning to read. Kokichi sat with his head turned in the opposite direction for a little while longer before facing Shuichi again. He intended to tease and distract the other, but he got one look at the other's peaceful expression and went silent, resting his head in his palm with his eyes trained on Shuichi.

"And I'm apparently the disaster, huh?" Rantaro muttered as he spared the pair a glance.

"Shut up, Amami-Chan."

<i write scenes with my ships: the chapter.>
"Ultimate Nightmare Fuel," May 4th 8:43

**Weeb:** GUYS IVE BEEN TRYING TO WATCH BNHA SEASON 4 EPISODE 8 FOR THE PAST THIRTY MINUTES AND THE VIDEO WONT LOAD

**ThingPurple:** You see? This is why Shirogane-Chan has that as her nickname!

**Weeb:** But we're Japanese.

**ThingPurple:**

**ThingPurple:** Shit

**Kayaday:** Careful!

**Kayaday:** Keebo and Gokuhara are also here

**ThingPurple:** Whatevs

**Smoll:** Hurt him and I'll hurt you.

**ThingGreen:** Hurt him and I'll hurt you.

**ThingPurple:** Okay! Okay! W o w

**Weeb:** I read the manga and everything! I just wanna see some awesome Suneater moments and a heavy helping of Miritama!

**ThingGreen:** Why are you watching anime in the middle of gym class?

**NotTodaySatan:** Are you questioning the methods of a maiden blessed by Atua himself?

**ThingGreen:** Uh. No?

**NotTodaySatan:** Good!

**ThingGreen:** Atua seems a little biased, doesn't he?

**NotTodaySatan:** Maybe Atua just thinks it's fun making you suffer~

**ThingGreen:** Based off how life has been lately, that doesn't seem too far fetched

**Kayaday:**

**Weeb:**

**NotTodaySatan:**

**ThingPurple:**

**Smoll:** You good there?

**ThingGreen:** ?
Kayayday: Your last text

ThingGreen:

ThingGreen: Oh

*ThingPurple is offline*

Weeb: Are you okay?

ThingGreen: Yea, I'm good

Kayayday: Are you sure?

Kayayday: You don't seem fine

Smoll: Yea

ThingGreen: I'm fine. I was joking before

NotTodaySatan: Angie was joking before as well! She didn't mean to offend you, Rantaro~

ThingGreen: I'm not offended

Weeb: Are you really sure?

ThingGreen: Yes, okay?!

ThingGreen: Sorry. Idabashi's coming over so I'll talk to him instead

Kayayday: Wait

*ThingGreen is offline*

NotTodaySatan: Angie shouldn't have said that

Weeb: You had way of knowing.

NotTodaySatan: It's times like this when Atua's guidance is needed

Kayayday: Is he still sleeping?

NotTodaySatan: Yep! Don't think you can get away with sinful deeds though~

Smoll: How long has it been since you've actually spoken to this Atua guy?

NotTodaySatan: Atua has been very busy since the simulation ended! He leaves Angie messages though!

Smoll: Are you sure those aren't just your thoughts?

Weeb: Hoshi-kun, look at the meme I sent you. It's just plain hilarious

_Private Messages, "Shirogane Tsumugi and Hoshi Ryoma," May 4th, 8:55_
Shirogane Tsumugi: I think Yonaga-San is struggling with her faith right now. I don't need have any solid evidence I can think of, but I'm pretty sure Akamatsu-San and Saihara-Kun also think so. I don't think it's a good idea to tell her your own opinion on Atua though based on how fragile everything is.

Hoshi Ryoma: Oh shit. Guess I've still got a ways to go...

Shirogane Tsumugi: No, it's okay!

Hoshi Ryoma: Yea, well thanks I guess

Hoshi Ryoma is offline

Shirogane Tsumugi: You still hate me, don't you?

Shirogane Tsumugi: Oh

Shirogane Tsumugi deleted the chat

"Ultimate Nightmare Fuel," May 4th, 9:03

NotTodaySatan: And that's the story of how Angie and Korekiyo broke into a Jalapeño's and stole all their beans at three in the morning!

Kayayday:

Kayayday: How are you not dead yet?

<Jalapeño's is the Chili's in this world. Also, I still can't write fluff like a normal person, help—>

Keebo glanced across the table at Rantaro. The adventurer had looked for the roboticist shortly after logging off the chat. He just wanted to get out of there and Keebo was the first person that popped into his head. It would've been better if he said Kirumi or Maki because the two girls were already nearby. However, he got hasty. Rantaro had taken Keebo to a picnic table near the dorms. Fridays in gym class were always quiet because Juzo took those days to grade papers, so the students did as they pleased. The green haired boy didn't say anything, staring blankly at the surface of the table.

"Are you—" Keebo began, but was quickly cut off.

"Could you not ask me that, please?" Rantaro requested, "I just got out of a conversation like that and I don't really want another."

"I see," Keebo affirmed, "I'm sure whoever it was was just looking out for you."

"I guess," Rantaro lifted his head and offered an awkward smile, "it isn't really worth worrying over me, though."

"Of course it's worth it!" Keebo insisted, "don't say such things. You're a lovely person!"

Rantaro's ears turned pink at the last comment. Keebo's tendency to not quite understand what they're saying sometimes had interesting effects. The green haired boy thanked the other, but the ultimate didn't seem to listen. They were talking about self worth or something like that. Rantaro wasn't exactly listening, concentrating on the way the light shone on Keebo's cerulean eyes and the
way his white hair swayed to the side as he talked animatedly.

"Amami-Kun, did you hear anything I just said?" Keebo quizzed, looking a bit too upset for the situation.

"Oh—right, not really," Rantaro admitted, chuckling, "I just thought you looked nice and tuned out."

"Huh?!" Keebo cried, face red.

"Wait—no," Rantaro panicked, "well this is awkward, isn't it?"

"Little bit, yea," Keebo agreed, hiding his face in his hands.

"I didn't mean it like... well, that," Rantaro defended, despite the fact he did mean it like that, "my bad."

"No, it's fine!" Keebo shouted, still flustered, "you look nice too!"

"I... what?" Rantaro said, a dumbfounded expression on his face.

"I don't know! I panicked!" Keebo shrieked, speaking quickly, "you do though—wait no!"

"Thank you?"

<Headcanon time: Rantaro and Keebo are both awful at flirting and being flirted with>

"Ultimate Nightmare Fuel," May 4th, 12:31

**ThingBlue:** Is Tojo-San online?

**Mother:** Yes. What is it?

**ThingBlue:** Your birthday's on the tenth, right? Anything you want to do for it?

**Mother:** That is correct. However, I am perfectly content with just going about the day as we normally do. I would not want to trouble anyone with additional work.

**DingusTheSecond:** NOT ON MY WATCH

**Mother:** Pardon?

**MakiRoll:** You've been doing too much work lately.

**Mother:** I am perfectly healthy with my current work ethics. I have no idea what you are implying.

**DingusTheSecond:** Ur literally going to die

**ThingBlue:** Guys, it's her birthday.

**MakiRoll:** Shut up Shuichi

**ThingBlue:** Sorry.

**MakiRoll:** Dude, have some backbone
ThingBlue: You just told me to shut up.

MakiRoll:

MakiRoll: Anyway

ThingBlue: Okay then

MakiRoll: What Kaito and I are trying to say is that you need a break Tojo

DingusTheSecond: yee!

Mother: If you guys are requesting that I take a break, then I will allow it just this once.

MakiRoll: Finally

Mother: However

MakiRoll: Damn it. So close.

Mother: It is my duty as a maid to make sure those I serve are content. I will celebrate my birthday only if everyone is in attendance and everyone can agree on an activity. Yumeno-San, Yonaga-San and Chabashira-San will be out tomorrow and I believe a Saturday will be the best day to do this. Therefore, I think we should have the activity on the twelfth.

DingusTheSecond: thats a lot of words...

MakiRoll: She wants us to celebrate on the twelfth and for everyone else to decide what we do

DingusTheSecond: oh! Thanks makiroll

ThingBlue: Are you sure this is what you want?

Mother: Yes, I would love to do what makes everyone else happy.

ThingBlue: Of course. Sorry for second guessing you.

MakiRoll: Oh my god Shuichi, if you apologize for something stupid one more time I'm going to chuck you out a window

ThingBlue: Was that meant to be encouraging or threatening?

MakiRoll: Both

Mother: Do any of you have any requests before I go clean?

MakiRoll: Yea. Eat. It's called lunch for a reason

Mother:

Mother: Very well.

Mother is offline
MakiRoll: I honestly wasn't expecting that to work

DingusTheSecond: same

DingusTheSecond: also did you guys see how low key I was?! Tojo has no idea

ThingBlue: We're still on the class chat, Kaito-Kun.

DingusTheSecond: whoops

DingusTheSecond deleted 2 messages

MakiRoll: If we're going to talk about that, at least go to the other chat

"Happy Fun Time," May 4th, 12:39

OurInitialsSayKMS: Here

KoolAidManVibes: I forgot this existed for a minute

TheThirdWheel: You were talking on it just this morning though.

TheThirdWheel:

TheThirdWheel: Kaito-Kun.

KoolAidManVibes: yea?

TheThirdWheel: Did you change my name?

KoolAidManVibes: 

KoolAidManVibes: no?

OurInitialsSayKMS: Yea he did

KoolAidManVibes: Maki!

TheThirdWheel: While we're on the subject, when are you gonna tell everyone you're dating?

OurInitialsSayKMS: Never

KoolAidManVibes: soon as possible!

OurInitialsSayKMS:

KoolAidManVibes: 

OurInitialsSayKMS: SHUICHI STOP LAUGHING BEFORE KOKICHI CHECKS YOUR SCREEN

KoolAidManVibes: I dont think we have 2 worry about it. Oma's just staring at him

OurInitialsSayKMS: Oh my god he's worse than Keebo
Kokichi slipped away from the rest of the table. There were about twenty minutes left of the lunch period, so he had already finished his meal. The same couldn't be said for a certain inventor. Miu stood in her empty lab, goggles on as she worked away on a complicated invention. Kokichi made his way the room in question, only to run into another one of his classmates on the way.

"O—Ouma-Kun?!” Kaede jumped, "what are you doing here?" Her eyes found the bag of baby carrots Kokichi held in his right hand, "oh. I already tried. She won't budge."

"Hm? Oh, this?! Silly Akamatsu-Chan! I was just about to go stuff my face in front of Iruma-Chan," Kokichi lied, but it was flamboyant enough that Kaede could see through it.

"You can try to convince her if you want to, but I spent over forty minutes there and nothing worked," Kaede sighed harshly, but her tone softened before she spoke again, "I'm getting worried."

With that, Kaede took off. Probably to the cafeteria with the others if Kokichi had to guess. The supreme leader pushed open the door and walked into the engineering lab. The air was significantly colder inside and he went unnoticed by Miu, who had her back to him. Kokichi skipped over to the blonde to get her attention, but it was useless. However, one look at the inventor's face told him enough. Her hands were holding onto the table so tight that her knuckles were white and her face looked slightly green and shone with sweat. She was sick, likely from starvation. She probably hid it from Kaede, which is why it surfaced only now.

"I got something for you, Iruma-Chan," Kokichi grinned, waving around the bag of carrots. Miu eyed the bag, "I'm fasting," she says, "come back in about eleven hours."

Kokichi groaned before moving over to the inventor. He dropped the bag in front of her, taking the same stern approach he did with Shuichi just weeks ago. The circumstances were different though, where Shuichi's emotions had taken away his appetite whereas Miu was rejecting her appetite altogether. She simply grabbed the bag and put it next to a sandwich. Kokichi figures that the sandwich had probably come from Kaede.

"Whatcha building?" Kokichi asked, stalling for time as he though of another course of action, "better not be another one of those weird sex toys."

"Wouldn't you like to know," Miu snarled as a sweaty hand reached for a screwdriver, "it's a robot, actually. I'm making the framework and the plans and then Keebs is going to program it."

"Wow, that sounds boring," Kokichi deadpanned, tossing one of the carrots in Miu's direction.

"Well that's because you're stupid!" Miu responded, popping the carrot into her mouth before tightening a screw.

"Hm, am I?" Kokichi asked, leaning back in his seat with a satisfied smile. He knew tricking the girl into eating wasn't exactly humane, but it was the best he could do. He continued to speak so Miu wouldn't notice the carrot when she began to speak, "I was gonna ask if the robot was meant to do some pervy stuff, but then I remembered that Keebs is the one programming it. They seem like the type who would shield their eyes when two people hold hands."

"Oh, if we're talking about those kinds of people, Amamass is there for sure!" Miu smirked, "I remember this one time there was this chick who asked him out. The fucker said 'I think I left my freezer on' and left."
"Are we exposing our childhood friends now?" Kokichi laughed.

He was about to throw another carrot and continue talking, but Miu responded first, "Amami wasn't really my friend in middle school or any stupid shit like that. He was a hell of a lot nicer than the other kids though."

It was at that moment where Kokichi wondered something. What did she mean by that? Hell of a lot nicer? Kokichi came to a conclusion, but didn't wish to vocalize it. He knew there was a time and place. He wouldn't ever admit it though, but he was scared. He had his additional reasons to be, but the concept had also brought up memories that linked back to the scar on his neck and the vase of dead flowers laying somewhere in the kitchen at his orphanage. That alone was nearly enough to make the words die in his throat.

"I see," Kokichi continued, tossing another carrot to Miu. He waited until it passed her lips before speaking again, "well, that won't stop me! Maki-Chan was even more of an emotionally constipated person back then than she is now. A kid asked her out and she tossed him into a trash can, apologized, then zoomed to class."

"Pfft, what a dumbass!" Miu cackled, "what about you, twink? Ever have any ladies thirsting for you? Or a dude. We don't discriminate here."

"Me? Nah," Kokichi brushed off the question, but the words scrawled onto his desk still lingered on his mind, "you?"

"Nah."

The two of them avoided the subject until the bell rang. By then, the bag of carrots was still halfway full.

<I am legitimately unable to write fluff. Is there something wrong with me???>

"Ultimate Nightmare Fuel," May 4th, 16:03

Gonta: GONTA DID A BAD THING

Kork: Enlighten me.

Gonta: So Gonta found this very pretty butterfly

Kork: And killed it?

Gonta: No! Do people do that?!?!?!

Kork: 

Kork: Actually...

DEGENERATE is online

Kork: Oh dear, it would appear that I've been caught.

DEGENERATE: IM GONNA HAVE TO STOP YOU RIGHT THERE DEGENERATE MALE

DEGENERATE: Don't worry Gonta! Nobody would dare hurt something so pretty! Not even a degenerate
Gonta: Thank goodness!

Kork: What are you going to do when he's out in the real world?

DEGENERATE: Protect him out there as well!

Kork: I suppose there's no use arguing here, is there?

DEGENERATE: Nope! I'm gonna go check on Yumeno-San now

Gonta: Is Yumeno-san aslip again?

DEGENERATE: Yea

Gonta: Well tell yumen-san that Gonta hopes she feels better!

Kork: Send her my best wishes as well.

DEGENERATE: I dunno. I don't think Yumeno-San would want your wishes, Shinguuji. I'll give her yours though Gonta!

DEGENERATE is offline

Kork: I've been wounded.

Gonta: Is Shinguuji-Kun ok?!

Kork: It's an expression.

Gonta: Shinguuji-Kun's face is wounded?!

Kork:

Kork: How about we continue that story you were telling before?

Gonta: Ok

Gonta: So fowned a beotiful butterfly

Kork: Yes.

Gonta: Gonta got a pikchure of the butterfly for his lab

Kork: Continue.

Gonta: But then Gonta forgot to tell the butterfly how nice it looked!

Kork:

Kork: Ohgoshyouresopurethatyoualmostsolvemyentirecharacterarcinthisbookjustbyexisting.

<I didn't do too bad there, so I don't have much to say here other than the fact that I just realized I stopped making Tenko speak in the third person. It's fine. I'll just add it to her arc>

Tsumugi sat in her lab, sewing a design into a brightly colored fabric. The creative arts lab, where
Tsumugi was partially assigned, was empty at this point, most of it's students not up for the idea of staying there after classes had ended. Or so she thought. Tsumugi jumped at the sound of the door slamming open, jabbing her sewing needle into her finger in the process.

"Well, well, well Tsumugi!" Angie cheered, skipping over to her table, "Just who Angie was looking for!"

"Looking for?" Tsumugi pondered, "what could you possibly want from plan old me?"

"Actually, it was Tenko who wanted to ask you for this!" Angie explained, still upbeat, "she has something she'd like you to make~"

With that, Angie handed Tsumugi, who was in the process of bandaging her finger, a piece of paper. On it was a sketch that could've only been done by Angie. The drawing was detailed and the lines ranged from light to dark. However, the labels weren't in Angie's handwriting. If Tsumugi had to guess, she'd say it was Tenko's.

"Well?" Angie spoke expectantly, "can you do it?"

Tsumugi cast a glance at the project she was already working on before responding, "yea, I'll have it done before midnight."

As Angie celebrated with no one in particular, Tsumugi analyzed the blueprint. She picked up the fabrics from the many shelves provided one by one with an amount of concentration and duty that not many people recognize from the normally subdued girl. Somewhere within this fine, Angie had calmed down, going to watch Tsumugi as she got to work. She didn't quite understand why, but the girl's expression kept her from saying anything. She didn't want to interrupt it.

As promised, Tsumugi left the room at half past nine with the finished product. Angie, who followed closely behind her, had proven herself useful by specifying patterns and materials so the other girl could get everything just right. Night had covered the school grounds in a comfortable silence as the two girls made their way to the dormitory. They were greeted by Kirumi upon entrance and ran into Ryoma on their way to Tenko's dorm. Tsumugi made a motion to knock, but Angie ignored it, opening the door and bursting in with little to no shame whatsoever.

"Ah, Yonaga-San, Shirogane-San!" Tenko whisper-yelled so she wouldn't awake Himiko, who lay nearby on the aikido master's bed, "that was fast. Good job!"

"Yea, it was finished sooner than I thought it'd be. It was just plain weird," Tsumugi commented, placing the item on Tenko, desk, "she’s still out?"

"Hm—oh, you mean Yumeno-San? Yea," Tenko affirmed, turning to the magician, "she’s been in and out of consciousness, but the nurse says that she’s just gotta rest. She’s woken up from nightmares once or twice, but she calms down if I hold her."

"I know this doesn’t really fit the mood very well," Tsumugi added, "but you two are just plain adorable."

"Nyahaha," Angie laughed, someone managing the volume, "Angie knew she wasn’t the only one who thought so~"

"You guys!" Tenko shrieked, "Yumeno-San and I’s relationship is not like that! I keep my thoughts as pure as possible when I think of her!"

Tenko was loud enough to rouse Himiko from her slumber. She didn’t catch the conversation and
just cracked her eyes open and mumbling some unintelligible nonsense. This was enough to direct the attention of all three girls in her direction. Tenko, naturally, panicked as she pondered the possibility that Himiko had overheard, but it melted away almost instantly as Himiko rubbed the sleep from her eyes and sat up for the first time in almost a day.

“Aha! You’re awake!” Angie chirped, bouncing over to where the other girl sat, “Atua’s been waiting for you!”

“Nyeh...” Himiko mutters, “m’ sleepy...”

“There’s no rush for you to wake up!” Tenko assured, “you can go back to sleep if you need to!”

“No,” Himiko objected, “I don’t wanna be up all night.”

“Well in that case, I have something for you,” Tenko began before turning to pick up the object left on the wooden surface of her desk. “I’ve noticed that you don’t wear your hat anymore because of what happened. So, I asked Yonaga-San to get Shirogane-San to make this new one for you.”

The hat was a simple white color, contrasting the darker color of the hat Himiko had worn throughout the simulation. The base of it was simple and made from a simple suede-like material that felt soft to the touch. The band wrapped around the cone part of the hat was a lovely red color. Like raspberries. Inside, there were many patterns embroidered. Stars. Moons. Himiko examines the garment a moment before tearing up a bit.

“O—oh no!” Tenko panicked, “is it something I said?! Do you not like the hat?! I can make a new one all by myself if you want me to!”

“No... it’s just,” Himiko wipes the tears from her eyes, “I’m just really happy.”

Tenko relaxed as smiled down at the other girl before wrapping her in a tight hug. Himiko soon exited the room with the hat, claiming that she was going to ask Kirumi for some tea. As soon as the door swung shut, Tsumugi and Angie turned to Tenko, who immediately picked up on the expressions on their faces.

“You guys are going to say things now, aren’t you?” Tenko chuckled nervously.

“What happened to ‘our relationship isn’t like that?’” Tsumugi teased, but the smile on her face was more happy than it was playful.

“Stohoop,” Tenko whined, cheeks going red.

“But you’re so cute~” Angie cooed.

“W—well, what about you two?!” Tenko cried defensively, scrambling for something, “I uh... yea! What about you two?!”

“Tsumugi’s a solid eleven out of ten,” Angie shamelessly admitted.

“I... what?” Tsumugi gaped, confused by the very sudden turn of events.

“Ahaha! See!?” Tenko exclaimed, “adorable! Both of ya!”

“Oh my gosh stop you guys, we sound like twelve year olds,” Tsumugi hastily spoke, embarrassment seeping into her voice.

The three of them eventually settled down, opting for idle chit chat. Himiko joined soon after she
got back from downstairs, clutching a cup of steaming tea. They talked into the night until they could barely hold their eyes open and parted ways. For the first in a while, they were all able to feel like teenagers again. Not killing game participants.

Yea! This chapter got out faster than I thought it would, but it was a lot shorter than I would’ve liked it to be. It’s not the shorter chapter to date (chapter 6,) but still.

Chapter Twelve: The Secret is... I am Me (PREVIEW!)

Hey, so remember that secret Keebo had way back in I think chapter two? Well I didn’t forget about it and we’re going to learn exactly what is going on inside their head as they talk it’s out with the only person that they can.
The Secret is... I am Me

Chapter Summary

We finally learn what that secret from chapter 2(?) is.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

TW: Gender dysphoria.

It's times like these when I wish I was still a robot. There is no computer that I, even after years of work, could create that would ever feel even a fraction like this. Everything feels broken and it's like I can't control a single breath I take. Nothing will ever be enough. I will never be enough. It's times like these when I wish I was anything but human.

Keebo lay restlessly in bed, staring at the ceiling with only partial interest. This wasn't an uncommon occurrence, sadly. The numb feeling constantly gnawed at their brain like some kind of bug that just wouldn't go away. It's grown worse lately. It's always been bad, really, but never like this. Now they can't sleep as their mind matured more and more and more and their problems grew larger and larger with it. The feeling of discontent broke them.

Tonight was particularly awful. Dissatisfaction and agony peeled away at Keebo's happiness in a terrible harmony. They cried softly, sobs muffled by the pillow they held to their chest. Just yesterday, everything felt okay. They smiled and didn't feel themself cringe every time someone added "kun" to the end of their name. Now, the thought of it just made the ultimate want to themself in a world where they never have to hear the reminder. The reminder that their body. Their life. Will never be exactly what they wanted.

It was so great that it pulled the roboticist to action. They grabbed their phone in a fit of desperation. Their mind was just about to crush them when they finally reached their messages they had with the only person that could grasp the concept that Keebo felt. The person they never even told, well, not directly, but still knew what was going on. Keebo hesitated for second. Their hands shook and all they wanted was the feeling to go away. The distrust they held in their mind for the person on the other side of the message board eventually gave in and Keebo pressed send.

<I'm extremely sorry if anything is off in this chapter. I tried my best to research and make this as realistic as I could. The last thing I want to do is hurt any of you, so please tell me if this made you uncomfortable or offended anyone.>

"I Thought "I'll see you in court" Meant a Wedding, Not a Lawsuit," May 5th, 3:34

Keebuddy: Are you awake?

GoshDangRobophobe is online

GoshDangRobophobe: Nope
Keebuddy: Okay sorry

GoshDangRobophobe: Wow! Only Gokuhara-Chan would fall for that lie.

Keebuddy: I'm just a little disoriented right now

GoshDangRobophobe: As in drunk???

Keebuddy: Course not!

GoshDangRobophobe:

GoshDangRobophobe: Hold on a moment.

GoshDangRobophobe is offline

<I get anxious every time I write Kokichi. I think I make him too openly kind. I molded his backstory a little so his behavior will make sense later on, but I still tend to worry.>

Keebo wallowed in regret as their classmate went offline. Did they mess up? Keebo knew it was a gamble contacting Kokichi for this, but they felt like it was their last hope. They didn't want to burden anyone else and the supreme leader was the only one who seemed to pick up on what ran through their head. Rantaro, Miu, Shuichi, Kaede, Korekiyo and even Kaito seemed to have had their fair share of suspicions, but it never went beyond that.

Keebo let out a choked sob before covering their mouth. They dropped onto their bed, feeling hopelessly around their face. Their nose was cutely shaped and their jaw was round. It felt too feminine. Their build, despite the tinier waist, felt too masculine. And... well it was always a reminder that their body was very much male. They didn't want to be either though. Not right now. They felt like they wanted to be Idabashi Keebo. Not male. Not female. They silently cursed the world as more and more tears slid down their face.

Just when Keebo was about to succumb the raw despair in their head, they heard the door to their room slide open. Kokichi burst through as if he owned the place, but seemed to take extra care to not be ridiculously loud. However, before Keebo could open their mouth, the purple haired boy pulled out a few rags from his pocket. He took look around the roboticist's room for a moment before sighing, likely relieved for whatever reason, and placed the rags back in his pocket.

"Heya Keebs!" Kokichi greeted, skipping over to the other ultimate with a carelessness that didn't fit the mood of the room. "I was going to talk over text, but then my phone died!"

"How did you even get in here?" Keebo pondered, sitting up on their bed. Their voice was weak and lacked its typical confidence and slight accusatory tone. The tears had stained their face, but had considerably slowed down.

"I stole Yumeno-Chan's totally real magic powers and blasted the lock right open," Kokichi exaggerated, "you should've seen it, Keebs!"

Both students knew they were beating around the bush. The problem lay in the middle of the room like an ugly wound no one wished to clean because they knew how much it would hurt. The truth was hidden in the tears on Keebo's face and the raging storm of Kokichi's mind. However, when the typical banter died down, the wound was all that remained. There were no more bruises or cuts to bandage. An uncomfortable silence resonated throughout the dormitory, neither of them wanting to be the first to speak.
"Anywho," Kokichi grinned, finally choosing to break the silence, "what did Keebs mean when they said they were disoriented?"

Keebo stiffened despite the fact that they were the one who had brought it to light, "it's uh... well... you know what gender dysphoria is, r—right?"

"Well duh!" Kokichi deadpanned, but caught Keebo's gaze, "still, I'm a newbie at this, so if you want my help, you're going to have to give me something to work with... a—and if you don't want to... I don't have a hit man available right now, so I'll let you off the hook just this once."

"I think I'll be fine," Keebo muttered, "talking's sort of toned everything down a bit, so I can at least talk a bit. What do you mean by your help, though?"

"Tossing you into a blender, obviously," Kokichi snarked, "come on, have some faith in me! Even I'm not that awful."

"Okay then..." Keebo began, hesitating for a moment "well, I just feel like... I'm never going to have any control over that part of me. Like the other day, I was perfectly fine and now, here I am, talking to you of all people because it's gotten so bad. No offense."

"Oh please. I'm flattered."

"If you say so," Keebo replied, "I can't really describe it that well. It's like my head's trying to tell me to change and when I give it my all to give it everything it wants, it just changes its mind. It feels like I'm never going to truly be happy with myself no matter what I do..."

Kokichi hummed in acknowledgement, at a loss for words.

"I have no control over how I feel, too," Keebo added, tears that were always somewhere in the back of their mind since the start of the conversation beginning to silently drip down their face "it sounds silly, but if I felt... comfortable enough to check off that 'other' box you see on papers and stuff—"they took a moment to suck in a breath"—I—I think I'd be even a fraction happier, but I'm not there yet... It's like the world around me just rejects me all together or something like that."

Kokichi finally spoke again, "y'know, even though like half of us have attempted murder, including you, I think the others would literally throw a parade for you if you told them."

"Are you saying I should tell them now?" Keebo quizzed, looking at the other in confusion.

"No, obviously!" Kokichi exclaimed, "I'm just saying that when you do, they won't give a shit and say corny stuff you hear in LGBTQ movies like 'I'm so glad you told me!' or 'we still love you!'"

"You watch LGBTQ movies?" Keebo inquired, "aren't most of those in English?"

"Not the time, Keebs," Kokichi reminded, "I'm not going to push you out there because I know that that's a shitty thing to have happen to you—"

"Did someone out you?" Keebo panicked, "that's awful!"

"Not about me, Keebs!" Kokichi snapped defensively, "as I was saying. I don't think those dumbasses are going to do anything because they are waaaaaaay different from a lot of people. Not a compliment to them, by the way. They won't leave you behind or anything if that's what you're worried about."
Keebo took a moment to process it, "you really think so?"

"No, I think that all of our fr—classmates are secretly demons and werewolves!" Kokichi exclaimed.

"That's rude!" Keebo argued, regaining their original spark, "still though. Fourteen people is a lot."

"Well for starters, you don't even have to do this now," Kokichi repeated, shooting the other a bored expression, "and even then—"

"No. I'm ready tell them," Keebo grinned, "I already told you, didn't I? Well, more or less. You figured it out on your own, almost accidentally told everyone, told me you were gay as an apology of sorts, then never brought it up again."

"Haha," Kokichi laughed awkwardly, "allow me to continue what I was saying before I was so rudely interrupted. Since you think fourteen people is too much, just tell a few people. Iruma-Chan and Amami-Chan are normally up around now and you have some sort of sexual tension with both of them, right?"

"Ouma-Kun!"

"Fiiiine," Kokichi whined, "you used to have it with Iruma-Chan, but now Amami-Chan is the apple of your eye."

"Please, stop!" Keebo shrieked in embarrassment.

"Okay, okay!" Kokichi complied, smirking, "Saia-Chan normally roams the halls like a zombie around this time as well. You have sexual tension with him too, right?"

"No!" Keebo screeched, "just those two I think is alright for now. I'm fine if Sahara-Kun runs into us though... I trust everyone in our class, but I just want to see how this goes before I say anything to the others."

The tears had already cleared from the roboticist's eyes despite their tendencies for being very emotional. The fear and anguish they felt was slightly less destructive and a newfound drive had overcome the need to cry. They weren't expecting it, honestly, but they didn't hate the feeling. Kokichi stared at the other's face for a moment with a contemplative expression, trying to see past some sort of nonexistent lie. When said lie never made an appearance, he let out a sigh that was so quiet, the air barely caught it and pursed his lips to keep the genuine smile from his face.

"Alrighty then," Kokichi responded, whipping out his phone, "where should we meet them?"

"I don't know... wait, didn't you say your phone was dead?!"

<This won't be the last time I touch on LGBTQ+ in this fic. It won't be a dominant theme, but it fits into the struggles of one couple in particular. It's going to cover the less supportive side of the world though, and I'm honestly sort of scared to write it.>

"The Dark Side of The Lunch Table," May 5th, 3:52

TheDumbass: Hey there, children!

TheSlut: fuck, he's actually older than us
TheEnabler: Oh jeez, you're right

TheDamageControl: Hello guys, I want to talk.

TheEnabler: About what?

TheSlut: why is the good kid awake at this ungodly hour?!

TheDamageControl: I'd rather say it in person.

TheSlut: oh? trying to confess to one of us? i bet it's assmami!

TheEnabler: Hwat?

TheSlut: you're in luck then, keebs! he totally wants your ass too!

TheEnabler: Now hold on a moment

TheDumbass: I knew it all along~

TheDamageControl: Guys! This is serious.

TheEnabler: Sorry

TheDumbass: Oh yea, I forgot what we were doing for a moment there.

TheSlut: you told the dumbass but not me?! the fuck Keebs?!

TheDamageControl: He figured it out on his own!

TheEnabler: Is this about that secret thing we talked about a while back?

TheDamageControl: Yea. Can you guys meet me in the common room?

TheEnabler: Sure

TheEnabler and I other are offline

TheSlut: idfc what Keebs says, i'm gonna be the maid of honor at those guys' wedding

TheDumbass: I call dibs on Amami-Chan's best man

<Do you guys have any suggestions for my characterization?>

Keebo felt like puking as nervousness swam through their mind. Still, amongst it all shone a feeling of determination. Eagerness. The weight on their shoulders felt so heavy and they were finally ready to remove it, not caring about the cramps and the sores that may come later. They were ready for the others to support them when the burden grew too strong. They were ready for them to know.

Kokichi skipped around the room until Keebo finally stood up to leave. He was waiting for the roboticist to muster up the courage, but he claimed to be bugging their dormitory to watch the other's every move. Kokichi didn't say anything as he quietly shut the door behind Keebo and instantly pranced ahead of the other ultimate. Keebo didn't mind though.
"I suppose I should thank you," Keebo said from above the silence, "you didn't have to come all the way over to help me."

"Yea I did! My phone died, remember?!" Kokichi scoffed, probably well aware that he was just using the very much alive device not even five minutes ago, "it's your fault for being so emotional! Silly Keebs is so forgetful."

"There are multiple inaccuracies in that statement," Keebo groaned, but chose not to elaborate. "Still, I'm beginning to understand more about what Saihara-Kun says now."

Kokichi paused, "eh?! Is my beloved Saihara-Chan speaking behind my back?! I'm so betra—oh, hello my beloved!"

Confused, Keebo turned their head a bit and sure enough, there stood Shuichi. The other looked worn out from sleep and had likely just come from his dorm. His eyes were heavy with sleep that barely seemed there to begin with and his clean blue hair stuck out a bit as he stared down at his classmates. Keebo didn't personally find anything particularly interesting about the display, so they were slightly confused at the faintest shade of pink that only they could see in that level of light.

"Wh—what's going on here," Shuichi yawned, using his hand to cover his mouth as he did so, making the words come out muffled.

Kokichi opened his mouth to say something, but no words came out. Noticing that both Keebo and Shuichi's were on him, the supreme leader played the action off as him going for his own yawn. Keebo couldn't help but envy how comfortable the pair seemed their mild actions. Even Shuichi was alright with a sliver of pale skin on his stomach showing as he stretched the stiffness from his muscles. Keebo unintentionally slumped a bit, knowing that the body they rested in was something they'd never truly feel as theirs. The slightest hint of anger flared up in their head, but they shoved it down with the help of the logic that nearly constantly ran their mind.

"Saihara-Kun," Keebo spoke up, "could you come with us? Please."

"S—sure," Shuichi hesitated before agreeing, "if it's not annoying to ask, where are we going?"

"Just to the common room," Keebo responded, stuffing their still shaking hands into the hidden shelter of their sweatshirt.

"Oh, alright," Shuichi hummed, staring down so he wouldn't trip on the stairway.

When the three of them made it to the common room, Rantaro and Miu were already there. The two of them were sprawled out on two separate couches, faces casual despite the ridiculous ways they'd chosen to sit. Miu was sitting—well, more laying—on the upper part of the couch rather than the actual cushions whereas Rantaro was resting in between the coffee table and the other chair. His legs were balanced on the table, but he was using the sitting part of the couch as a method of balancing himself in the air about one or two inches above the ground. Neither of them seemed to notice the trio, eyes trained on a kids cartoon playing on the television.

Keebo's breath quickened as the weight of the situation slowly began to crash down on them. They had never felt more ready for something, but at the same time, they'd never been more terrified. It was all happening so fast. The moment the words are uttered, everything will be out on the table. It wasn't that Keebo doubted their classmates, it's just that there was this natural fear of rejection that still lingered in the back of their mind. It was like getting a shot. You could be aware that the process won't hurt you, but still be afraid of the needle. Shuichi recognized the sound of heavy breathing and turned to look at Keebo, Kokichi following at the other's actions.
"Ah, Idabashi-Kun?" Shuichi gasped. The words were soft and kind, but the sound of the honorific felt like a knife twisting into Keebo's gut.

"What's up gamers?!" Kokichi shouted out of the blue, "what's going on tonight? Are we gonna play some UNO?"

"Hey!" Miu growled, eyes not leaving the television, "I'm in the middle of seeing how long it takes for these dumbass characters to figure out how to do some basic fucking shit!"

Shuichi looked at Kokichi, confused by his words, but Keebo knew what it meant. It was their last chance. They didn't have to do this. Not yet. It was the first time Keebo really saw anything in their classmate other than his constant teasing and loud voice. It was different. Keebo supposed it came from memory alterations. The roboticist couldn't help but wonder how much better, or how much worse Kokichi’s real memories must be to cause such a change. However, realizing they had yet to say something, Keebo directed their attention back to the current conversation.

“Didn’t Idabashi-kun—" the knife twisted once more “—call us down here to say something serious?" Rantaro spoke up, leaning back from their abnormal sitting position.

“Uh y—yea. Yea, I did," Keebo admitted, hating how much their voice shook as the syllables rolled off their tongue. They turned to Shuichi and Kokichi again, “could you guys go sit with them?"

Shuichi gave a quick word of affirmation while Kokichi immediately jumped to the couches, pushing Miu from her place on the seats. The familiar sound of Miu’s string of curses and strange insults, followed by Kokichi’s equally strange retorts gave a sense of simplicity to Keebo’s troubled mind. Their heart was still practically leaping out of their chest. Shuichi took a seat next to Rantaro and the green haired boy gave the roboticist a smile. It was small, but it was sweet and made Keebo reflexively return it. The gesture cleared their head even the slightest bit and replaced the pounding in their chest with a warm feeling Keebo still didn’t quite understand.

“So... the reason I... gathered you all here,” Keebo’s words came out in choked chunks. A lump had formed in their throat, “is to... uh... to tell you... tell you that.”

“Take your time,” Rantaro assured, sending a slightly larger smile. Somewhere in Keebo’s mind, they imagined that smile going away after hearing what they had to say and the very thought of it gave tears to match the sobs, “hey, come here.”

Rantaro opened his arms and in a fit of confusion and sadness, Keebo engulfed themself in the embrace. Rantaro’s grip was firm, but not crushing. It felt safe. Keebo knew they were getting tears on the adventurer’s shirt, but they couldn’t bring them self to pull away. The warmth of the other helped Keebo not only realize how cold they were, but to warm up. The feeling melted away the
thought of that smile going away. A smile attached to a hug so warm wouldn’t leave so easily. The others vanished from Keebo’s mind for a moment. They weren’t scared anymore. They weren’t scared of telling Rantaro and that was enough.

“I’m gender fluid.”

Keebo nearly missed the sound of collective breaths releasing from around them, including their own. Keebo sniffled before continuing, “like... sometimes, I’m... I’m p— perfectly fine with being... a boy. Other times... I just don’t feel like either a boy or girl. It... fluctuates between those two, I guess. It’s... c—could someone please say something? It’s too quiet.”

The room had dipped into a silence that wasn’t particularly comfortable, but not tense or uncomfortable. Kokichi still had yet to say anything, but Keebo supposed the leader had done enough to help already. Miu seemed to still be processing the information. Shuichi shot a thoughtful look at Kokichi, which was ignored, before looking back at Keebo. Someone still had yet to make any sort of move or motion to break the silence that no one could attach a mood to.

“Do... you have a preference?” Shuichi was the first to speak up, “a—as in honorifics. O—or a name that you think fits you better, I mean...”

“I—I’m fine with Idabashi Keebo,” Keebo responded softly, suddenly feeling very tired, “I’d prefer no honorifics, regardless of my current identification.—“ Keebo thought for a moment “—and, if it’s not too much trouble, if I’m not physically present, I’d prefer it if you used they and them pronouns... just in case.”

“Hell yea!” Miu obliged, pushing Kokichi out from her original spot on the couch, “and! If anyone messes up, I’ll kick their ass!”

“Th—that won’t be necessary, Iruma-San!” Keebo yelped.

“Don’t worry, she won’t do too much damage,” Rantaro teased nonchalantly, pulling away from the hug that Keebi forgot was still going on.

“Yea!” Kokichi added from the floor, “by the way, that hurt, you used tissue!”

As Miu erupted into a fit of sputters and questionable noises, Keene felt their eyelids grow heavy. Perhaps it was the feeling of finally removing the weigh on their chest, or maybe all the crying they’ve done in the past hour or so, but the ultimate was exhausted. However, not wanting to leave the moment that had given Keebo such happy feelings, they couldn’t bring themselves to leave. Instead, they found themselves sitting on the couch as consciousness slipped away into a peaceful slumber. Not one of pain and tears.

“Ultimate Nightmare Fuel,” May 5th, 14:19

Weeb: Is Idabashi awake again?

ThingGreen: Yea, they woke up about five minutes. They’re in my lab with me

ProfessorThot: course you are!

ThingGreen: It’s time to stop

ProfessorThot: what do you want Keebs for anyway?

Weeb: I made them something. Sort of a sign of my acceptance because it was kind of hard to
convey over screen

**ThingGreen:** They were so determined to get it out, I’ve never seen them like that

**NotTodaySatan:** Rantaro probably thought it was cute~

**ThingGreen:** You people

**DEGENERATE:** Plus, Yonaga-San, Yumeno-San and I are out today!

**ThingGreen:** No offense, but I wasn’t expecting you to be so supportive that you gave Idabashi a virtual hug

**DEGENERATE:** Mind over strength. This is something they strongly believe in. That’s worth more than anything physical, even my Neo Aikido skills

**ThingGreen:** That’s nice of you. You’ve changed a lot. That’s a compliment, by the way

**DEGENERATE:** I don’t accept compliments from degenerates

**ThingGreen:** Okay cool

<For once, I don’t have much to say. It’s just a normal divider now...>

Tsumugi didn’t like the researching lab almost as much as Rantaro did at first. It reminded her of the room where she began her line of sins that piled up one by one. Nevertheless, the blue haired girl made her way to the far hallway, carefully handling a tiny box she’d taken from her lab. The contents weren’t particularly fragile or anything, it’s just that the meaning and emotion hidden within made Tsumugi not want to risk anything.

The researching lab was noticeably cleaner thanks to Kirumi. The scent of the books still lingered in the air, but it was no long accompanied by dust that made Tsumugi want to sneeze. From behind her glasses, the girl scanned the room, looking for a pair of her classmates who had claimed their location to be there exactly. Eventually, Tsumugi found them. Keebo and Rantaro. Keebo looked like they were still drifting off. That’s what happens when you’re used to having a healthy sleep schedule. Rantaro, on the other hand, seemed hyper aware of the roboticist, holding a strained expression as they sleepily leaned against the adventurer’s shoulder. The boy was doing his best to pretend he was reading the book that rested in his lap.

“Hello,” Tsumugi greeted, successfully gaining the attention of both of her classmates, “um, Idabashi? I made you something.”

Despite Keebo being one of the students kinder to Tsumugi, the two’s relationship was awkward. They couldn’t bring themselves to make conversations, likely due to their drastically different interests, and the game had always managed to root itself into the back of both their minds. Of course, that doesn’t mean they don’t chat. They exchange hellos in the hallway and there was this one time they had to do partner work together for an assignment. Despite this, Keebo sat up, much to Rantaro’s relief (or disappointment) and looked up at the cosplayer with the best curious expression that someone half asleep could muster.

“Hm? Yea?” Keebo murmured, looking like they would collapse at any moment, “what is it?”

Tsumugi crouched down to the same level as her classmate. Rantaro has stopped trying to distract himself and was now staring at the bespectacled girl alongside Keebo. She carefully fumbled
around with the box. It wasn’t exactly necessary to put the creation inside, but Tsumugi had expected that Keebo would be completely awake and able to open the box on their own, but alas. When the box was finally open, Tsumugi extracted two items. They were bracelets made from knotted threads. One was a simple blue, whereas the other alternated between black and white knots. Keebo stared at the bracelets for a moment.

“They’re identification bracelets,” Tsumugi explained, “it’s so you don’t have to worry about public spaces. Like if you wear the black and white one, everyone who you tell about the bracelets will know you currently wish to be identified as they/them. You won’t have to say or do too much... do you like it?”

Keebo stared at the accessories, dumbfounded before gently taking them from Tsumugi’s grasp. They examined the knots with a childlike wonder. Each one was done perfectly to make the end products look as attractive as possible. After a while, Keebo looked up at Tsumugi, happy tears in their eyes, before nodding. Snorting in amusement at the roboticist’s reaction, Tsumugi pulled the other into a hug, which was almost instantly returned. Rantaro smiled lightly in the background. It wasn’t exactly a conversation, but he knew both students understood each other a little better.

Chapter End Notes

I sincerely apologize if my portrayal of gender dysphoria was incorrect or offensive. If I made any critical errors, please alert me and I’ll do my best to fix them. I want this fic to be enjoyable for everyone.
Chapter Summary

We find ourselves in the view of a new character as Kirumi’s birthday celebration approaches. Despite what you’d expect, there’s a shockingly low amount of Kirumi.

The human brain is weird.

Then again, if all human brains are weird, then wouldn't weird be considered normal? If you go down that line of thought, human brains are actually plain and ordinary. It's all dependent on the variables. I've found that if you can use an adjective with negative connotations on a wide spread group, then it no longer seems so bad, whereas an adjective with a positive connotation just makes things boring. For example, if all the books you read are good, then is there really such thing as a good book? How much would the quality have to deteriorate before you thought to yourself 'hey, this book sucks more than socks with sandals!'? If you read just a single bad book, can you tell?

Sort of an excessive way to get my point across, but I've always been the type crank up the theatrics, haven't I? This leads me to now. Say the opposite was true. If all you've had are bad experiences, would you be able to tell if you're suddenly in a better situation? No. Why? Well, let me put it this way. When you put a glass container under extreme heat, then cool it off too fast, chances are, the thing is gonna shatter. Shattering is a lot worse than extreme heat. So here's my question. How long is it going to be until this 'amazing, super fun second chance,' we've been given shatters? We were under the heat of that game for so long and suddenly, everything's alright? What kind of bullshit even is that? Therefore, I've come to the conclusion that the killing game is going to return to shatter us all. And I'm ready.

Yea right! I can't seriously be that stupid, can I?

Harsh! I make it sound like I'm Momota or something. If anything, that idea is stupid. I dunno, maybe this whole three in the morning dealio is screwing with my weird/normal human brain. Luckily, it's a Saturday. Silly Saihara won't leave his room for most of the day. Having him going around being concerned for me or whatever is something that I'd prefer not to put up with today. A simple lie should do the trick with everyone else other than maybe Maki or Amami. No one really bothers talking to me when I do that either way. That's fine though. I'd rather not have someone pick up on every little thing about me. Imagine the damage! The horror!

I wish someone would at least try though...

Ew, gross! Seriously, I'm gonna barf. Silly me for thinking about silly things like that! And when all of our lives are in mortal peril?! How selfish of me! I should be scheming against the mastermind. Figure out who they are before this game can start up again... yea. I can leave a note from the past. Hide it away in here. If they erase our memories again, me or whoever ends up in my dorm can find it. It's shaky and risky, but it's my best bet here.

And if the games really are over?

That's not possible. It's sort of stupid to even ponder that possibility. How could we just be safe all of a sudden after all of this? It's stupider than stupid.
It's terrifying.

That's a funny story! Did I get it on one of those sketchy ads you find on informational websites only nerds like Keebs look at? Actually, those sites are normally paid for by sponsors or something, so maybe not there. I shouldn't joke about that though. I'm above emotions like terror. I am the terror, aren't I?

I'm not supposed to feel them.

Wow, I'm on a roll with this, aren't I? I should become a comedian.

I'm not allowed to feel them.

Not after what I did to Gon—Gokuhara.

Jeez, just call him Gonta you doof.

I don't deserve to call him that.

I saw what happened the other night.

It's my fault.

I should've died right then and there.

No matter how much I fight it.

Defeating a nonexistent villain will never redeem me.

I'm just clinging on to the last hope of it.

But I'm just like what they said.

Just a monster.

A jerk.

A murderer.

Deserves to die.

Die.

Die.

Die.

Well that's enough of that! Silly fresh air, making me think silly things and telling me things I already know and accept with open arms. I've been standing out on the veranda for too long. That's all. Those words aren't true, anyway. Sure, if I died, no one would miss me and my funeral would be like a Christmas party, but that doesn't mean I deserve to die. Right...? No bother! After I blow this whole killing game out of the water, maybe I won't have to wonder about that. People will be bowing down to me and using cliche lines you hear from movies. Like the ones where the hero is all misunderstood and stuff, but saves the day and everyone begs for their lives. Okay, I can't even pretend that lie is true.
It's a little colder inside my dorm than it is outside. It's weird because it's still like, three in the morning. The air outside is throwing nonsense at me, but I think it might be better out there than in here. Even if it's colder, it's stuffy in here because I haven't used my air conditioner in weeks. It might blow away the washcloth I have on the security camera. Why is there a security camera in here, might you ask? Well, apparently some genius decided that if someone wakes up from a killing game and tries to stab themself in the abdomen means both a week in a mental facility under suicide watch and five and half more with a security camera in their room.

It should be getting removed today, actually. Took long enough! Should probably remove the cloth though. The therapist is gonna be pissed if she finds out both of her worthless efforts did absolutely nothing. Probably has more to do with the fact I'm a lost cause rather than her being a bad therapist, but whatever. Still though, it might be a little interesting to see her face puff up again like the day of our last session. Maybe she'll give me another journal. Ah, the journals. Due to my "inability to cooperate," the therapist got fed up with me and ran out of time before school began, so she gave me a cute little notebook to write my thoughts in. Thats like saying, "hey, you don't playing sports, right? Here, take this fucking ball and play some, only I won't be watching you!"

Since I'm just a bright ball of evergy, I don't feel like sleeping, but what else is there to do? Going back out on the veranda is out of the question because Amami probably went out on his after I left. I caught him once and he said that he just so happened to wake up because it was one of his "random days." A pathetic lie, honestly. Since our rooms are right next to each other, I can see him hop out of his bed like some sort of mad lad from the corner of my eye, even if I'm completely spaced out. It's like watching a rabbit on steroids. He probably just had a nightmare or something.

*It happens way too often though.*

*I'm sort of worried.*

*Are his nightmares like mine?*

Of course, I don't get nightmares! Only happy dreams. The secret is finding the perfect position to sleep in. Obviously, it's not that difficult if you're not stupid. Like how sleeping on your side makes it easier to dramatically roll out of bed first thing in the morning, or like how only using one blanket can make surprise attacks much much easier! That's all there is too it! All in a day's work of being a supreme leader of evil. Even the way I sleep is manipulated by countless calculations because unhappy sleep is bad sleep, which is exactly why I have this method!

*That and the ceiling.*

*It reminds me of the press.*

*And that makes the nightmares worse.*

*Too many blankets feels like I'm being crushed again.*

*If I sleep without one, I get cold.*

*Just like the steel on that fucking press.*

Obviously, none of that is true. I no longer want to sleep though. Not because of those lies or anything. It's just too stuffy in my room, so I might just explode if I let my guard down with something as simple and unnecessary as sleep!

*We could all die if I let my guard down.*
I don't want that right now.

Well duh! I don't want my self to die right now! There are so many things to do. As a supreme leader of evil, I have quite the agenda. I'm not really in the mood for this silly killing game stuff again because it's getting boring. That's the only reason why I'm doing this. I obviously don't care about those other dumbos I have for classmates. That's sort of obvious though. I'm an ass to them, so the feeling is mutual anyway. It's fine that most of them can't stand the sight of me because that's how it's supposed to be.

Besides, to get this whole "stopping the killing game" thing done and over with, I'm going to have to look right at their ugly faces and see the stupid things they do. I'm going full on Shinguuji mode and I'll have you know that it's one hundred billion percent necessary. If I do that, I can find the mastermind before we get thrown into that game again! Not like that'll be too difficult. My classmates are all psychotic monsters with no redeeming qualities!

Other than maybe Amami's comforting presence.

Which could be an obvious lie to make him seem approachable.

Or Akamatsu's ability to bring people up again.

Could just be a lie to make her seem harmless, or too kind.

Perhaps Hoshi's ability to stay serious in any situation.

Could be a lie to convince the others to rely on him.

Tojo and her overwhelming care that still feels respectful.

Could be another lie to make the others dependent or trusting.

Even Yonaga's uncanny ability to keep smiling.

Could be a lie to hide away her twisted thoughts and emotions.

Chabashira and her constant encouragement.

Could be a lie to shine a light of heroism onto herself.

Shinguuji always there to listen to every side of the story.

Could be another lie to hide him discovering your weaknesses.

Iruma and her hilarious attempts at conversation.

Could be a lie to make herself seem careless.

Gokuhara and his constant kindness and stupid forgiveness.

Could just be a lie to regain my favor. No other reason to ever want to talk to me again...

Momota and his ways of bringing people together.

Could be using lies to seem incapable of such a deed as to mastermind.

Shirogane and her oddly enjoyable ramblings.
Could just be a lie to distract from any suspicious activity.

*Keebs and the way they get happy over little things.*

Could be another lie to seem non threatening and open with their intentions.

*Yumeno and her strange amount of consideration for her friends.*

Could simply be a lie to make it looks she like values any of our lives!

*Maki and the way she truly wishes to change.*

She could be lying still! She did it for years after she took that job.

*Then Saihara.*

Saihara....

I'm thinking silly things again! Tsk tsk! Such thoughts aren't allowed on a supreme leader such as myself. All those kind things are disgusting lies disguised as white lies. Trust is a thing for morons like Momota who are too cowardly to face the facts. People are all crazy sons of bitches if you look hard enough. Lying, thieving bastards who don't care about humans at all. I find it funny that no one other than me seems to understand that. Like, what kind of funky monkey business are they trying to pull?

Either way, I guess I'll have to deal with it. Everyone here doesn't believe a single word I say, not that it's surprising considering I'm the embodiment of walking, talking garbage. Anyway, that means people will get on my case if I fake being sick or something. Tojo's party celebration thing is today, if you can even call it that. Seriously, who does what everyone else wants for their own birthday?! They chose to go to a karaoke bar of all things as well. Probably Shirogane and her weird ass pastimes. Not that I know about those. I don't care about anything the old mastermind says, obviously. Karaoke bars are so stupid for this situation though. Like, imagine sixteen teenagers in this... tiny room. Hm. Sounds boring! Seriously, if I keep thinking about something so boring, I might just cry!

Maybe I should go talk to Saihara. Not that I want to. Supreme leaders don't need friends. Saihara just gets all emo and goes all Saihara Shusleepi in the morning when normal people wake up. Seriously dude, get yourself together though. I guess he's a lot less boring than everyone else. Only by a fraction though! I can't be going soft on little old Saihara. Not to quote Shirogane, but that would be just plain stupid of me.

*And going soft is what kills you.*

Plot twist! I'm actually the softest boy in all the land! People gasp when I curse! They give me their candy and sweets like I'm their king! Of course, I'm still alive, miraculous as that sounds. There's no way that all my softness would ever kill me. Or maybe I'm the toughest in all the land and everyone has come to fear my strength! Of course it's not like I was forced into this. Some people are just born as badasses, I guess.

*Especially if you fuck them up mentally while they're young.*

Of course, that never happened to me! The police just had a little mix up when they chose to arrest dear old momma and papa Ouma. Then again, police officers are reliable people. Not because I know a reliable person who works alongside them! They just put up with a lot of crap. The whole thing was just a lie told by me on the phone. The "scar" I have on my scalp is actually
just a birthmark that showed up late! So is that one mark on my wrist that looks like someone got a little too frustrated with slicing and dicing. Same goes for that tiny little one on my neck and the one on my leg. Even this one on my stomach that just popped out of nowhere! It's changing color, too. Maybe I should sell my body to science.

Enough of the small talk, though. I moved to the desk chair at some point, but that's just a tiny little factoid that has as much significance in this world as me! I said I was going to meet Saihara in the dead of night (how romantic!) before I went off on yet another rambling about random things and random topics that don't matter. I don't push in my chair before leaving my room. Is pushing in chairs really necessary to begin with? If anything, you're doing the next person who sits there a favor by leaving it. Then they won't have to move it, sit down, then scoot forward. It could be simple as sit and scoot!

The hallway has this spooky theme that you only see in cheap horror films made by high school students. It's boring. All I can really hear on the way down is the sound of my own footsteps. What if everyone in the world could suddenly hear everything's other than the sound of their own movement? Wow, what an idea. I'm giving Fukawa a run for her money with all these plot lines! Maybe I should pitch her a few! Picture this: the view pans over to me as I stand in the perfect world. Of course, I'm in hell because I don't belong in such a place. Maybe I don't use that one then. A book without me in it would be way too boring.

"Hello, Ouma-Kun," holy shit, I think my soul just ascended. Bye bye! See you never again!

Did the kitchen get closer to my room? No? Maybe I just have super speed or something because I'm there now and Saihara is sitting there with his ugly face with his long eyelashes with his eyes that always look either gold or green to me. Of course, I don't know that off the top of my head! I just figured it out by the way the lamp light caught on his hideous face at just the right angle and made them look all nice and glowey. Or something. I dunno. I have better things to do than stare it Saihara and his pretty... hideous face. He doesn't have to know that though.

"Hey Saihara-Chan! You look pretty as always~" perfect.

Okay, this is boring. He didn't even react! Did he even hear me?! Saihara knows better than to defy the ruler of anything and everything, doesn't he? He's not as stupid as everyone else. If I look enough though, it's obvious that he's just way too into his book. What a nerd! That means he just naturally greeted me when I walked in. And here I thought he was too anxious to do such a thing! Imagine how embarrassing it would be if it wasn't me. Come to think of it, Saihara does this a lot. He always trusts that it's me when I walk in. He sounds calm for once...

*That makes me happy.*

Can it with the nonsense, for real now!

<Yes, I know any sort of Kokichi chapter wouldn't be expected until later, but this is necessary. Trust me.>

"*Ultimate Nightmare Fuel," May 12th, 17:45*

**ThingPurple**: Okay, but think about it this way. Human chases dog. Dog chases cat. Cat chases mouse. Dog chases mouse. And yet humans are normally afraid of mice?

**Kayayday**: Ouma the subway leaves in fifteen minutes!

**Kayayday**: Could you pick up the pace?!
ThingPurple: How about no?

ThingBlue: Please, Shirogane-San worked really hard to get a room on such short notice.

ThingPurple: How about yes?

ThingBlue: Thank you.

Kayaday: ????

ThingPurple: Saihara-Chan just has a quality, Akamatsu-Chan. Nothing personal~

Kayaday: You're making him blush and he's supposed to be giving us the directions to the station!

ThingPurple: Well gosh! Sorry for making your boyfriend blush! Maybe I'm secretly in love with him??? Who knows???

Kayaday: We aren't a couple Ouma

Kayaday: Why are you so insistent about that?

ThingPurple: Maybe that was a lie about you and Saihara-Chan dating!

Kayaday: Thank you!

ThingPurple: Maybe you're just in love~

ThingBlue: I'm right here...

ThingPurple: Oh yea! Hello my beloved!

ThingBlue: Akamatsu-San and I aren't together or in love, okay?

ThingPurple: Okay fiiiiine!

Kayaday: Seriously, what is this "quality?"

ThingPurple: Dat ass

Kayaday: Ouma, you're going to kill him!

ThingPurple: That was a lie!

ThingPurple: Saihara-Chan is just adorable~

ThingBlue: OUMAKUNSTOP

ThingPurple: Kidding!

<Yay, divider shenanigans!>

The subway is gross. It's that time of day when couples are going to dinner to do gross couple stuff. Seriously, Miss. Acrylic nails over here was literally sucking faces with Mr. Stupid. It's making
everyone else gross as well! Shirogane is holding what looks like the most awkward, yet loud conversation in the history of ever with Yonaga. Hoshi is just staring at Gokuhara with his fish eyes. Iruma, being the slut she is, is literally trying to pole dance for Akamatsu. Amami keeps trying to grab Keebs' hand, but chickening out at the last second. Maki and Momota are holding hands, but they're trying to be sneaky about it. Shinguuji is... oh. That sucks for him. Still though, this is gross! Like geez, keep it to yourselves. Not everyone has that lovely dovey crap! I don't get to deal with this too much.

_Besides, I'm alone._

_And I always will be._

Now's no time for pity parties! The train finally slowed down. Seriously, did they have to make them so fast? Anyway, so the train slows down and all the gross couples leave. We have to follow Shirogane for about two million years because as it turns out, she's plainer than I thought and kept making us wait forever every time we crossed the street. Seriously, it's not like it's matter if I got hit by a car. I almost, did, actually. Silly driver was in my way. Saihara freaked out and it took about five minutes for everyone too stop scolding me. 'Hey, you could've died, I hate you!' That's some Persona 5 level nonsense! That's right, Shirogane's not the only one who can make references!

It's kind of depressing that the karaoke staff gets all excited when we walk in. How much money would Shirogane had to have spent over the years in order to get that kind of treatment? No bother. We're brought into this room that's got all of these weird lights that make everything look a pink or purple color. There are all these tablets as well and this tiny little bar. The alcoholic beverages were removed for legal reasons though. Even in my years and years of expertise, I have no clue what's happening. Shirogane, on the other hand, literally throws herself into one of these puffy little chairs and grabs a tablet. She starts saying stuff that makes absolutely no sense.

People are starting to sing now. Oh boy, what fun. Of course, that's a lie because my classmates can't sing for shit. Iruma sounds like a dying crow with a cinnamon stick shoved up its ass and Keebs' turn was like listening to one of those videos where people toss a brick into a dryer. Probably the reason why those two get along so well. People bond over being shit at singing, I guess. Oh, there's Maki and Momota. They say something in the microphone. Oh, they're coming out of the non gay closet. I almost feel bad when I see his face fall. I’m sort of tempted to get up there and sing something of my own. What’s a good memey song? Doesn’t matter anyway because I’m not going up. The stage is higher up than the rest of the room and it’s stupid.

_It’s also even more cramped over there._

Not that that bothers me! In fact, I could go on partying like there’s no tomorrow forever. Maybe I should sing!

_The ceiling will be even closer on the stage._

Maybe I shouldn’t sing. I could pose for the camera. Shirogane must’ve paid to have the company get photos of the night.

_Cameras also mean someone’s watching you._

_It’s so crowded in here with everyone._

_With everyone so close together, it would be so easy._
The mastermind could get up.

Right here.

Right now.

No.

Please no.

I don’t wanna go back there.

Okay, I’m out of here! Nobody would really notice or care that I’m gone because I’m already in the back of the room. The staff gives me weird looks, but it doesn’t matter.

I failed.

We’re all going to die.

It’s my fault.

Why couldn’t I just try harder?

I have to run. That way the mastermind will be unable to get me. They won’t be able to catch me. I can’t move. My legs are jelly like.

What am I doing?

Why won’t I move?

I’m so scared.

I don’t want this.

I can’t move because I’m scared.

Because I’m a coward.

I can’t move.

So the mastermind is going to catch us.

No, it’s fine~

We’re going to die.

Because I didn’t try hard enough.

Because I’m a coward.

I have no one to blame but myself.

I did this.

WE’RE GOING TO DIE BECAUSE I’M A FUCKING COWARD.

“Ouma.”
Welp, there’s the mastermind now.

“Ouma.”

*Here to take me away.*

“Ouma.”

*I can’t see their face and their voice is all distorted.*

“Can you hear me?”

*Probably from tears.*

“Hey, listen.”

*It doesn’t matter anymore.*

“Ouma!”

*They sound awfully sincere though.*

“I’m trying to help you out here!”

*Oh. Is that a lie?*

*There’s no other options unless I decide against it.*

“He—help,” I make this weird, strangled noise before I can say anything. Stupid.

“I’m trying!” Wow, great help, stranger! “Shit, sorry. Uh, can you hear me now?”

“N—n—no,” jeez, my voice is so shaky? What’s up with that?”

“For fucks sake,” how rude of you! Of course, I can’t say that, but still, “can you... name five things you can hear?”

Okay, shit. What kind of weird test is this? There’s nothing left for me to do though, is there.

“I hear cars.”

The road is back.

“The leaves.”

So are the trees.

“Crickets.”

The sky.

“My voice.”

Me, obviously.

“Your stupid voice.”
Momota.

Momota?

“Okay...” Momota keeps blabbering, “how about four things you can see?”

Momota’s the mastermind, isn’t he.

Otherwise he wouldn’t help me.

He hates me.

Everyone does.

“Ouma. Four things you can see,” why the fuck is he still trying? I guess I have to try. He could kill me and then there would be no chance of ending the game.

“My beautiful hand.”

“Your ugly ass face.”

“The building.”

“That tree over there.”

“Now three things you can feel,” Momota keeps talking.

Why is the mastermind helping me still?

Maybe this is just Momota?

He is stupid like this I guess.

“The grass.”

“The air.”

“My face.”

“Two things you can smell,” Momota just doesn’t stop talking, does he?

Where is the mastermind?

“Your cologne, which is way too strong by the way.”

“Nothing else, your cologne is that overpowering.”

“Hey, I’m trying to help you, asshole!” I’d be lying if I said that wasn’t amusing, “one thing you can taste.”

Maybe we’re safe for now.

“Your fucking cologne. Seriously, what is that stuff?!”

“Whatever... at least it worked,” Momota sighed, “I’d only done that to Sh—an old friend of mine in primary and middle school, so yea... you don’t have to talk about it either. I think I know what happened anyway.”
Well aren’t you smart! Well, quite frankly, I’d rather keep my plans on the down low for until, I dunno, a thousand years have passed. If Momota of all people figured anything out, it would only be a matter of time before he went and blabbed to little old Maki and Saihara. Both of them are pretty meh at the whole secret keeping thing. Saihara is the better of them, but that doesn’t matter. Either way, the ideal is nobody knowing about my business, thank you very much.

“Did you like that little play I put on?” I did this before and it worked, so maybe it’ll work again, “man, it was hilarious watching you freak out and stuff! How would Maki react if she’s saw that face?!”

Based off the idiot’s facial expression, he doesn’t buys it, “I won’t tell anyone. I know you’re weird about this kind of stuff, but if this happens again, I might have to. C’mon, let’s go.”

As I expected, nobody really cared that I was gone. Saihara smiled at me when I walked in for some reason, but that’s about it. He didn’t see, did he? Whatever… he didn’t though, right? Not important! What I should be thinking about is Momota’s blubbery nonsense he calls talking. “If this happens again, I might have to?” Simple. It won’t. Nobody will ever see that part of me until the day I die.

_I don’t even trust myself enough to cry anymore._
Group Projects, Case One

Chapter Summary

When assigned a group project, we get a better look at the inner struggles of all the students. This chapter, we take a look at Kaede, Maki, Kaito and Shuichi.

TW: Strongly implied depression, self deprecation and self harm.

Hello! H—hello. Hey! Hi.

I'm Akamatsu Kaede! My name's Saihara Shuichi... The name's Momota Kaito! Harukawa Maki.

Takumi wasn't the type to give big projects. He gave you things to study and then a quiz later on to see if you're trying hard enough. It took some people (Kaito) a while to understand they had to actually try in order to pass. The process was slightly annoying at first, but now the class had grown accustomed to their strange teachers. They hardly even state anymore when he pokes his head through the ceiling. Despite all this, Takumi brought shocking news to the class one Monday morning.

"As a progress report to the research facility, you guys are going to have to do projects," Takumi explained with disinterest, "you can work in groups of four of your choice. The instructions are on your desk." Then he ducked under the podium like nothing happened.

It didn't take long for groups to be formed. The class seemed to be split into fourths in a natural way that never seemed too noticeable. Of course, there always seemed to be one odd one out for any given trait in any given groups. The independent Tsumugi was surrounded by those guided by belief. The pessimistic Ryoma was surrounded by realists and optimists. The laid back Rantaro was surrounded by anxiety and worry. And the self deprecating Shuichi was surrounded by strong, confident people.

Or so he thought.

<This might be a mess, so bear with me guys.>

"Kaito and The Good Kids," May 14th, 18:34

Idiot: Harukawa!

Idiot: Did you change the names?

YesIDid: No

Moron: look like I'm not the idiot anymore huh akamatsu?

Moron:
Moron: HEY MORON IS JUST FANCY FOR IDIOT

Cretin: At least it's fancy now.

YesIDid: I like how Shuichi has no reaction to his username even though it's probably the worst of all

Cretin: I've been called worse.

YesIDid: Oh, okay

YesIDid:

YesIDid: Wait. No

Cretin: Was there something you wanted to tell us, Akamatsu-San?

Idiot: Yea, my dorm's cleaned up now

Idiot: You guys can come over and we can work on the project

Moron: wuts this project even about?

YesIDid: Read your paper, moron

Moron: I'm not a moron!

Idiot: Stop it!

Idiot: Aren't you guys dating?

YesIDid: Hush

Moron: its fine! maki roll doesn't mean any harm

Cretin: I'm almost to your dorm, Akamatsu-San. Are you two coming?

Moron: just a sec!

YesIDid: I'm leaving now

I'm confused as to why I'm friends with these people, which isn't to say they're bad people or anything, quite the opposite, actually. There's something about the way they hold themselves I guess that makes them a lot better than me. For starters, all of them, even Maki, are encouraging in their own ways. They're all so strong as well. Mentally, I mean. I've never even seen Kaito cry and Akamatsu sacrificed her life for everyone in the simulation.

Then there's me. I'm different and not in a good way. Half the time I can barely choke out a sentence without sputtering or tripping over my words and my positive impact on other people is so small that there would be no change if it wasn't there at all. Negative impact is a different story though. I'm a jerk who was too stupid to see the truth before it's too late. I can't talk to people normally. I'm not particularly interesting or good to be around and—
"Shuichi!" Akamatsu snaps me out of my thoughts. Based off her tone, it probably wasn't her first attempt.

Still, she looks worried. That's my fault, I guess. I get too lost in thought when it counts. The two of us, along with Kaito and Maki, are sitting on the floor of Akamatsu's dorm. We're working on the outline of our project. The entire thing was probably just so the scientists at the research facility can keep tabs on who we worked well with and how our teamwork is compared to other students who didn't go through the games.

"S—sorry!" There I go, stuttering again... "I—I guess I sort of spaced out for a moment, Akamatsu-San..."

She gives me a look, "I told you to call me Kaede! If I'm using your given name, you can use mine."

Aka—Kaede did tell me that. Maki is explaining to her how I'm just like that and how long it took me to get used to using her given name. Still, I could try harder, couldn't I? If this is what Kaede wants me to do, I can't really half ass it, can I? I think I owe her that much. Even though it won't do much to atone for anything I did or didn't do, I can at least try.

"Right," good, no stuttering, "sorry, A—Akama—" damn it "—Kaede-San."

Luckily, she laughed, "we'll work on that."

The four sat in silence as they worked on researching their required information. Well, relative silence would be a better word to describe it. Kaito would grumble in boredom every now and then before trying to get off topic. Maki would shut down these attempts. Shuichi would mutter lines of information out of habit, only to catch himself and apologize. Kaede would sigh and say he has a problem with that, then receive another apology in return.

"Alright, Momota-Kun, how about this?" Kaede reasoned, "if you can work in silence for twenty minutes, we can take a ten minute break, okay?"

"Twenty minutes?!" Kaito whined, "fine, I guess it's better than nothing."

"Shut up and get to work, moron," Maki growled, but smiled the slightest bit before scooting a bit closer to the astronaut.

Due to Kaito and his questionable ability to tell time, the group wound up working for thirty five minutes rather than twenty. Outraged, Kaito insisted that the break be extended another fifteen minutes to make things even, but was outvoted by the other three. So, their break began with Kaito pouting until he realized he was just wasting time.

"Do you guys just wanna talk?" Maki suggested, "it's easier than leaving to do something else."

Agreement hummed through the room and dissolved into simple conversation. Plans for the weekend, even though it was only Monday. Panicking over an upcoming quiz on who knows what. Asking about grades and random pictures or corny jokes (thanks Kaito) that they found in the internet. Everything was functioning relatively well until they moved on to a specific topic of conversation.

"Oh, by the way Shuichi! Since you're class rep and all," Kaito began, "do you think you could organize a meeting or something for this comet that's coming around soon?"
Shuichi perked up at the mention of his name. He was tired from the lack of sleep he'd gotten lately, but was still doing his best to listen and get his work done. Not wanting to ask the other boy to repeat, Shuichi took a moment to process the words before working out a response. Kaito raised a brow in confusion at the gesture, but couldn't comment on it even if he wanted to because Shuichi began to speak.

"I think Kaede-San's better at that sort of thing," Shuichi admitted, "u—unless she doesn't want to! S—sorry if I put anything unnecessary o—on your plate! I can do it if you don't want to—"

"Relax, Shuichi!" Kaede squeaked, "it's fine!"

"Yea, and if there's anything unnecessary, it's your apologies," Maki commented, but her tone softened a bit, "seriously, what's been up with you?"

"N—nothing," Shuichi insisted, mentally cursing himself for stuttering. He continued in a slower voice to keep the issue away, "sorry for worrying you."

"You did it again," Maki sighed, leaning back a bit against the wall, "but I guess it's fine."

"Oh, and Momota-Kun," Kaede added, "I'll see what I can do about that comet thing."

"Hell yea!" Kaito cheered, fist bumping the air with the excitement of a child given a piece of candy.

"Kaede-San, is it possible for you to take my place as class representative?" Shuichi asked, only half joking.

The words weren't intentionally damaging. This was only supported by the fact that Shuichi, who overthought and worried over every word he uttered, was the one who said it. However, even there was a joking tone to it and it was received with laughter on Kaede's end, the words that followed were baffling and worrying.

"I don't think I should," Kaede giggled, "that'd probably just mess things up."

In a normal conversation, these words would just be passed off as a self deprecating joke with no context. It would be fine and the conversation would move forward like normal. However, the words were greeted with silence from all parties. Kaede seemed to realize what she just admitted and bit her lip, hanging onto the slightest bit of hope that no one else had come to any conclusions. It couldn't be helped though. Shuichi and Maki gave her a look of slight concern whereas Kaito had one of thoughtfulness.

"Why would that mess things up?" Kaito dared to ask, "I think you'd be a badass leader!"

"Come on guys, it was a joke!" Kaede backpedalled, face growing hot under the stares, "you know, because of what happened? I wasn't a good leader in the game, right?"

"Akamatsu-San, don't blame yourself," Shuichi cut in, doing his best to maintain eye contact from under his hat, "it's my fault, okay?"

"No. No, it isn't," Kaede said sternly, regaining her composure, "see? You wouldn't think that if I didn't do what I did."

"Stop," Maki snapped all of a sudden, "we're not talking about that fucking game, okay?"

"Maki-San, please," Shuichi pleaded, "I think we have to right now."
"No, we don't," Maki objected sharply, "it's stupid and in the past, so we don't have to."

"Guys, stop!" Kaede interjected, "this is silly. Besides, it's not even a big deal."

"I don't care," Maki growled, "I'm not talking about the game."

"Maki, trust me," Shuichi responded, "we need to at least address it!"

"No," Maki hissed with so much venom that it made Shuichi hesitate.

"Why are you so against talking about the simulation?!" Shuichi barely raised his voice, but he felt like he had to to get his point across.

"We survived, so we shouldn't have to!" Maki shouted, face red from anger.

"This isn't about us, Maki," Shuichi shot back, his quieter voice now sounding exasperated.

"It still isn't our place!" Maki argued.

"ENOUGH YOU TWO!" Kaede bellowed, "If this is because of me, then I should get a say in what we can and can't talk about, okay?!"

Kaede's voice successfully silenced both sides of the argument. They sheepishly muttered an apology before looking anywhere but at the other. Kaede let out a long sigh of frustration before slumping back. Across the room was Kaito, who had been uncharacteristically quiet the entire time. His face had a hard look on it and his eyes were trained out the window where the sun was beginning to dip below the horizon. It was obvious that he was uncomfortable, but no one could place why exactly.

"I think we've done enough research for today," Kaede grinned, but it was obviously forced, "we can meet again tomorrow if none of you are busy."

Giving quick nods of approval, Shuichi and Maki gathered up their materials and made for the door. Shuichi stumbled a bit and his hat nearly fell off, but he made no move to fix it before muttering a quick farewell and scampering through the door behind Maki. Deflating Kaede made to close the door, only to stop and turn around. She was greeted with Kaito, still staring out the window with a blank look on your face.

"Are you okay?" Kaede pondered, taking careful steps towards her classmate, "sorry if they made you uncomfortable. I don't know what got into them."

Kaito nearly jumped as if knocked out of a trance. He took some time to comprehend the state of the room and how it had two less people. He turned to face Kaede shortly after and offered her a steady smile that looked so real to her.

"Nah, it's fine!" Kaito exclaimed carelessly, "s' my bad for not taking care of them sooner. I'll catch you later, okay?"

Kaede hummed in agreement as the astronaut made his way to the door. She couldn't help but frown when she noticed how his smile dropped the moment it looked like his face was out of her view. The door shut loudly because Kaito didn't turn the handle, leaving the noise to echo throughout Kaede's head like a rotten melody.

Progress report A1: Negative
The moment Momota closed the door, I allowed myself to drop to my knees. That was exhausting to handle. I inch over to my dresser before unhooking the security camera attached. I was given specific instructions as the “hostess” to hook it up before the others arrived. Come to think of it, the camera probably caught all of that mess, didn’t it? I’m suddenly very tempted to stomp on the thing, but that’s probably against the rules. The scientists are only studying us. They’re not allowed to interfere.

Still though, wasn’t the killing game enough? They could’ve just studied what happened in there rather than out here! I don’t think it matters because I heard this one American group who did the same test we did escaped before any murders happened. They still get monitored, too though, so what gives? Are they studying the behavior of the students and the mastermind? I guess I shouldn’t really think too much about why though considering I’m a subject and should be going about my normal business.

I wonder what the leader of that group did though. What did they do that I didn’t? They probably rallied everyone together like what I tried to do. They probably stayed in line and didn’t get paranoid unlike me. They probably trusted the plans of others like what I failed to do. Was there even a leader there? Were my efforts to take control turn out to be the very thing that dragged everyone else down with me?

I’m not supposed to wonder those kinds of things though. I should play piano. That’s something I know I’m good at. My lab is way in the building though and I’m not up for the idea of talking to anyone else right now, so I pull out the keyboard from under my bed. I’m glad I placed this thing here. When the year started, I’d get so restless that I’d walk the entire way to the main building just to play.

I try to think of a soothing song because those... well, soothe me. However, the only thing that could come to mind was Clair De Lune. I still remember the scene that I saw play out before me during the screening. Shuichi looked so sad. I don’t want to be reminded of that, so I put the keyboard back under my bed, which left me to think about the American killing game again. The very thing I was trying to stop.

It was probably hard work that got everyone out of there. I know we’re all fine and things should be getting better, but it isn’t. All because we didn’t get out of there fast enough, we have to deal with the consequences. I thought it was fine for a while until things just got worse. Shuichi being more hesitant than I remember, Gokuhara’s breakdown, Yumeno’s breakdown, and now that fight I just witnessed, along with Momota’s haunted expression.

All of these are because of the game. I think we would’ve been fine if everything had just ended fast enough. Even if I wasn’t the one to draw first blood, I gave Shirogane the ammo. I gave up too easily because I was too much of a coward to understand that it was going to be much harder than a shot in the dark. I got so careless. Now we’re here with all these problems as a result of that carelessness. If only I just tried like the students in the game.

*Why didn’t I try harder for them?*

I’m well aware I’m not the smartest student in our class. I’m never going to live down Kaito scoring higher than me on that one test, but that’s not the point. Point is, I might not be the brightest, but I can say for certain right now that Saihara Shuichi is a fucking idiot. I don’t give two shits about grades and the opinion of the lovestruck idiot Kokichi. Saihara Shuichi is a fucking
moron and that’s a fact.

I’ve tried to see things from his point of view, but all I see is more stupidity. As survivors, we’re the ones who have the least trauma. We’re the ones who have the strength to pick others up. Or however that dumb phrase goes. But no. Saihara fucking Shuichi goes and flaunts that game in front of Akamatsu of all people. And right after she states her regrets about it? I don’t care if he thinks it’d be beneficial to talk about it. I don’t.

Seriously, what good is going to come from talking about that shit? All it does is bring up memories and clearly that hasn’t done anyone any favors. Don’t believe me? Here’s a few. Gonta. Remembers himself killing Iruma. Breakdown. Yumeno. Remembers Shinguuji killing her best friends. Oh would you look at that? Breakdown! I don’t know what that idiot is trying to pull, but “talking it out” is just going to lead to worse.

Obviously, I’m not stupid either. I remember exactly what happened to Kokichi a few years back. I know it’s because of the whole thing with him not talking about his feelings, but this is different. The killing game is in the past. Kokichi was constantly harassed and ridiculed. Not to mention how I rubbed it in his face every time I asked him if everything was okay and threatened to stab someone.

The killing game is something that we can forget. We just don’t have to think about it. Of course, I’m not saying shit didn’t go down in there. I’m just saying that it doesn’t matter anymore because this is real life where we have real things to deal with. We can’t really have been taken down by something that isn’t real, right? Haven’t I been doing nothing but thinking about it for the past two hours though?

Shit. I need to get my mind off this. Training begins in about ten minutes anyway, so I might as well just go. I don’t care if I have to see Shuichi. I honestly couldn’t care less at this point, as long as I can get my mind off the g—as long as I can clear my mind. I made my way to the common room and pass by Tojo. She gives me a smile and I do my best to wave at her rather than scowl. She’s not part of this. She doesn’t deserve to be either. She’s too kind to be.

I do a lap around the dormitory, but it barely takes me any time. Shuichi and Kaito aren’t here yet either, so we can’t get started. I sit down on a nearby bench instead. As long as I distract myself enough, I won’t have to think about the simul—I can think about nothing. The game is stupid anyway. Wait. Shit. Kaito and Shuichi still aren’t here. Where are they? Are they not coming again? What’s been up with them lately. It can’t be because of the—damn it! Whatever, with or without them, I’m going to train. It’s better than sleeping because then I won’t get nightmares about—oh for fucks sake!

*Why can't I stop thinking about it?*

If humans were replaced with stars, would that be a bad thing? Don’t get me wrong, I know some pretty badass people. She may not look it, but Gram could kick anyone’s ass if she wanted to, but like, sometimes people aren’t that great. Like when they kill people. I won’t lie to you. Killing is not my favorite. I’ve always been against it, obviously, but my memories being restored and all that made things worse. Sorta ironic because my girlfriend is the ultimate assassin, but that’s different! I don’t know how, but it is!

Anyways, as I was saying, humans wouldn’t make bad stars. I mean, if you ask me, stars are some of the coolest things in the world. Plus, they don’t kill things. They don’t mess things up. They don’t take things. Actually, none of that is really true, but you get the point, don’t you?! Cuz
like, if everyone was just a rock on the ground or something, this could still be the case. Stars are just a lot cooler to use than rocks.

I dunno, I’m probably just distracting myself from the obvious again. People say I do that a lot. Pa did. Ma does. Kiyo did. Grams and Gramps do. You get the point. So yea, Maki and Shuichi fought. It wasn’t fun to listen to, but it confused me. Sure, it sounded like they were talking for Akamatsu’s sake, but it almost seemed like their were fighting for their beliefs. Now normally, I’d pick one of these sides and fight for it too, but there was something weird about it. It was like I didn’t believe in either side.

It’s stupid, I know, but this isn’t the first time this has happened. I was talking to Gonta just the other day and all of a sudden, I just felt strange. I was like “oh shit, I’m talking to someone who killed a woman!” It’s the worst with Kiyo because I’ve known him for so long. Suddenly, it’s like everyone I know is a killer. Even the nicest people. And as said before, I’m particularly against that now. I don’t know how Ouma deals with this with how he views murder. Probably just another one of his lies or something. Or maybe he and I are just different. Yea, probably that. He can’t trust people for shit and all I did was trust people, regardless of their shit.

I may be an idiot when it comes to books, but at least I’m self aware enough to know something’s off. In that room just now, I couldn’t even move. I just kept on thinking about the death sentences Shuichi gave out and Maki’s history of murder and slaughter. I seriously don’t know what’s up especially with the reasons for doing what they did! Cuz then I remember that these are my sidekicks I’m talking about and they’re nice people with nice hearts. I just. I just don’t believe it anymore. I can’t just say “oh yea, I love that guy” like I could before without feeling any sort of doubt.

Then I was like “hey wait a minute, didn’t I kill someone?” and things started getting real intense. I’m doing all this judgmental shit and didn’t even think about how much of a hypocrite I was being! Like, seriously, am I becoming Ouma!? Seriously though, this is getting out of hand. How can I, someone who killed someone, be the same person who made everyone else smile through thick and thin.

Then I think about Maki and Shuichi again. I did my best to help them out, and yet I’m the one who killed someone. Is there a grey area here? I have no idea at this point. Did I really even know before? Why did my memories mess me up so badly? Honestly! Everywhere I look, I just remember what everyone else did. I remember how much they messed with the world. I’m just so fucking confused!

Why can't I even believe in myself anymore?

I start crying the moment I reach my room. What was that? I seriously couldn’t just keep my mouth shut. Now Maki’s mad, Kaede’s uncomfortable and who knows what Kaito was feeling during all that. And now, here I am, feeling sorry for myself like the selfish jerk I am. I can’t bring myself to care or drag myself to bed, so I just slide down my door, crying like a baby. I hate it because I feel so useless just laying there when I could be doing something better.

What’s wrong with me? I’m the one who shouldn’t be crying right now. Everything just feels so heavy though and my mind is so blank yet so full at the same time. Why do I have to do this? Why do I have to be me? Me being me is exactly what messes things up. Me being me is exactly why they left. Me being a failure. Now it’s come back again to ruin things, which makes things worse because now what? They’re going to leave too, aren’t they? Then I’ll be stuck with no one but my uncle because he’s the only one who can put up with me anymore. He’ll leave me eventually too.
because that’s how things go. People leave because I’m not good enough. That’s just how it is and I don’t blame them.

I don’t want to think about that though. I don’t want to think. Thinking hurts me mentally and even though it’s selfish, I don’t want to hurt. Hurting physically makes things hurt less up there. My legs burn when I stand up, but I deserve it. I hate how that thought makes the pain seem somehow more bearable. I can’t feel, but I see myself as I move to my bathroom. The razor feels familiar in my hand in an unsettling way, but I don’t care. I just want the pain in my head to stop.

There I am again, counting out my flaws in ugly markings on my wrist. Every little thing wrong with me. Every little thing I burden other people with. I’m not smart enough. I’m not charming enough. I’m not unique enough. I’m not cheerful enough. I’m not outgoing enough. I’m not enough. Everything that they’ve pointed out about me rolls out through my head and into that blade in a speed I’m ashamed to admit.

By the time I’m finished, I’m lightheaded. It doesn’t hurt as much and my head isn’t nearly as heavy and hurtful. That’s enough indulgence though. I still have to grit my teeth though as I wrap my wrists. Not the easiest thing to do with only one hand. I end up having to use my leg again to pin down the bandages enough until they overlapped.

I want to sleep now that I’m out of the bathroom. I think I cut a little deeper than normal. The blood might go through. Someone might notice. Still, I’m too tired to think now. I collapse onto my bed, carefully landing so I don’t put any unnecessary pressure on my wrists. I did that once and I almost blacked out. I wouldn’t mind that right now, but me being the selfish person I am, I don’t want to deal with the pain.

I stare at my ceiling for a while. Even though I felt so tired, I couldn’t bring myself to sleep. I keep remembering my argument with Maki. All I did was mess things up with my opinion. I didn’t do anyone any favors. If anything, I made things worse. I remember that I was trying to get rid of those thoughts and sigh. I flip onto my side, landing as hard as I could on my wrist. It stung, but I didn’t pass out this time.

*Why can't I do anything right?*
Chapter Summary

We continue the group projects, this time in the view of Korekiyo, Kirumi, Ryoma, and Gonta!

Greetings. **Hello. Hey. Hi friends!**

I am Tojo Kirumi. *I'm Shinguuji Korekiyo. It's Hoshi Ryoma. Gonta's name is Gokuhara Gonta!*  

"**Gonta is the Sparkle to Our Gothic Vibes,** May 14th, 15:13

**IsRuined:** Tojo-San, would now be a good time to come over? I'd prefer to have this project completed as soon as possible.

**MyDay:** Yes, it would be alright.

**MyDisappointment:** U guys and ur normal grammar

**IsImmeasurableAnd:** Gonta thinks that Tojo san and Shinguji kun right just fine!

**MyDisappointment:** Right. Sorry

**IsImmeasurableAnd:** It's okay!

**IsRuined:** Oh the humanity (but in a good way.)

**MyDay:** Indeed.

**MyDisappointment:** Don't rope Gokuhara in with someone like me

**IsImmeasurableAnd:** What?! Gonta would be happy to be like Hoshi kun!

**MyDisappointment:**

**MyDisappointment:**
IdidntknowsuchlevelsofcutenessexistedandIveevenalotofcatvideoslikeseriouslywhatisthisabsolutenonsens

**IsImmeasurableAnd:** That's a long word... Gonta can't read it

**IsRuined:** I am conflicted as to whether or not I should say something.

**MyDisappointment:** No

<Please tell me you guys understood the names.>

Ryoma was hesitant as he made his way to Kirumi's dorm. The mid May sunlight felt warm and bathed him in a glowing light, but his head felt cold and dark. Ryoma knew that he wasn't the type
to let go of things easily. It was both a flaw and a strength depending on who you asked. In this situation, it made matters worse as Ryoma was weighed down by distrust and bitterness as he inched towards the door that belonged the woman he though ended his life before it could begin.

However, when Ryoma pushed open the door, the scene in front of him was slightly questionable. Despite it being her dorm, there was no sign of life. The floors shone as if untouched and the bed was neatly made. The window's shone and even the darkest corners were devoid of mess or dust. Footsteps grew closer and closer to Ryoma from behind and the boy reflexively turned around, fully expecting a hit to the head.

"Oh, Hoshi-Kun!" Gonta smiled brightly at the sight of his classmate and friend. The gesture drowned out the sight of the other's features relaxing, "Gonta is happy to see you!"

Ryoma surprised himself when he felt a smile tug at the corners of his lips. However, he found himself settling for a simple wave of his hand as a greeting. It was almost as if he were afraid Gonta would hear the traces of happiness in the other's voice. Of course, that was a silly concept to ponder. Happiness was something that people would typically welcome with open arms. Not something you threw away when you are given a moment to bask in it's light.

The duo went and took a seat on Kirumi's polished floor. The wood was so shiny that it almost felt like a crime to possibly scuff the spotless surface, but eventually the awkwardness of standing in the doorway gave out. The initial guilt was eventually thrown away by Gonta as he spoke excitedly about a topic that Ryoma had little to no knowledge of, but listened in anyway. The conversation wasn't one sided either. Ryoma added in the occasional and even the occasional chuckle.

About five minutes in, Korekiyo made an appearance. He apologized for being late. He claimed it was due to him having issues with getting ready. The three of them continued to talk, but there was still no sign of Kirumi. Another fifteen minutes droned on until even Ryoma had begun to care for the matter. The conversation dissolved into the occasional comment of worry and looks thrown at the clock hung perfectly on the wall.

It wasn't long until Kirumi finally showed up. She looked slightly disheveled and rushed with her hair, which was pulled into a ponytail at the back, was beginning to become undone and messy. Kirumi took a moment to catch her breath without making it obvious. She disguised the action as her merely fixing her hair and dusting off her clothes for what was probably the fifth time that minute.

"Apologies for my tardiness," Kirumi grimaced, moving over to her dresser. She grabbed a black headband and placed it into her head, tucking the tips of her bangs into the side. Probably so they wouldn't hang from her face. "I got caught up when dusting the common room and lost track of time."

"It is quite alright," Korekiyo assured, folding his hands neatly in his lap to fidget around with his fingernails. He wasn't wearing his bandages, a rare occurrence. "Now, if I may, I would like to distribute specific materials for each of us to research."

"Actually," Kirumi cut in, voice shockingly hesitant, "would it be appropriate if I requested that we worked in the dining hall instead?"

"Huh, why?" Gonta asked, looking up at Kirumi from behind his rounded lensed glasses.

"It is not necessary for you all to agree," Kirumi added, "if you would prefer to work here, I would be perfectly content with that."
"I don't see a problem with that idea," Ryoma muttered nonchalantly. Despite his indifferent tone, the boy would be happy to be in a more open area when around Kirumi.

"Nor do I," Korekiyo agreed, but his eyes still remained focused on his hands, "how about you, Gokuhara-Kun?"

"Gonta's okay with it!" Gonta replied cheerfully, "would anyone like Gonta to help carry their stuff down?"

As the three boys gathered up their things, they remained blind to the way Kirumi let out a quiet sigh of relief at their agreement. As the rest of the group made their way to the door, the maid turned around to take a look at the state of her floor. Due to the respectful nature of the others, the hardwood floor still shone, but Kirumi still bit her lip in hesitation. Looking between the others in the group and the invisible indecencies on her floor, Kirumi decided she'd take care of it later and left.

The dining hall was empty, obviously. The group took a seat at the end of the table with four laptops they had borrowed from the research lab. As he suggested previously, Korekiyo gave each individual certain sections to gather information on. The process was going fine, but due to his observant nature, Korekiyo picked up on a few things. Kirumi wrote excruciatingly slow and would often erase her work as if worried about writing perfectly and Gonta didn't seem to be writing much at all. Typically, finding such quirks would make the anthropologist smile, but instead a scowl broke out from under his mask.

"U—uh, Gonta's sorry, but can he finish his work tomorrow?" Gonta sputtered out of the blue, staring at the laptop he was working on with a fearful expression.

"Hm? Why?" Ryoma questioned, leaning over to look over at the other's screen, "is the laptop not working? You can use mine if you want. I have all the information I need anyway. Just gotta analyze it."

"No, that's okay!" Gonta insisted, sending a shaky smile of encouragement in Ryoma's direction, "it's just... Gonta's been having a bit of troubling believing digital stuff like this every since what happened... Gonta thinks that if he prepares himself though, he can stand up to it!

"Oh," Ryoma grunted, casting a look to the two others in the room, "yea, you can go then. Good luck with preparing yourself."

"Thank you, Hoshi-Kun," Gonta beamed, "Gonta's sorry he couldn't help you guys out too much today though."

"It's fine," Ryoma replied, "better to give it your best later than something mediocre now I guess."

Gonta gave a sound of affirmation, but chances are, he didn't understand the quote very well. The entomologist gathered up his belongings before sparing the group another apologetic smile and leaving. Almost instantly, Ryoma grabbed the laptop Gonta had been working on and glanced at the page. He took some notes and continued to type furiously onto the device. Kirumi and Korekiyo both raised a brow at the sudden change in demeanor.

"M—night I ask what you're up to?" Korekiyo dropped his speaking mannerisms for a moment at the end as he observed the tennis player.

"I'm playing an Olympic sport, duh," Ryoma deadpanned, but then proceeded to explain, "I'm researching Gokuhara's section and printing it out. If he doesn't trust anything on a screen, I'll just
"That is... very kind of you, Hoshi-Kun," Kirumi praised, finally taking her eyes off her work, which she had been staring at with great intensity the whole time.

Although, the words were met with silence despite their kind intent. Ryoma pursed his lips and his gaze on the screen hardened as he pretended he didn't hear Kirumi. Korekiyo noticed the display and raised a brow before the same disgusted scowl traced his lips from beneath his mask. Kirumi waited another moment for a response, but didn't seem too shocked when nothing came. Thus, within seconds, the room grew tense. The tension was only broken by sudden movement from Korekiyo.

"Hello," Korekiyo greeted, speaking into the phone he had extracted from his pocket, "mhm... alright... oh dear... yes, I will take a look at that... indeed, I have the paper in my room... I will get back to you on that as soon as possible." Korekiyo hung up the phone. "Apologies, but I must return to my room. I just received intel that requires my work in order to further advance the study."

Not waiting for a response, Korekiyo scooped up his stuff and left in a hurry. This left Ryoma, Kirumi, and the tension that hanged between them. The elephant in the room was being ignored as they both worked on their own problems. However, when the tension grew unbearable for both sides, they looked up and met each other's gazes. Ryoma's dark brown, round gaze piercing into Kirumi's slim, green one. Neither of them spoke though as a thousand more springtime's came and gone.

After forever had passed, Ryoma spoke, "what made you choose me?"

Kirumi was quiet for a moment. The question was simple, but the answer was heavy and they both knew it. It lay in the motive video that Kirumi never ever saw. It lay in Ryoma's past that had crushed him all those years ago. Kirumi took a deep breath. She couldn't quite collect the words in her head, especially not vocalize them. It made her head hurt, but she and Ryoma both knew she owed at least some sort of explanation. Even the smallest answer.

"There were twelve other people," Ryoma sighed.

"I... it wasn't that I thought you would be the happiest to die," Kirumi whispered shamefully, removing herself of her professional tone, "you just seemed like the one who would be the least upset to let go of life."

"Why?" Ryoma spoke. Once again, he knew the answer, but hearing the words from another person was what made them feel secure. The human mind worked that way.

"You... you never seemed attached to the idea of life," Kirumi admitted, voice shaking a bit, "you proved my point back then as well. The moment you turned around."

Ryoma took a second. "Yea, I guess that is how it went, wasn't it?" Ryoma almost laughed at the bitter thought, "don't think I'm gonna let that happen again though, okay?"

Kirumi stared at the boy from across the table. A determination she recognized had passed his face. It wasn't the one that Kaede held throughout the Death Road of Despair. It was the same one that embodied Kirumi's entire being as she ran for her life. One that was sewn in with ideas of escaping. Kirumi willed herself to smile at the sentiment nonetheless and nod.

"I am glad to hear it," Kirumi responded, leaning back the slightest bit in her chair.

Ryoma gave the girl a nod before standing up. He never asked to leave, but still made to gather up
his materials. However, the second Ryoma turned away from Kirumi, both their smiles vanished from sight, replaced with grimaces. One of bitterness and resignation. One of concern and regret. The boy disappeared as he advanced to his own room, leaving Kirumi to her own devices. Kirumi knew she was meant to feel happy at the declaration of moving forward, but instead she found a feeling of dread. The feeling you get when you know you've been lied to.

*Progress report A2: Negative.*

- I feel bad again. I don't like it. I wish I could've helped out more back there, but I just kept on remembering things and it isn't good when that happens! I remember what happened last time. It wasn't gentlemanly at all for me to make the lives of my friends inconvenient! I hope Hoshi, Tojo and Shinguuji aren't mad at me for leaving. I just thought if I stayed, things would keep getting worse and that's the last thing I want. Gentlemen always help friends!

I see Ouma when I go to my lab. He always looks so sad without other people. That makes me sad too. Is it my fault he's always so sad? I hope not. I want to apologize to him, but Ouma always distracts me somehow. Ouma is very smart like that. I'm happy he's so smart unlike I am, but I'm still sad that he uses that to hide that he's sad too. Why doesn't anyone else see him like this? I hope I can remember to apologize soon! It's too late now because Ouma is talking to Keebo and Amami now. Gentlemen don't interrupt!

My lab is very pretty and full of bugs. I have a small locker that I can store stuff in, which was very nice of the school! I should tell the office people that sometime. I keep my bug books in there so I can study any new bugs I catch. Catching bugs in the pretty lab is fun. It makes the bad thoughts go away, which makes everyone happier alongside me! Gentlemen always make everyone happy!

The sun is very bright today and the bug I want to find and research doesn't really like that. Bugs are very close to people actually. Some people think they're scary like Harukawa and Shinguuji and Hoshi, but are actually very nice. Some are hard workers like Tojo, Akamatsu, Shirogane and Saihara. Some of them are loud sometimes like Chabashira, Yonaga, Momota and Iruma. Some are great at adapting like Keebo, Yumeno and Amami. Others are completely ignored like Ouma. That part makes me sad. I'm not saying friends and bugs are the same thing though! Gentlemen don't lie!

Didn't I lie in the game though? Even if I didn't know I was lying, I wasn't telling the truth. Didn't I just make things harder for my friends when I killed Iruma? Didn't that also interrupt the peace of the school? Then, I even failed to make everyone happy, even now. Ouma is so sad now and Iruma acts different. She isn't always so loud and she doesn't always make those weird noises that make other people yell at her. Is that my fault?

I know that she told me herself that she was doing okay, but I sometimes don't believe her. I feel bad because gentlemen are supposed to believe in friends no matter what! Now the lab isn't helping with me feeling bad, so now what? Maybe if I think about the nice feeling of the sun on my shoulders, the bad thoughts will go away! I heard Ouma say that people get sleepy in heat, which is why we can't get too close to fire. Then the sleepy cells inside the heat will get trapped in our skin and kill us!

... 

That didn't work... I wish I was a caterpillar right now and getting into a chrysalis. Then I can just turn to mush for a while. I don't know a lot about how bugs think, but they probably don't feel as bad as I do right now. Maybe if I think about it enough, it will be alright. Iruma forgave me! Iruma...
forgave me! Ouma being sad isn't my fault! Ouma being sad isn't my fault! Still nothing... this isn't gentlemanly at all.

Why do I not believe their forgiveness?

When I removed the security camera, it left a smudge on the wall. My fault for placing it in such a place. I could have rested it upon a table rather than tape it. Now there is adhesive stuck to the wall and if I do not take care of it, it will be stuck there forever. Who knows how long it will take for dust to gather over the adhesive. Imagine the mess. Imagine the—jeez Kirumi! Get ahold of yourself. It is merely a nearly unnoticeable marking less than five centimeters in diameter. It is not the end of the world.

However, that may not be the case. It was a tiny error that led to me turning to vicious methods in that simulator, was it not? I cannot afford to be careless ever again due to such risks and consequences. I will not be like that foolish girl whose brash decisions led to unsavory outcomes. I will be careful and precise. If I do that, I can at least control that. If I hold detail in high regards, I will not fall victim to anymore cruel attempts at luring me into sinful deeds.

So, the mark. Come to think of it, there are likely scuff marks littered about the floor of muni room now. Although, that's going to have to wait due to the fact I am still making progress here. The dining hall is a more universally used area than my own dormitory, so I should prioritize the former. My living quarters are merely meant for sleeping in brief intervals in order to maintain energy. I eat whenever there's time, or whenever necessary. Even if it is not my first order of business, replenishing is required for efficient work.

Spending time doing much else is useless to me. My sole purpose is to shed myself of the person I was before. Every waking hour is spent scrubbing away. I will work harder than the woman in the game. Back then, I was too simpleminded to comprehend that they motive videos were a scam. Back then, I was the woman who fell into the game's hands and murdered. I refuse to make those same mistakes now. If I continue this behavior, one day I will be immune to such indecency. Immune to error.

There is this one specific part of the adhesive that had wedged itself into a small crevice within the texture of the wall. I must be thorough with this, so I scrub harder. I will not be taken down by something so small. However, the rag is eventually pulled downwards to reveal that it had taken numerous small flecks of paint along with it. I had torn off part of the wall's coloring from scrubbing too hard. I failed to be careful once more. I will have to ask Yonaga for paint later.

I have a quick thought in which I find myself comparing my physical and mental being to this wall. I am trying so hard for something that simply does not exist and the resulting outcome is much worse that the thing I was trying to remove to begin with. Was that tiny piece of adhesive even there to begin with? Or was I just desperate to find something wrong with the picture? That way I'd have something to fix and add to my own worth. I shake the thought away though. It is foolish. I share no similarities with a wall other than its purpose to protect.

I eventually bring myself away from the dining hall and advance to the kitchen. Dinner was going to begin soon anyway and I was cooking like I always did, but it never hurts to clean. The room looks perfectly fine as I walked in. I wonder if perhaps my morning efforts had been enough to satisfy my keen eye for improvement and nearly smile to myself. However, the thought is struck away at the sight of dirt and grime that no one else ever seems to see. It covered the countertops and I knew that by removing it, there was a chance that I would feel some sense of accomplishment, even the slightest.

Why am I not satisfied with myself?
A guy like me couldn't ever be a mind reader. Sure, I might not have killed an entire mafia like I remembered, but I felt it. May not be as capable as someone else is, such as Harukawa, but I could kill. So, as I was saying. A guy like me could never be a mind reader. I doubt that kind of thing exists to begin with, but it's not worth going off on a tangent again. Either way, I could tell by the look in Tojo's eyes that she didn't believe me. She didn't believe that I had a value to my life.

I guess I can't blame her. I'm well aware I'm not an upbeat kind of guy. I slouch when I sit down, I always look upset at one thing or another, I hardly smile. If I'm going to give myself credit for something, I'd choose self awareness. I know what I can and can't do, which is much better than assuming I can do everything or that I can do nothing. So yea, I'm well aware that I still have a ways to go if I'm ever going to get anyone other than Gokuhara to believe me.

Which means yes, I do feel happy. I have for a while. I almost forgot how it feels to have the sun feel warm on your face again. I don't exactly know where it came from either. Maybe the fact that I didn't turn out to be the murderer I thought I was in the simulation. Maybe, and this is the cheesiest thing ever, but maybe it's that I feel like I found a family after I thought I'd lost the concept forever. Yep, definitely the cheesiest thing I've ever thought. Guess there's no use of lying to myself though, is there?

While I'm on the subject though, I still don't know how or why I feel like this exactly. Is it just some superficial thing that’s not really there? I remember the last time I felt like this. Back when everyone was still alive. That didn’t last long though, so how long do I have with this? Next thing I know, I’ll be back where I started. Is it worth being happy when it’s just going to go away and leave me feeling like garbage? I should probably stop worrying about it and savor the feeling like a normal person, but I just don’t trust it.

Happiness is such a fragile thing too. Gokuhara, for example. He’s a great guy. One of the best I’ve ever met. He’s so smiley and... what’s the word for it... sunshiny? And yet, that all went away so easily. It was t even that long ago either. Just a few weeks. And ever since, he’s been off. Sad smiles when you ask him how he’s doing. At least he doesn’t lie about it. Probably something about being a gentlemen or whatever. I can’t say I don’t admire that. Still though, to have someone that bright cut down so quickly and then I’m here, happy?

Maybe this is the world’s way of guilting me for giving up before. Torturing with me with happiness I don’t think isn’t going to stick around. I’m not religious or anything like that, I’m sort of the opposite, actually. I just think maybe this is a cruel thing to have handed to me right now. It’s a cruel thing to hand to anyone at anytime actually. Guess I was just the guy unlucky enough to get it. It’s funny because I don’t believe in luck either. Normally in movies or something, people start believing after some crazy awesome event. Ironic how this turned out.

The happiness I have doesn’t feel real. It feels empty if I have to give a single word to describe it. I hate it because happiness was something I’ve always sort of wished for because it’s in human nature. Now that I’ve got it though, all it does is put me on edge as I wait for something to take it away. Is it really happiness if it does this to me? No, it has to be. Even if it’s long ago, I still remember the feeling.

Why am I so sad about feeling happy?

That room was almost as tense as the classroom in third grade when I had to tell the substitute that I had no parents. Being a witness to such events is exactly what makes humanity the way it is. So needlessly complicated because people are so incapable of basic communications of feelings. It is stuff like this that makes me believe that humanity is so... so hideous. No, beautiful! Maybe hideous?... Interesting. Yes. It is stuff like this that makes me believe that humanity is so very
The hallway air feels so excessively cold on my hands. It was as if a bimbo with the intelligence quotient of a kids cartoon character had attempted to fashion an air conditioner and failed dreadfully. Pitiful. Despite what that monster in the killing game suggested, I am rather fond of air conditioning. It was just another side effect of the bug that had placed her in my head. Such an error has never made me more hideo—interested in humanity and it’s... many surprises.

How shameful of me to trip over my thoughts. I mustn’t hesitate, remember? I mustn’t carry myself carelessly. I mustn’t step out of line. I mustn’t disobey. I already know the consequences for failing such orders. Even if I am meant to be safe from them, the one having delivered such consequences already parted by death, the deed is easier said than done. Just to be safe, I take certain precautions, thus the bandages. They hide the scars that she would consider foul and shout over. They add an extra layer of protection for harsh hits. They stalled for time when... that happened.

Now is not the time to dwell on such little things though. Still, it is not wrong to wish I would not run into another human being. Now is not the time for me to deal with humanity’s flaws and the true... spice they add to life. Besides, it is likely I would act inappropriately. I mustn’t stutter. I mustn’t lose eye contact. I mustn’t fidget... no, those are her words, not mine. Nonetheless, I doubt I would be able to compose myself if I were to run into either of them. They certainly do not deserve any wrath from me, but it cannot be helped in some cases. Perhaps if Tojo and Hoshi begin to yell, they may be attracted in that direction. Likely not though considering they’re likely working on their projects as well in the dormitory of their host.

At last, I reach my dormitory. At last... sounds like that foolish song I had used as I drew blood within the simulation. I highly doubt they had gotten squat about me correct in there aside from my personality and relative interest. I suppose I am partially at fault for erasing so many of my previous memories, but the opportunity to do so was too great to pass up. I did not realize how much that would mess with things.

Going along that line of thought, I have noticed a few things about my classmates that I did not quite pick up on throughout the game. Chabashira is a particular mystery. After Yumeno suffered from her breakdown, I recall her making Saihara breakfast the morning afterward. She and I had both likely overheard Yumeno’s aggressive words to him seeing as we were right near the stairwell. I have brief memories of such kindness from the simulation, but it never went to this degree. I guess that is what made me choose her as one of my victims.

However, the sentiment made me feel little to nothing positive. The monster would be overjoyed from observing such kind deeds, but the real me felt nothing. All I could do was remember her prejudice and her loud voice and how she completely brushed those flaws off as if nonexistent. It enrages how every human being is like her in one way or another. They ignore the flawed parts of humanity and grow blind to them as they leech away at the world. Why am I the only one who notices such things?

Why does humanity no longer look so good?
TW: Struggles with religious beliefs.

Nyeh... Hello. Heya! Ya-ha~!

I'm Yumeno Himiko. My name is Shirogane Tsumugi. I am Chabashira Tenko! Yonaga Angie is here!

"Lovely Ladies," May 15th, 18:31

Majestic: Chabashira is ur dorm ready yet? I want to finish the project today so we have no work

ALovelyLady: Yes! You guys can make your way over now

ALovelyLady: Oh gosh, who changed my name?!

Majestic: Me

ALovelyLady: ACK! THANK YOU YUMENO-SAN!!!!!!!!!

Superb: May Angie bring a candle~? It's for Atua!

ALovelyLady: Sure, just be careful!

Extraordinary: I almost forgot we were doing work today. I was just plain sad because of the newest BNHA chapter. Poor Shirakumo is making me cry!

ALovelyLady: Shirakumo? Is that a degenerate? I'll kick him for making you cry Shirogane-San!!!

Extraordinary: No don't worry! He's a fictional character.

ALovelyLady: That won't stop me...

Majestic: I'm almost there. Ur dorm is so far away

Superb: Angie has nearly arrived as well!

ALovelyLady: Alright I'll be there in a second!

ALovelyLady and 2 others are offline
Extraordinary: And so, despite the peaceful beginning, the four will soon find themselves in a rather rotten situation.

Extraordinary: Oh gosh, I scared myself with that one...

<The next chapter may not be out before Christmas, so merry Christmas! Or, if you don't celebrate, happy holidays! Or, if you're reading this a while after it's been published, have a lovely day/night!>

Tenko was the energetic type, though that's kind of a given. She bounced on the balls of her feet as she awaited the knock on her door. Eventually, although it felt like forever to Tenko, the aforementioned knock rang through the room. Despite the fact that she had been waiting for the sign beforehand, Tenko still jumped at the thumping noise because of the excitement. Not because the sound of the fist making contact with the wood reminded her of what she's thought were her last moments or anything!

Tenko shook off the feeling of excitement (not fear!) and opened the door with a bright smile on her face. She happily greeted the three girls that stood on the other side with an extreme amount of energy that was only really reciprocated by Angie. However, the artist's movements were limited by the candle in her hands that was colored suspiciously similar to blood. Luckily, when Tenko caught a breath of the item, she discovered it was just an apple cinnamon scented candle.

The four girls got to work relatively quickly. They were somewhat efficient despite most of their mediocre book smarts being paled in comparison to people like Miu, Kirumi, or even Shuichi. Angie and Tenko were both naturally loud people, but Tsumugi and Himiko didn't seem to mind. In fact, the two found a rhythm in the other's shuffling papers and fidgety clicks of pens or tapping of pencils. Nonetheless, the silence soon grew too loud to Tenko and she made to begin some form of conversation.

"So... how have you guys been lately?" The question was innocent, especially in the harmless tone Tenko had used.

The question was mainly directed at Himiko. Tenko was still worried after what happened only a few weeks ago. That wasn't to say she didn't have her concerns for Angie or Tsumugi. She knew both of them were fighting their own battles, but the guns there still had yet to fire. Tenko was just naturally more concentrated on healing wounds that were already bleeding, especially if the person whose body they littered was something close. Although, the desired response didn't come, instead coming in the melody of a different voice.

"Things have been alright for me," Tsumugi signed, balancing her pencil on her finger absently.

Tenko deflated a bit, but she guessed it was better than nothing. She knew Tsumugi. Not as well as Angie or maybe Shuichi would, but it was enough. Enough to know that while the blue haired girl was relatively soft spoken, she could talk for hours if she were in the mood to. It was entirely possible that Tsumugi just didn't feel like speaking in that moment, but Tenko still couldn't help but be off put by the short response. She didn't quite hear what Angie had said as a reply to her question and continued to pry.

"Are people still being rude to you?!!" Tenko cried angrily, "I'll Neo Aikido them away if you want!"

Himiko's gaze hardened at the statement and she suddenly became very focused on her work. She was one of those people if she's thought about it. Of course, if you look at things her way, it's
obviously difficult to regain trust, even respect, for someone who dragged you and your friends through an awful game. Even if it wasn't by choice, the human brain is always looking for something to blame. It didn't stop Himiko from feeling bad though. She couldn't exactly help her emotions.

"Oh, no, that's okay!" Tsumugi insisted, "even when you guys were out a few weeks back, there are still people who are there with me! Saihara-Kun and I hung out for most of the day and then I talked to Amami-Kun and Idabashi for a while."

"Degenerate males and Keebo?!" Tenko gasped, already frustrated, "are you sure that's a good idea?!"

"What do you mean?" Tsumugi mused, looking up at the other girl. Her eyes had previously been concentrated on her pencil.

"Nothing good comes from degenerates other than the fact they help give life to girls!" Tenko explains as if her words were fact.

"Chabashira I though we were past this..." Himiko murmured, though her tone made her sound indifferent on the matter.

"Besides," Tsumugi added, "everyone in our class is just plain amazing, regardless of whether or not they enjoy my company."

Himiko sent Tsumugi a grateful look, but it wasn't never received before Tenko continued to speak, "I thought you had the same ideas, too!" She said "especially after what happened with Gonta-San!"

Tsumugi winced at the mention of their taller classmate. Although, the gesture was still noticeable enough to catch Angie's eye. The white haired girl had been uncharacteristically quiet, much like Kaito had been. However, rather than the window, Angie's blue eyes flickered with the orange flame from the candle as she stared at it. The conversation had grown compelling to the artist, so she spoke up.

"Huh?! What happened with Tsumugi and Gonta~?" Angie cooed, only a fraction of her curiosity making it into her words.

"That's not really impo—" Tsumugi began, but the rest of her sentence was cut off by Tenko's aggressive tone.

"Alright."

April 21st.

The dormitory was deathly silent. Miu had only just slipped out, so now the only sound was the lightest taps of Kirumi's shoes or the sweep of her broom as she cleaned. However, not even her keen ear could catch the faint creaking of a door opening only one floor above. Out came Tsumugi. She held her phone in one hand, grip so tight that her her knuckles greatly contrasted the dark room around her.

The heavy look on her face and ruffled hair suggested she had only just woken up. Despite this, her expression was traced with some form of desperation, though it was betrayed by the way she still wore a pair of shorts and a graphic t-shirt of some anime and the way she swayed around a bit
as she tried to stumble through the hallway. Her glasses had only been put on haphazardly, which made it all the more difficult for the cosplayer to navigate through the darkened dormitory.

Tsumugi staggered around in attempt to reach the stairs. She was in for a surprise as another door swung open with a shocking amount of force. Tsumugi’s exhaustion, combined with her only mediocre reflexes, she didn’t have time to dodge and ran face first into the door. The owner of said door was quick to react though and caught Tsumugi before she could fall to the ground. Tenko’s hair was out of its usual style, leaving her long, wavy hair out to touch the floor as she crouched down.

"Shirogane-San?!" Tenko whisper-yelled, "what are you doing out here?!

Well, that wasn't really much of a question, at least not in Tenko’s mind. The aikido master had always been a light sleeper, so the constant buzzing from her phone had eventually roused her from her slumber. After successfully removing ideals of sleep from her mind, she had checked her messages and was now in the loop about what could be happening with Gonta. Tenko wouldn't be surprised if the same could be said for Tsumugi. The blue haired girl has even said herself that she was a light sleeper.

"The text from Gokuhara-Kun," Tsumugi confirmed, dusting herself off.

"Yea... Tenko saw it too," Tenko still referred to herself in the third person back then, "even if he's a degenerate, something like that is—"

"—Awful."

"—Silly."

"Yea, exactly," Tenko agreed on reflex before Tsumugi's words sunk in, "wait, what?!

"Feeling bad about the game... that's just plain silly," Tsumugi deadpanned, "It... it wasn't real. Why worry about it then? The things I did weren't real, so it's just plain unreasonable to let it effect us here. Why? Do you not agree?"

Tsumugi looked as if she were in a trance. Her eyes swirled with the same desperation from before, taking over her mind. Tenko would typically wonder what the other girl wasn't so desperate to find. So desperate to prove. However, that was drowned out by confusion and undertones of disgust. Betraying her typically straightforward personality, Tenko delved a bit deeper into the idea.

"If you think Gonta-San's emotions are... silly," Tenko hesitated, "why are you going to help him?"

"Hm? Oh... there were other people online, remember?" Tsumugi reminded, "they probably went to help Gokuhara-Kun. I'm going to tell them that he's doing just fine and probably just had a nightmare. It happens on occasion..."

The nonchalance of her inconsiderate words was held back by some sort of hesitance. If it weren't for the conflicting feelings Tenko felt towards the girl in front of her, she likely would've picked up on it. The expression was lost on her though, and she opened her mouth to object. Before any words could be spoken, soft footsteps made them die in Tenko's throat and disintegrate.

"I heard noises up here, so I grew concerned," Kirumi explained respectfully, "might I ask what the two of you are doing up so late?" The maid waited for a response, but none came. "Would the both of you be interested in some tea? It would help you both fall back asleep."
Tsumugi opened her mouth to object—that way she could continue with her plan—but Tenko was faster. The brunette agreed enthusiastically, happy to have a way to resolve the problems that had arisen. Tsumugi waited impatiently for a while, but was still too polite to leave as the kettle left puffs of steam to raise over her head. She eventually gave in and slumped into her seat, the white steam now looking like the waving flag of resignation. Tenko was relieved, but didn't comment on it. Instead, she energetically thanked Kirumi for the tea.

"You tried to stop Gonta-San from getting better," Tenko repeated, "that means you could be just as aware of masculine toxicity!"

"That's different from you!" Tsumugi claimed, raising her voice, "I was trying to stop something unnecessary. Even if you went to help back then, that doesn't change how you're just plain sexist!"

"At least I understand basic human value!" Tenko shot back, "males may be scum, but they're still human! All humans are allowed emotion. Of course, maybe you forgot that, little Miss. Mastermind."

The argument derailed from something about others to something more personal. Tsumugi hardly recoiled from the harsh insult. Himiko watched helplessly as her two friends (well, Tsumugi was sort of a grey area there) made jabs at one another that held such venom towards one another's beliefs. Even Angie looked bothered by the arguing. Her eyes were screwed shut and she held her hands in a desperate prayer. No one in the room, not even the two fighting, handled conflict very well. Whether it's overreaction or under reaction.

"You know Shirogane? I tried to give you the benefit of the doubt because that's the good thing to do," Tenko growled, exasperated, "but maybe you are the evil mastermind everyone's making you out to be!"

Tsumugi jumped to her feet, "please! That's just plain stupid! What happened to girls being so kind and all?!!"

Himiko leaned over to whisper to Angie.

"Maybe I was wrong!" Tenko considered, rolling her eyes.

The magician and artist made their way to the door unnoticed and opened it.

"Oh really?" Tsumugi spat, "and yet you're so close minded that you can't consider for one second that not all dudes are plain disgusting?!! Not everyone's like you!"

Tenko made one of her faces. One of the faces she reserved solely for men. One of disgust. The look in her eyes burned further though as she looked at the girl before her. Before another cruel retort could be delivered, Himiko and Angie charged at Tsumugi. The two girls both grabbed the angered cosplayer around the waist. Using Tsumugi's blinded state of anger and Angie's agility, the blue haired girl barely noticed the other two until she was shoved out of the room at a surprising speed given the size of Himiko and Angie. Tenko gaped as Angie hastily grabbed her candle and left behind Himiko before Tsumugi could enter.

The sound of the door slamming could barely be heard over the blood pounding in Tenko's ears.

Progress report A3: Negative.
I sit in front of Chabashira's door. All that pushing made me sleepy, but I have to stay awake. If I stay here, I can protect Chabashira from harm. Shirogane didn't seem like she wanted to come back; she looked kind of sad, actually. Still, I don't know what to expect anymore and my mana is way too low to cast a proper barrier spell. Plus, if I don't move, Chabashira won't leave and get into trouble. She'd listen to me. She still follows me like a puppy and it's sort of a pain sometimes, but puppies are cute and fun, so I guess that makes up for it. Not that I think Chabashira's cute. It's just better than her being dead.

Sleeping has been easier lately. Chabashira and I have sleepovers a lot now. It's normally at my dorm because it's a pain to move my stuff around everywhere. But yea, not a lot of nightmares, which is good... it also means I haven't said anything mean to my classmates. Not on purpose at least. I still don't like Shinguuji and Shirogane is sometimes hard to look at. Ouma too. No mean words, though. I apologized to the entire class a bit after I woke up again. They were all pretty nice about it even though I didn't even explain why I said the things I did. It was strange, but it wasn't bad.

It was too good to be true... no, my classmates are just nice like that. Hoshi and Momota were still pretty grumpy, so it wasn't all good, right? At the end of the day (or however that saying goes,) things are real enough to not be too good to be true! Positives are a fun thing to think about. I can see why Chabashira and Yonaga love it so much. Even when Yonaga and I were kicking Shirogane out, she was smiling. Smiles are one of the most effective sources of mana, people just don't know it.

I want to give people the same powers. Not the same power as me. That would be crazy and almost impossible, but enough to make them cast a spell and make their day better. I would teach the people I was mean to. Okay, maybe not Shinguuji, but people like Saihara and Gonta. Both of them are very nice and are even nicer when they're happy. Even with my magic, I'm not super smart, but I know both of them are very sad. Gonta hasn't been as sad lately, but Saihara always looks like someone made a rain cloud over his head and made it rain all the time. Maybe not rain, actually. Saihara said he likes the rain. Hail then.

Saihara and Gonta are both guys, which makes me think about Chabashira and how much she hates men. I know she's not entirely wrong about that, but she isn't looking at the big picture. Everyone can kill. Tojo did. Akamatsu tried to. She isn't right either. Lots of guys are nice just like Saihara and Gonta. I won't tell her that though. Even if she'll probably listen and at least think about it, it's just... a pain. No, that's a lie. Telling her would help a lot. I'm just a little bit afraid to say anything.

It's not that Chabashira is super scary of anything. She has the intimidation level of a kitty most of the time. It just reminds me of my dreams. Sometimes, it would go far back enough to the conversation that I had with Chabashira. She one right before she was... killed. She was so kind and I just sort of ignored her. Conversations like that always meant death. I didn't have to go to the screening, but I heard about them. Saihara and Akamatsu. Hoshi and Tojo. Even Momota and Ouma is he was telling the truth.

What if Chabashira brushes off my words just like I did to her? What if she dies right after? I know she would never do that, I just don't believe it. It could be just like my dreams, which I know it isn't. That's just a possibility. We could all possibly die at any moment. Just like in that game. Heart to hearts are for death. I can't do that. This isn't a dream, so the odds of that even happening are low, especially with my magic. What if this isn't reality though? Just another nightmare. Just like Momota says. The impossible is possible. Maybe now, I have no choice in whether or not it is so.
Why does everything still feel like a dream?

Angie is very sorry you had to see that! She knows you are a lover of sunny skies, happy thoughts and peaceful minds! She will relight your candle as soon as she returns to her dorm. Angie hopes that will be enough to bring you back. The sun may be setting, but perhaps the candlelight can be a much calmer alternative that may be even more preferable to the real thing! The sun doesn't smell like cinnamon apple either. Angie wishes the calm flame will be enough to make up for the turmoil that might've attempted to corrupt your vibrant light! The fight between the your prophet's blessed maiden's soul and the warrior of human life was unfortunate, but please don't let that slow you down.

... Nothing, huh? No bother. My—wait, no—your prophet's dorm still smells of paint. She brought back yet another painting from her lab and had to keep it inside due to the rain. The rain has let up and the painting is dry now, so Angie will just stand on the veranda. Your light reaches her better out here and the candle will do just fine... nothing. That's alright! You can take your time and Angie will still be there. She will always be there... Isn't the sunset delightful? The Devine colors and the way it makes everything glow orange. Maybe that's just Angie's morphed opinion though. If it's incorrect, just say so... okay then.

A distant melody hums through the air like the way your voice used to. It sounds sad and sorrowful, but it's the kind of tune that makes Angie feel peaceful when she sings it to the rain as clouds rain down overhead. You like it when Angie sings, right? You make her feel happy when she does it. Angie can sing right now. She knows the song. She's singing it now. She's doing her best. Just for you... nothing. Angie will keep singing. Kaede, musical maiden making the lovely sounds smiles up at me. Angie. She smiles up at Angie. Her light is almost as bright as yours.

You don't seem to like Angie's singing this time, do you? Angie is feeling sad rather than happy now. Well... if you aren't watching, Angie might keeps singing. A cool night after a sunny day is always pleasant. Even if today was rainy, you would still wish such emotions for your prophet, right... Angie doesn't hear a no, so she keeps singing. She keeps feeling sad. There's no need for rain anymore to make the tune happy. The tears that fall from Angie's eyes are enough. When her emotions are restored to happiness, it was of her own creation, not yours. Angie is sorry for that. The only happiness she needs is what you give her.

Angie stops singing and puts out the candle. It's colder in there. Maybe that's how you intended it to be though. She won't neglect your wishes by turning on the heater. She'll just wrap herself in a blanket. Angie wants to keep singing, but she won't for your sake. You're all she needs. Indulging in comforts out of your care would be betrayal. It would be a claim that you haven't done enough to help her out. You helped Angie make friends. You've been with her since birth. Before she could think. You are what gave her life.

She still wonders sometimes about that though. Do Angie's friends like Angie or the person sculpted by Atua? Luckily, she always realizes that the real and Angie and the person sculpted by Atua are one in the same. She remembers that Angie is merely the name of the vessel that carries your will to the world! She hopes you remembers that and returns to her. Or she would if she were allowed to have these hopes. Angie only carries your thoughts. She doesn't think on her own without your supervision. That would be another form of betrayal.

This doesn't stop Angie from having emotions though. Emotions are easier to give than thoughts. She holds her hands into a prayer to you. She holds all her emotions in her head and sends them to
you once more. Angie cries once more, but this time she doesn't sing the sorrowful melodies that take the pain away. She has to be honest and admit that she worries you aren't there. She's falling into a pit of darkness deeper than any color she could ever paint. She's your prophet. I'm—She's in pain. I'm so—ANGIE is so sad. I'm... I'm lost.

*Why won't Atua come to save me?*

I didn't think it was possible, but maybe there is such thing as a degenerate female! Seriously, Shirogane can't be that stupid, right? She was smart enough to throw everyone off her trail in the simulator for weeks and yet she's got the balls to make such a move. What kind of argument was she even going for there?! Seriously, for a girl, she's sorta dumb. I'm close minded? No. I'm just doing the right thing! Some people just deserve prejudice! It's correct to go against the degenerates. They prey on the girls who are kind and... accepting... oh. Yea, I think I see it now. I'll apologize later though. I'm still angry.

Before I get sidetracked, I get rid of the security camera. Yea, that probably won't go over well with the scientists if they're doing a progress report. They saw Shirogane of all people start yelling. That's almost as unlikely as Yumeno yelling! The soft, melodic sound of a lady's voice doesn't deserve to be scratched up by screaming. The report probably failed, didn't it? The other three didn't know the true motives of the project. I was given specific instructions as the hostess to not tell the others. I don't like lying to girls, but I technically didn't because they didn't ask!

Anyway, after I volunteered to host this disaster, Sensei gave me a sheet of paper. It was classified and everything! I've never been given classified stuff! Mom and Dad probably thought I would blab about it and master and I aren't meant to have any secrets! Secrets hold you down when fighting! Of course, that's not the point of Neo Aikido. It's meant to protect everyone and anything in need and—I forgot to take my ADHD medication, didn't I? What was I talking about before? Oh yea, classified papers!

So the project went a little something like this! The degenerate males (or lovely ladies!) that work at that data place wanted the people in the groups to get one person to act as their host! Well, not acting. I'm a great host, actually! All the neighborhood kids love love loved my tea parties! No degenerates allowed, obviously! Where was I? Right, still the classified stuff. So we had to make sure none of the people in our groups found out because that is a no no! The point of this whole thing is to see how we've all moved on from the game. So if the scientist are given any reason, any at all, that you're struggling with something related to that... you fail!

Wait wait wait! Doesn't that mean I'm the reason why we failed?! Oh no! This doesn't effect our overall marks for the terms, but what if I damaged Yumeno's record! I hope she doesn't get too too angry if she finds out! It can't be worse than how she acted towards that degenerate Shinguuji a few weeks back, right?! Degenerates like him are the only degenerates that deserve to be spoken to like a degenerate! If Yumeno does find out, I can apologize like I did that one time I broke mom's favorite vase! What was I saying? I don't remember... yea I do! I should really take my meds though...

When I wait for the effects to kick in, I send an apology to Shirogane. Thinking helps calm ya down after a real bad fight! Master thinks it's good that I know how to channel my anger! It's a good thing that I can practice my Neo Aikido and my thoughts shoot around like pew pew pew! Yea... that's nice. Shirogane responds with a thank you and this cute little smiley face a few minutes later. She apologizes back, which I'm happy about. Not so excited that I get out of control! That's another no no! It takes a bit longer until the medicine really relaxes me.
Now I can finish the thought. It’s my fault we failed that progress report, wasn’t it? I brought up that whole Gonta thing, which was what made me call Shirogane out on being the mastermind. It wasn’t her fault... she wasn't wrong about me either. That's what I believe though! I dunno, it changes. Sometimes I can be nicer to guys. I was sort of rowdy today or something. I just have trouble with that. I always will. It's what I was taught, but now, even when I'm being proven wrong, I'm held back by what I've learned.

Why can't I see past the surface?

I'm grateful I got out of there when I did. Who knows what could've happened if I stayed there? Oh, it gives me chills just thinking about it! Not the good kind I get when I see some animation that's just plain incredible, but... actually, I'm too plain to have any situations I can use for this. I'm still pumped up from adrenaline. Even someone as plain as me can have it. Because of this, I get to my room with the speed of a certain blue haired class rep. Not the one in my class, but like... never mind. When I'm inside, I don't bother stopping myself from thinking about the fight I just got out of.

I guess neither of us were really correct in that fight, were we? I mean sure, Chabashira can be a little bit sexist sometimes and yea, what I did in the simulation was just plain awful, but not everything we said was true. Chabashira is getting much better at talking to the guys. She does nice things for everyone. Heck, she even respects Idabashi's identity and checks their bracelets every time they enter the room! Even if she's had worse moments, Chabashira is truly good. The same goes for me. I didn't do great things, but I'm not evil now... right? I haven't caused any damage in the real world... right?

I guess it's plain to see that I'm not fooling anyone, isn't it? It’s just that... every problem that comes up about that... horrible, horrible game. Every time that comes up, I try to deny it, but I know that it’s my fault they feel this way. As the mastermind. As the one who put everyone through that hell. It happened with Gokuhara. It happened with Yumeno. It’s going to happen again, too. I know I did this to them. I’m the reason why everything went wrong in their lives. The more this goes on and on, the more I see it. The more damage that I’m responsible for. That’s why I tried to stop things with Gokuhara. I didn’t want to accept that I’d done that.

Maybe I should’ve let Saihara take the role and acted oblivious... no! That’s an awful thing to wish on someone. Better someone like you than him. You sit in your room all day and watch anime while he goes out and makes a difference in the world. The smile of someone seeing their favorite characters come to life pales in comparison to the smile of someone who finally found their lost child. Even if telling the others the truth about his original role would calm things down, I couldn’t do that to Saihara. If he hasn’t told anyone by now, he probably doesn’t want anyone to ever know.

For all I know, Saihara could be over the game entirely. Actually no. I saw his and Akamatsu’s conversation about his hat. If it’s back, it has something to do with the simulator. The simulator I masterminded. It’s just plain silly of me to be so worked up over this though, isn’t it? I have the least right to. I was the one least effected. The victims have to deal with their deaths. The culprits as well, plus an excruciating memory of their execution. The survivors, even if they never died, have to remember the deaths of their friends, but me? I had no memories in there. I was never able to truly think of those guys as friends.

This could just be karma for what I did in the game. The reason I took the role was weighed down and taken away by how just plain awful my actions were. Is torturing me with guilt that I’m not even supposed to feel some form of payback? Probably not. The universe doesn’t focus on people
as plain as me, regardless of what I’ve done. Stupid of me to think otherwise. Only natural for someone so plainly evil to develop some kind of ego. This whole time I’ve only been thinking about myself, haven’t I. Even if I’m alone, that’s more than normal. Usually I think of others and whatever comes to mind.

Now if I think about anyone else, my mind trails back to my classmates. Saihara and his hat. Ouma and his disappearance on Tojo’s birthday. Yes, I did notice that. Harukawa and the way I can see her doing frustrated laps around the building. I get a text of apology from Chabashira. I’m grateful for it, even if she was right about what she said. I send her a thank you and apologize for my own, false words. My mind just keeps spiralling from there. Yonaga and the way she covers the back of her neck. Akamatsu and the way she flinches every time she plays the wrong note. Idabashi and the way they start shaking at loud noises. The sameness goes for me, but that doesn’t matter.

Why did I let everyone get so hurt?
The final case of the group projects arc gives us a look at Keebo, Miu, Rantaro and Kokichi.

TW: Gender dysphoria, existential dread/angst, suicidal thoughts, mentions of bullying, mentions of self harm, negative body image, and eating disorders (specifically bulimia and anorexia.)

Greetings! Howdy do! Wassup fuckers?! Hey there.

I am Idabashi Keebo. It's ya boy, Ouma Kokichi! Gorgeous girl genius Iruma Miu here! My name is Amami Rantaro.

<Oh dear god. You can already sense the chaotic energy from their introductions alone...>

Despite being some of the brightest students in their class, Rantaro, Keebo, Miu, and Kokichi still had yet to work on their project. Sure, it had only been a day since the work was assigned, but the four had yet to do anything aside from deciding their host, that being Rantaro. As of right now, the four of them sat with four desks pushed together in the classroom. Determined to not get distracted, they were eating lunch there to discuss a time that would work for the rest of them. Miu spent a worrisome amount of time working, so the others were trying to respect her wishes despite not being for them.

"I thought we were supposed to do this yesterday, so I cancelled my flight," Rantaro sighed, his face uncharacteristically troubled, "it's probably fine though. I can always reschedule."

"Huh? You seemed so excited for it though!" Keebo remarked, "you could've told us!"

"Assmami has the ability to look excited?!" Miu gaped, nearly falling out of her chair, "Well the more you fuckin know or some shit..."

"It's fine," Rantaro insisted, pushing on the back of Miu's chair to keep her from tipping it. The result was a middle finger, which Rantaro merely laughed at, "besides, I'd end up being gone for the whole week. I know how much you hate missing out on this sort of thing."

"You cancelled because of me?!!" Keebo sputtered.

"Aww, how sweet Amami-Chan~!" Kokichi cooed teasingly, his face resting carelessly in his hands.

Miu whacked Kokichi's elbow, throwing the boy off balance, resulting in his face slamming on the table, "Yea! The fuck Amoron?!!" The inventor gasped accusingly over the sound of Kokichi's dramatic crocodile tears, "choosing favorites..."

"Hey, the same goes for you two," Rantaro defended, subtly leaning his cheek into his palm to hide the pink tint that had made an appearance, "Iruma, you hate taking breaks and Ouma, you're a
"Hwa?!" Kokichi shrieked, "I am no such thing! Nishishi~ you think that a supreme leader of evil such as myself would fit the role of a nerd?! The word you're searching for is evil genius! Evil. Genius!"

"That's lie," Shuichi vaporized from thin air all of a sudden, "you guys should see the notes he takes..."

"Saihara-Chan!" Kokichi whined, "how dare you pull sneaky ninja moves on me! Then lie to not only me, but Keebs and Amami-Chan?! I don't care about the reject porn star, but still! For shame!"

"Ouma-Kun!" Keebo scolded as Miu writhed in her chair.

"S—sorry," Shuichi said, stifling a laugh with the back of his hand, "Ouma-Kun, Munakata-Sensei was looking for you. He sounded angry."

"Oh yay!" Kokichi cheered, "he found the tarantula!" The boy hopped from his seat and made for the exit, "toodles~"

"Uh... I'll put his stuff away. He could be gone for a while," Shuichi murmured, "bye you guys."

Shuichi left the room, closing the door behind him, which left only Keebo, Miu, and Rantaro. It took a while, but the roboticist and the adventurer were able to convince the inventor to clear out a few hours of work later that day. Sending Kokichi an update, the three ultimates were left to their own devices as they chatted away. The idle conversation only ended at the sound of Rantaro's phone ringing. The boy peered anxiously at the caller ID and terror crossed his face. It was as if he knew why the call was there. Letting out a shaky breath, he shot the others a sympathetic expression, covering up any emotion from before.

"Sorry, I gotta take this," Rantaro chuckled lightheartedly, already halfway to the door, "this could take a while so I'll see you guys later."

The ultimate exited the room, muttering something to himself. The tone was miserable and terrified, but the forced smile never left his face. As the classroom door clicked shut once again, a frown made its way onto Keebo's face as they stared at Rantaro's empty seat. However, before the remaining two could strike up a conversation amongst themselves, the door opened once more with a flamboyant thud. Kokichi came striding back in with a slightly concerned look on his face, a smirk made into a smirk at the sight of his two classmates.

"Oh, what's this~?" Kokichi drawled, "a romantic lunch?! Wow! That must be why Amami-Chan looked all upset when I passed him in the hall! Don't you know it's basic lunch etiquette to not make the third wheel feel like the third wheel?!"

"I'm going to go talk to him," Keebo declared, setting their stuff down. However, they were stopped at the door by Kokichi.

"Silly Keebs," Kokichi sighed, "at least let Amami-Chan finish his phone call! For all we know, he could be hearing like, the best news of his life! Like finding out his crush on you is one hundred percent, totally requited!"

"Don't joke about that!" Keebo yelped, "Amami-Kun and I do not have feelings for each other!"

"I'm sure you fuckin don't," Miu snickered, but the tone was lost on the roboticist seeing as they were relieved by the words, "now come ere."
Keebo made their way back to the quad of desks with a hesitant look. They stared at the closed classroom door for a good while before finally tuning back in on whatever ridiculous conversation Miu and Kokichi were in the middle of. The roboticist laughed and scolded who and when needed, but never really focused on what was being spoken. Keebo wasn't the only one to notice. Kokichi also spared the occasional glance at the way his classmate had gone, as well as Miu, though she was a lot more obvious than the smaller boy. The discussion remained lighthearted despite their concerns.

Rantaro didn't come back.

<Ohoho? Is that some more spooky mystery I see? Feel free to comment any theories! Happy holidays. Take care!>

"Catch These Hands, But in a Nice Way, Motherhecker" May 15th, 15:21

FemaleDog: amamass, we still meeting in ten???

DumbBum: Yea

TheNotHeaven: Where were you the rest of the day?!

MinusculeFecalMatter: Now that's no way to ask, Keebs!

MinusculeFecalMatter: Watch and learn!

MinusculeFecalMatter: Spill the beans before I spill your brains!!!

FemaleDog: tf?

DumbBum: I spaced out for like a minute there. What's happening???

FemaleDog: back read, dumbass!

DumbBum: Oh. That was nothing. Just got a call about my traveling stuff is all

MinusculeFecalMatter: Lies~

TheNotHeaven: Ouma-Kun!

TheNotHeaven: You're okay then?

DumbBum:

DumbBum: Yea, I'm fine

TheNotHeaven: That's good.

<Sorry this chapter was a bit later than I thought it would be! I had to get some stuff together for the holidays and barely had time to write. Should be back to normal soon!>

Kokichi was the first to arrive at Rantaro's dorm. The smaller boy at this point was used to dramatically jumping from his veranda to his classmate's, which made his trip a lot faster than the other two. It was to the point that Rantaro seemed to expect the entrance and unlocked the sliding glass door without looking outside. The adventurer, despite not looking that way earlier, seemed
exhausted. It was like his mind was in a different place. Even as he greeted Kokichi with a calm smile and relaxed hello, the leader could practically feel the distress radiating off of him. However, the sight of a mediocrely well hidden security bug made him hold his tongue, Kokichi's own anxiety getting the better of him.

"Wowie Amami-Chan, I just love what you've done with the place!" Kokichi praised in an almost mocking tone. However, his face held no malice, "that's a lie though. I've seen like, trillions of abandoned warehouses and none of them are uglier than this room."

Normally, Rantaro would chuckle at the scene, even play along, but instead he bit his lip and stayed silent. Not wanting to show this off to the cameras, the boy let out a fake huff of amusement and disguised his ignorance as him just setting up his stuff. Kokichi blanked out for a moment, suppressing a frown as he burst back to life. The supreme leader scampered around the room, staring and commenting on various souvenirs Rantaro had accumulated throughout his years of traveling. This charade didn't last long until three knocks echoed around the dorm. Rantaro stood up, though the action was sluggish, before opening the door. Behind it stood Keebo, whose eyes lit up at the sight of the adventurer.

"Good to see you!" Keebo greeted, nearly dropping their books and laptop, "you were missing the rest of the day, so I wasn't sure if you were still hosting today."

"Jeez, Keebs, he was only gone for like, two seconds," Kokichi groaned with disinterest as he examined a model boat he had taken from one of Rantaro's shelves.

"Like I said, I'm fine," Rantaro assures, though he didn't look up and seemed concentrated on sorting through his notes, even if his eyes didn't move, "just stuff about my trip I had to take care of, remember?"

Keebo hummed in agreement and sat down next to Rantaro. Even then, plus the naturally gullibility the roboticist had, they didn't seem to believe the other's words. Even more surprising though, was that despite the occasionally blunt comments Keebo made, they never brought it up. They had noticed the security bug as well. Their distaste for the scientists at the research facility was enough to keep them quiet. Once again, it didn't take long for the fourth and final member of the group to arrive. Although, contrary to Keebo's polite knocking, Miu burst through the door with little to no shame at all.

"Hey my bitches!" Miu shouted, slamming a very heavy looking stack of stuff onto the small table Rantaro had squeezed into his dorm, "let's get this fucking bread!"

"Tsk, tsk! Didn't you ever learn to knock you greasy apple pie!?!" Kokichi retaliated, resulting in Miu melting into a mess of questionable noises, "oh, that was a good one!"

"Bread?" Keebo mused over the noise, "I thought we were doing a project—oh! Amami-Kun, is our project actually making bread?!!"

"No, we aren't," Rantaro sighed, not entirely in the conversation, "we really aren't."

"Speaking of bread," Kokichi grinned, "I got snacks~!"

Kokichi grabbed his bag, which he had come with, and opened it up. Inside was, as one would expect, snacks. The purple haired boy tossed a bag to each individual, though no one caught it. Kokichi had purposely thrown the package too far for Keebo to catch, and Rantaro spaced out and got hit square in the face. Miu, on the other hand, dodged and handed the bag back to Kokichi. Frowning, though he played it up as a pout, Kokichi shoved the bag back in Miu's direction. The
inventor responded by mirroring the action, only this time she spoke up before the pack went flying back at her.

"Fasting," Miu muttered, not meeting anyone else's gaze.

"You ate lunch though," Keebo reminded, raising a brow.

"That was before I began fasting, dammit," Miu responded, trying to keep her tone casual as she forcefully shoved the bag back into Kokichi's hands. However, the thing grazed Kokichi's finger at a good enough angle to give him a paper cut.

"Oh—shit!" Kokichi shrieked over Miu's cackling, holding his finger before bursting into crocodile tears, "d—d—d—d—damn you, you vintage thong!"

Kokichi jumped up, hitting his head on the wall in the process. Even Rantaro, who hadn't been paying much attention, chuckled at Kokichi's large array of curses. Although Keebo did eventually calmed down and helped Kokichi to the door to Rantaros bathroom when the supreme leader claimed he was seeing spots.

Rantaro's bathroom was just as cluttered as his actual room. Kokichi searched quietly for a bandaid to cover the cut on his finger. He didn't bother to play up the theatrics because he was nearly certain that there was no security cameras in the bathroom. Still, Kokichi lied, even if it wasn't with words. He pretended not to notice the large amount of tissues that lay in the trash, despite the fact that the garbage had been emptied just earlier that day. He pretended he didn't notice the concealer on the sink, even though he could tell Rantaro wasn't wearing it based off the freckles on his cheeks.

Kokichi cursed at Miu again as he came bounding back into the room. He fluctuated between his silent and loud mannerisms so quickly that it was nearly as impressive and drastic as Miu's mood. It didn't take long for the four of them to get into a groove though. They gave tasks. They all got their research finished. Before five hours could even pass, they had a complete project that even Miu didn't see any error in.

"Tojo-San probably saved dinner for us," Keebo said as they packed up their stuff, "she asked if we were coming down a couple hours ago, but I didn't want to stop working."

"I'll pass," Miu replied, already at the door, "bye bitches!"

"I'll uh... I may be late, so you guys can leave without me," Rantaro murmured, eying the security camera, "I just gotta do some stuff."

"I can't believe Amami-Chan had left us behind, Keebs!" Kokichi cried, wiping away a fake test. "He didn't leave us behind!" Keebo exclaimed before turning around at the door, "bye Amami-Kun!"

"Yea, bye..."

The door shut, leaving Rantaro behind.

Progress report A4: Positive?

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I didn't really want to go to dinner, honestly. I just wanted to leave that room. Don't get me wrong!
Amami and them are all great company and I love being around him—all of them, I mean! It's just... difficult to be around people who are so human. Okay, that sounded weird! Uh, what I mean is that I'm just having a bit of a tough time seeing people who are so comfortable with themselves! Amami is acting a little off, but we all have those days, right...? Maybe I should've asked if he was alright though. Wait, no. The security camera. If the project was for the researchers, then they're probably going to be looking at that tape. I know I don't speak for him, but I think Amami wouldn't be the happiest if his problems were broadcast to strangers. I would.

I should probably get back to explaining that whole humanity thing. I sounded like Shinguuji there for a moment... So yea, you know people eat cereal? Okay, bad metaphor, but I don't know how else to describe it. So cereal. Say you ate the same brand of cereal every morning. I don't know why you would eat the same cereal brand every day, but as they say, to each their own. Back to cereal. This brand tastes fine, but sometimes it tastes bitter and gross. One day though, you get a limited edition brand of cereal and it tastes amazing and it doesn't have any bitter and gross tasting parts. Then it goes off the market and you're stuck back with the old brand. Now the nasty parts are a lot more noticeable and a lot more well... nasty.

Alright yea, the metaphor was stupid, but I'm trying! So just swap out the old cereal with being a human and the new cereal with being a robot. Being a human was sometimes and awful thing to be before entering the simulation. Then I ended up being a cool robot that wasn't advanced enough to hold the same thoughts as I did. Now that I'm back to being a human though, I have to feel this way again after not feeling this way for a while. It's like taking a warm bath. When you get out, the air feels so cold. Definitely a better metaphor than the cereal. I don't even like figurative language either! I don't understand it.

So being human... kind of sucks. It's strange because when I was robot, I wanted to be just like other people, but now... well, I still do want to be like most people, come to think of it. Most people don't spend their nights thinking about how painful it's going to be when eventually they die. They don't wonder if it would be easier to just end things right then and there just to get everything done and over with. They don't spend hours crying because their body will never be the way they want it to be! I hate that I have to live like this and sometimes it seems worse than dying like this. I don't want to go down that road though.

I guess it's sort of my own fault all of this came rushing back to me so fast. When I was first accepted into Hope's Peak, I had chosen to alter my memories and have my talent changed for the killing game. That whole thing about being too similar to Iruma wasn't exactly the truth. I got to meet her before we got put into the simulator, so I knew our personalities would be more than enough to make up for our similar talents, but I got sort of selfish. I didn't want to feel this way anymore, so I went to the researchers and requested the alterations. That was the true reason why I was a robot. That was the true reason why everything came flooding back the moment I woke up with my old brain.

Luckily, Ouma left somewhere on our way to the kitchen, so I could leave and go back to my own dorm. It's on the male side of the building, but I try not to think about that too hard as I sit down. Of course, as a human, my brain doesn't stop thinking entirely unless I concentrate on something, but that's not going to happen right now. Naturally, I go back to thinking unpleasant things. In every state of mind. Every form. Every being. I've never been happy with it. How long will it be until I'm happy again? Will I be happy again? Will I be sad forever? How long will I be happy before I'm sad again? Normally I just talk to Amami when this happens. Of course I never told him why, but he just makes me happy. He's probably not in the mood though.

So I just sort of laid there for a while. My head hurts. Maybe a migraine. I never had to deal with this as robot. I would wish I could deal with migraines if I were a robot. It's no use. I won't be...
happy either way. I don't know when, but I started crying. I hate crying. I do it too much as a human. I can't at all as a robot. I hate it. I just want it to stop. I know this will happen again tomorrow and then again and again and again until I die. If I shortened the days by myself, would that really be so bad? No no no! I can't think like that! I want to be normal! I want to be happy! I want to be satisfied with existing! Why is that so hard to do?! Why is my body never content with my brain?!

Why does life itself hurt me?!

Shit, it's cold! I need Bakamatsu's jacket or something. Or my own! Whatever the fuck's available. Didn't the forecast say 59 (15 in Celsius) degrees or some shit?! I should be warm with all my cow fat. Imagine twigs like Twinkma and Yumenhoe trying to get through this bullshit! Whatever, I needed to take a walk for the exercise. Cardio bumps up your efficiency and burns calories. Should make up for the amount of time I spent sitting earlier. Either way, I was going to go to my lab eventually. I came up with this bitching invention that I've just gotta pump out on paper! Seriously, this thing could change the way we see all the normal shit people make in the world! I'm talking couches, cartoons, all that fucking stuff!

Or not. This could be another mess up. One of those rare mistakes I make. Maybe they aren't that rare, actually. No, of course they're fucking rare! I'm a fucking genius! Or maybe not. No! It's possible, dumbass. Middle school kids aren't all hormonal, shitty, dumbasses who don't know what they're talking about... Oh who the fuck cares?! Just because those virgins thought I was a stupid, boring, ugly bitch who would never amount to anything, doesn't make it entirely true! I'm just self aware enough to know that I'm not always right... and I'm not the thinnest... or the prettiest... and I there's always a chance no one will remember my name.

It's not my fault anyway, those little shits just misunderstood. Sure, after the car crash, I lost a bit of time, but I got my shit together! I learned twice as fast as those dumbasses too! So what if resting for so long made me a bit less athletic?! Look at me now! Bet those bitches who talked shit are gonna get their panties in a twist when they see me now! I've lost nearly ten pounds since school started! Sure, I had work to do after waking up from the simulator, but I got there! Pretty impressive huh? This new invention is going to fucking blow those bastards away when they see my sheer brilliance too!

I am just throbbing with ideas! I'm fucking elated when I reach my lab. Was it always such a tiring walk? Whatever, back to work! There's no time to waste! Nanapee is sleeping at the computers again. Seriously, I'm gonna walk in on her fucking that thing one day. I should tell her that when she wakes up and gets off her ass. Alright, so I left the damn thing on my work table earlier, right? Everything's sort of blurring together. I was probably buzzed and didn't realize it. Okay, hell yea! There it is! Why am I so excited?! Who the fuck cares, there it is! Soucuck left another one of his weird ass creations on it though. I'm giving that fucker a piece of my mind when I see him!

This invention fucking sucks! Probably was buzzed when I made it! All the wires and shit are in the wrong places. I have to fucking restart! Damn it... Not that this is pulling me down! Iruma Miu, gorgeous girl genius, doesn't make mistakes. Or does she? Oh shut the fuck up and get working you stupid, blonde haired, ugly ass bimbo! Maybe then you could burn off a few more calories. Puking lunch isn't gonna do shit unless you work harder. Your brain won't get smarter unless you get off your ass and get the fuck to work! Grab that fucking wrench, and get yourself together!
you even want to prove them wrong?! Or is that not possible because they were right?!

Nanapenis stands up to leave. I was gonna tell her something, right? Agh, whatever! Stop with the bullshit and get the fuck back to working! Jesus fuck you no good bitch with an IQ lower than a broken toaster! Can't you do anything right? Work harder! Get smarter! Burn calories! This is what is right! This is the way you prove yourself! To them... or yourself. No, if this was for me, everything would be fine! It's those asshole's faults for being shitty people! Either way, this is good for me. I could bear to lose a few pounds and get smarter. I could go on faster for another day. I could go on working for a few more hours. This is just my way of self improvement. This is perfectly fine.

My stupid, flabby ass body starts to feel tired. This has been happening a lot. The internet says shit about how it's because I'm not eating, but that's stupid. Like I said, this is healthy and will all be worth it in the end. I will look pretty for Bakamatsu. I will prove those middle school gossip girls wrong. I should've brought a coffee with me. I need the caffeine. No! I can do this on my own. If I can't finish this one damn invention, then that means they were right. Not on my watch! If I fail, it's my own damn fault. I will finish this thing now...! No food until then. My god, you fatass! Why can't you think about anything other than food? Just another day... SHUT THE FUCK UP AND WORK!

Why can't I prove those asses wrong?

That was boring! I thought I was going to die there for a moment! At least it's done and over with, I suppose. I hope Amami's okay... Actually, I don't care about that medium rare cabbage headed glue sniffer! All those tissues in the bathroom actually made me real happy! Knowing that life sucks enough that someone like Amami would cry makes supreme leaders of evil such as myself smile with glee! It was probably very bad then... All the better! Of course, there's no worry whatsoever in my head. I'm bored of the subject though, so I'll just stop thinking about it! ... I should check on him... Now I'm talking crazy! My mind is all over the place, isn't it?! Splattered everywhere!

Just like my blood when I was crushed... Woah! I just want the record to show that that was the bestest, most amazingest back massage I had ever gotten in my life! It really took my breath away, lemme tell ya! Completely unrelated, but I don't feel like eating suddenly! I can't after remembering that... That's obviously a lie though. I just have better things to do than eat. What am I, a mortal?! Keebs doesn't seem to care when I leave, probably because of my supreme stealth skills! They're probably happy I'm gone... That's nonsense though! I am an absolute delight to be around! Maybe it'd be better if I didn't run into anyone else though. Not because I don't think they'd want to see me! I'm just on too much of a roll. I'm naturally selfish and want the comedy all to myself!

That wasn't an entire lie. I am selfish... Gasp! I actually go all out when I lie! Half lies are half assed unless they have a hidden meaning to them for crying out loud! Either way, my luck has run out. I hear Saihara saying my name. His voice is so kind and adorable... Ugly, actually. The way it sounds like he actually cares about what you have to say?! Disgusting! I keep walking anyway. Not like I want to talk to him... I want to talk to him. He relaxes me and if I can't do anything about this Amami thing, I'd like to have at least him to talk to. I turn around and smile at Saihara. Wait— no! Smirk! Don't smile! My smile has billion jillion spiders in it!

That's not the point though! Now I have to talk to him! If I turn around now, Saihara will know I was ignoring him and get all depressed and emo. I don't really care about his feelings, I just don't want to deal with more glaring than I already get. Whatever, I'll make him walk to me rather than
walking to him. He takes a second to catch his breath. How long was this dude walking, even running for? Does that mean he was looking for me? Jeez, what is he, in love? I wish... Hush! Saihara apologizes, which he does way too often. He didn't do that before, which worries me... Kidding! Anyways, so Saihara apologizes and says he was training. That's why he's out of breath! Wow, I should be the ultimate detective too.

Saihara keeps talking with that stupid pretty face of his. This guy literally just wanted to ask me if I was alright after dealing with the big bad Munakata. I could tell him the truth, but I wind up giving him this whole, awesome story! I won't say much more, but let's just say I jumped out a few windows. Munakata just wanted to double check on the project really. I like my story better though! Saihara let's me finish talking before calling me out on the lie. He says he's glad I'm alright though, which is absolutely, totally, uncalled for! He's too nice and actually bothers to figure me out. I don't deserve that. Why does he even bother talking to me anyway? After what I did to Gokuhara, Iruma and Momota, he has every right to hate me.

I wish I could tell him about everything. He would probably understand because of how crazy nice he is. I... I want to tell him. I want to tell him about my fears about the killing game. I want to talk to him about his cuts. I figured it out a while back. It reminded me of my old ones. I want to tell him it's okay. I want to hug him. I want to tell him about my past. I want him to tell me about his. I want to cry. I want him to wipe away the tears. I want to not be afraid to give him a real smile. I want to do everything I can to keep those kind, smart, beautiful eyes happy and bright. But then, of course, I realize I've been thinking crazy stuff again and leave the scene. Supreme leaders of evil don't deserve something so good. They're evil for a reason!

Besides! It's not like I want that anyway! I have a killing game to work against, remember? Maybe... just maybe, though! Maybe if I do take the killing game away, I will consider those thoughts... Probably not! Like I said, I don't really think that... yea, I don't really think that! But the killing game is over... Nope nope nope! No it isn't! But it really is... No, it really isn't! It can't be gone so easily! I can't accept that! Even if it is over, what's waiting for me here? I can't see DICE. I'm sure as hell not going to the orphanage where I'm just babies and have stupid stuff rubbed in my face! Everyone here probably hates my guts! This is my only chance at redemption. But things could get better for me here if I just shut up and trust people. Why can't I do that?

Why can't I accept that things will be okay?

- You know the feeling you get when you get a paper cut? Like that moment of disappointment in not only the world for giving you this tiny thing that stings like a bitch, but also yourself? Well, multiply that by a good million times and you've got my current mood. I don't want to think too hard about it though. It hurts to. Instead, I remove the security bug from the wall. I probably could've hidden it better. Everyone probably saw it when they came in. The instructions said you couldn't tell them about it, which I never did, so I guess I technically didn't break the rules. Idabashi and them are just smarter than me and would figure it out. It's sorta funny... okay, not really, but I want something to laugh about.

I don't really have a right to laugh right now, really. It's my fault this whole situation happened in both the past and present sense of the word. The same thing happened in the simulation. I'd rather not remember anything from that place, but I sort of deserve it right now. Everything happened because of my own selfishness. I wanted to end the game on my own. I ended up being bait to Shirogane and was the reason the game went on for so long. I don't really think I qualify as someone allowed to feel upset though. I was the first one out of there. I had to suffer the least. Same sort of thing here. It's no biggie though if I can sum everything up in so little words.
And yet, here I am. I'm guilting myself. Making it seem like things were worse than they should be. I'm doing just fine, really. In fact, Idabashi looked a little bummed out when they left earlier. Maybe I should call them. They were worried about me, weren't they? I can't have people doing that sort of thing for me. Normally, they'd call when they are in a bad mood. They never say it, but I can tell. It's been thirty minutes and there's been no call. Once again, my own self indulgence has gone and messed things up. And I call myself reliable... I think about going to check on Idabashi, but they'd probably just keep worrying about me anyway, so I lay uselessly on my bed and sort of just succumb the void.

I hear my phone start to ring. I almost don't pick it up. Then I remembered that would make me hypocrite because I just scolded myself for indulging in my own whims and desires. I check the ID, expecting the worst to happen again, but all I see is an unknown number. Someone probably got the wrong number or something. I can't bring myself to do much else other than hang up the phone. I should probably check on her though, shouldn't I? The conversation will probably be painful, but I think I've learned my lesson about not doing things when you're supposed to and prioritizing. I sigh as I find her contact. My own form of stress relief. The phone rings three times before she picked up.

"Hey mom," was my voice this hoarse before? No wonder everyone was worried...

Mom didn't answer, but I could hear her breathing. She's crying. Of course she is. She got the call too. I should've called earlier, but I got too caught up in... well, crying... I talk a bit. I don’t address the elephant in the room. It’s for both of our sakes, really. It takes a while for her to stop crying, or sobbing. It’s hard to tell over the phone. I keep talking though. Now it’s really only for my sake, which is fine. I can’t see the harm in that right now. When I run out of words though, everything is just quiet. It’s painful and I’m about to say something more until Mom beats me to it. She’s almost as quiet as the room was.

“She’s gone,” Mom whispered, sobbing again, “she’s really gone.”

“Yea...” I respond.

I was going to say more, but the words died in my throat. Hearing her say it made the paper cut feeling in my head that much worse. It was heavier than when the doctor had said it. Her voice held this chilling empathy to it. I wanted apologize to her. I knew this was my fault. I made her cry. I made the doctor say the words. Still, the lump in my throat kept me quiet. My vision starts to blur, but I don’t cry. I have to be there for Mom. She’s the only one I can be there for right now. That’s all that’s really stopping be from collapsing in a heap of useless self indulgence on my emotions. I guess I’m out of luck though. Mome tells me she’s gotta go and hangs up after I finally let out a strangled goodbye.

I hate crying. I really do. I had already done it so much earlier, and yet the moment I heard the beep of the call ending, I start sobbing. At least I held it. Thank god for these sound proof walls, huh?... No, still nothing funny... Damn it. I’m not supposed to cry. Who are people going to come to when they need to cry? I’m supposed to be that strong person... Idabashi didn’t call. My mom didn’t call. I keep crying though. I can’t stop. I’m so tired, but I still have to brush my teeth and remove the concealer I used to cover my eye bags. I hate this whole situation, but I’m not allowed to complain. I’ve done enough of that. Not doing the things I’ve complained about in my head is what did this. After leaving the bathroom and falling uselessly in my bed, I start to cry again.

Why do I act so selfishly?
An Unlikely Chat

Chapter Summary

Kaito and Korekiyo talk.

TW: Mentions of bullying, implications and mentions of past abuse, panic attacks, and mentions of homophobia (the bad f word is brought up, but not with malicious intent.) In the chat, someone does make a sex joke, which happened before, so I'm not exactly sure why I'm warning you guys. It's just a bit more direct I guess.

Darkness blanketed the sky as the night crept up on day, stars laced into patterns that only the Luminary of the Stars could remember the names of. Kaito was sitting in an empty common room, fingers tapping the rim of an empty cup with an empty expression. The astronaut peered through the window at the stars, but his eyes, vibrant purple and full of their own stars, seemed to be looking beyond the flames. He seemed so lost in the galaxy of his own mind, that he barely picked up on the sound of soft footsteps in the kitchen.

Having always been curious, Kaito shifted from his place on the couch. His footsteps, while naturally loud, didn't show any signs of disturbing his new companion. The sound of running water suggested that they were getting a drink. The faucet shut off and the occasional drip of excess water dropped through the silence of the air in an unsettling form of calamity. Kaito nearly stopped moving forward from the unexpectedly ominous atmosphere, but he held himself together.

Rounding the corner, Kaito was greeted with a simple sight. It was Korekiyo. The other boy was sitting at the counter with the kettle resting upon the stove. He had an open book on the counter with words so small that Kaito would barely be able to read it if he chose to peer over the other's shoulder. Korekiyo's gaze was so intense as he examined diagrams and labels over pages that had been worn out with age. His shoulder length, silky hair would typically be draped over his face, but instead it was pulled back into a ponytail, a few strands coming to rest in front of slim, golden eyes that shone like the stars.

Kaito took another step forward, ignoring the strange feeling he got from such a calming sight. As his footsteps echoed lightly through the room, wisps of steam arose from the kettle's spout. It didn't take long for Korekiyo's eyes to travel away from the book and onto the intruder. Almost instantly, the golden irises flickered away like an angry candlelight, as if he didn't know the other boy had existed to begin with. Kaito still had yet to say anything as Korekiyo collected his book and made to leave despite the kettle of water.

"Wait! Kiyo!" Kaito sputtered, suddenly very aware of how hateful the other's gaze was when the words directed his attention towards the speaker. The expression burned with silent rage and sprinkled lightly with desire for escape. However, it was merely a shadow with the embers of anger there to overthrow it. "I wanna talk—"

"I would prefer it if you did not call me that," Korekiyo spat, hurriedly making his way towards the stairs. His hair fled alongside him and despite it's shortened style, it reminded Kaito of the mesmerizing trails left behind by a comet as it danced through the sky. He didn't have time to process the thought though seeing as Korekiyo was definitely faster than he looked, "besides, I
Kaito pursed the other, following Korekiyo up the stairs in an unfortunate race that neither intended to lose. However, being the exponentially more athletic of the two, Kaito eventually caught up to the other boy, catching him by the wrist with a firm grip that was a bit more forceful than originally intended. Korekiyo, whose arms weren't covered in bandages at this hour, reflexively pushed the astronaut away. The anthropologist's eyes swam with fear all of a sudden. Kaito noticed and quickly recoiled, although Korekiyo no longer seemed to be prioritizing escape. It's almost as if that grip made him give up...

"Shit, sorry," Kaito hissed, moving towards the other with abnormally large amounts of care that contrasted his typically harsh movements, "shoulda been more careful..."

"What did you want to talk about?" Korekiyo caved shockingly easily, though his voice trembled. It startled Kaito how much a simple grab made the other boy surrender. He connected the dots on his own with his knowledge and it made him shiver.

Kaito hesitated, suddenly uneasy and nervous, "uh, could you come with me?" Kaito asked sheepishly, "I don't think this is a conversation you'd wanna have in the middle of the hall."

Korekiyo looked as if he were searching for an exit again. However, when he found one, he deflated, "very well, but if I see fit, I can and will leave... okay?"

"Yea... I guess that's fair," Kaito agreed. Korekiyo sighed in relief. As if he thought Kaito would say no, "okay, here we are."

Korekiyo and Kaito stood outside the dormitory. The sky was dusted gently with billions of stars that shine from miles away. Despite being the one who had thought of the destination, Kaito's face lit up at the breathtaking sight. Korekiyo, on the other hand, kept his eyes trained on the ground as he tried to pull the sleeves of his sweater down to cover his hands. Kaito eventually came back to reality to find Korekiyo as he struggled. A moment passed until the anthropologist gave up, shoving his hands into the pockets of his pants before looking up at Kaito. However, Korekiyo's starry, golden eyes didn't meet the purple, galactic ones of the other boy.

"So..." Korekiyo trailed off, crossing his arms across his chest, "what is it?"

"Oh, this?" Kaito replies excitedly, "there's this comet that's coming tonight. I tried to get Shuichi and Akamatsu to plan something, but things fell short..."

Kaito rambled on for a moment and Korekiyo let him finish before finally stating, "what is that you wished to speak to me about?"

"Ah, that!" Kaito realized, smacking a palm to his forehead and laughing for a moment before an oddly sober expression made its way onto his face, "I uh... well, I just sorta figured I should... apologize for what I said to you—" Korekiyo didn't respond and Kaito began to sweat nervously "—You know? In the game, after your trial when I..."

"When you called me a fag," Korekiyo's voice was bitter and full of hurt as the slur rolled off his tongue, "yes, I remember."

Kaito shifted uncomfortable and looked away. Korekiyo, however, had taken the place as the one to stare. He looked at the astronaut with a pained expression as dull, yet vibrant golden eyes glared at him. Somehow, the expression held not so much resentment as it did another emotion. Betrayal. Kaito sighed and turned to face Korekiyo again, face tired and still in that same serious state as
before. The twinkle in his eye was gone and something about the look was enough to make Korekiyo hold his tongue as he contemplated excusing himself from the conversation.

"Yea..." Kaito spoke at last, "honestly, that's probably the shittiest thing I've ever said to anyone in my life. Especially after everything that's happened before the game at school and at home..."

Korekiyo grimaced at the last portion of Kaito's words. It was hardly visible from beneath the anthropologists mask, but Kaito could tell it was there. Something so bitter being brought up was an appropriate thing to evoke such a reaction. Beginning to feel worse, Kaito was a second away from apologizing when Korekiyo nodded his head in agreement. The boy was at a loss for words as he ducked his head, curling forward a bit as to hide himself from the world. Alarmed, Kaito rushed forward to the other.

"Hey! Ki—Shinguuji, you good?" Kaito asked, "are you cold or something? Uh... here!"

Kaito made to remove his sweatshirt to had the other boy. However, as he pulled the garment over his head, he caught sight of Korekiyo. His expression was terrified and directed at Kaito. His hands began to shake, quickly followed by the rest of his body. It didn't take long for Kaito to connect the dots. Quickly placing his sweatshirt back on, he hurriedly walked over to the other as Korekiyo's breathing grew ragged. The dark haired boy staggered at the sound of Kaitos footsteps, golden eyes shining with tears and horror. When Kaito reached Korekiyo, the taller flinched.

"G—get—!" Korekiyo choked, a sudden bout of anger flaring up as his calm demeanor slipped away entirely, "go... a—away M—M—Miya—ya—d—dera!"

Korekiyo's voice shook so violently on the last word that Kaito could barely make it out. Korekiyo's mask wasn't doing his breathing any favors, Kaito realized. The astronaut bit his lip. He stepped forward cautiously. Korekiyo had backed himself into the dormitory wall and leered at Kaito, though his movements seemed weaker and weaker as time went on. Kaito stood a respectable distance away as Korekiyo crumbled to the ground, back sliding against the brick walls of the building. Kaito crouched down so the two were level with each other.

"Kiyo," Kaito spoke as steady as he could to the sight before him, "it's just another panic attack... uh... shit, what's the drill—?" Kaito caught sight of Korekiyo's face and willed himself to keep speaking, "right!... Hey, Kiyo, if you can hear me... take your mask off."

Korekiyo shook for moment before nodding his head hesitantly.

"Alright... five things you can hear," Kaito began, feeling uneasy.

Korekiyo placed one hand to his forehead, knocking the hat off his head as he grabbed a fist full of hair on his scalp. He wasn't pulling on it, so Kaito didn't say anything. Golden eyes traced the
outdoors with a far away look as Korekiyo concentrated. After a while had passed, the anthropologist raised his other, shaking hand and pointed at Kaito. He could hear him. The astronaut was slightly taken aback by how aware the other boy had grown just from the sound of his voice. Korekiyo sat for another moment before pulling down his mask every so slowly and pointing at himself. His breathing. An even slower break happened before Korekiyo pointed at Kaito's foot. He had been tapping it without realizing. Korekiyo then pointed to a tree. The leaves. Korekiyo lightly knocked on the ground with his fist, making something else to hear.

"Clever," Kaito chuckled, "you've done that almost every time... A—anyway! Four things you can... see?"

Korekiyo was faster this time. His breathing was no longer blocked by his mask, though he still had that far away look in his eyes. Almost instantly, the boy pointed at Kaito. In fact, he did it nearly right after the words had left Kaito's mouth. The purple haired boy figured he must have memorized the procedure and his head was now clear enough to remember. Kaito wasn't sure if he was impressed by that fact, or disappointed. Korekiyo then pointed at the concrete. Then his own legs. Korekiyo then took a moment to gaze around. He probably saw many things, but just couldn't put a name to them. Then he pointed to the sky. It was the comet Kaito had talked about.

"Oh, it's here!" Kaito exclaimed, resulting in Korekiyo recoiling from the volume, "fuck. Uh... smell or touch...? Right. Three things you can feel."

Once again, Korekiyo's response was nearly instantaneous. He was still pointing, but Kaito knew he could probably speak. Korekiyo pointed at his hair, where one of his hands still remained embedded. He directed his pointing finger across the landscape, looking for something else. He eventually reached down and lightly tapped the ground twice. Then, Korekiyo pulled on the sleeve of his sweater again. With his mouth no longer covered by the mask, Kaito could see that Korekiyo was chewing on his bottom lip. Sighing, Kaito continued.

"We're almost done now," Kaito assured, "two things you can smell."

Korekiyo pointed at Kaito, only to scan the area once more before pointing back at the astronaut. Kaito frowned.

"Hey, my cologne isn't even that strong!" Kaito complained, "uh, one thing you can—hey, stop laughing! I put on one spritz, I'm telling you!"

Korekiyo didn't stop laughing though. The sight was eventually enough for Kaito to soften his gaze and sheepishly smile, doing his best to suppress his own laughter.

"So you're good now, right?" Kaito asked after he could will himself to open his mouth without laughing, "you haven't had one that bad for a while..."

"Yes, I'm alright," Korekiyo replied, placing his hat back in his head, "and perhaps you're playing things up a bit considering you haven't seen it in a while."

"No, that was definitely worse..." Kaito hesitated, "is... is it alright if I bring up the game again?"

"Considering the fact that you're actually asking means this is a rather serious matter," Korekiyo observed, voice still weak "I suppose it's fine though."

"Yea, I'm just a little pissed," Kaito admitted, huffing as he got to his feet, "that game completely fucked things up, didn't it? Like, why would those bastards make you and that crazy bitch all... ew! A—and with me forgetting stuff, I couldn't even react properly to it. Neither could you! I just
wound up like the assholes at our old school and you... well, you..."

"Made an absolute monster out of myself?" Korekiyo mused, "yes, I'm aware. However, it seems to me that you're more upset about what you did rather than what I did..."

Kaito quickly objected "Huh?! No—" Korekiyo gave him a look "—only sometimes... okay, it happens to everyone sometimes! Could ya stop giving me that look now?!... I dunno, it's been pretty shitty lately."

"Care to explain?" Korekiyo asked, "you've done more than enough to help me, so I'd be cruel to resist returning the favor..."

"No... don't really feel like it," Kaito declined.

"Is that so..." Korekiyo muttered before looking up and meeting Kaito's eyes, "or are you afraid to?"

Kaito stiffened.

Korekiyo continued, "I figured as much... you've been acting rather odd lately. You hesitate a lot more when talking to any of our classmates, save for Hoshi-Kun, Chabashira-San, as well as Yumeno-San."

Kaito stayed quiet.

"It's been particularly bad with Gokuhara-Kun, Saihara-Kun, Akamatsu-San and I," Korekiyo added, "I suppose your earlier apologies could serve as an explanation for you actions towards me, but based off your current hesitation, it's likely more than that."

Kaito was dumbfounded, "dude... you're like Shuichi, but with people."

Korekiyo chuckled, "I wouldn't go that far. I merely made an assumption, which, by the way, I won't pressure you into talking about."

"Nah, it's... well, not alright, but I'll talk about it," Kaito said, crouching back down to sit in front of Korekiyo, "I've known you long enough and tonight, things are going a bit better up in the old noggin."

"Hm," Korekiyo hummed, curious as to what Kaito meant with that last part, but didn't ask.

"You're curious about something," Kaito observed, "you're making that one face you make before you take a bunch of crazy detailed notes."

"Flattering to hear you can read my facial expressions," Korekiyo deadpanned, "I wouldn't be opposed if you gave me an explanation first, then I ask any remaining questions afterwards."

"So, you remember about, like, four years ago, when my pa was..." Kaito murmured, "well, when he was... killed?"

Korekiyo nodded.

"Yea, so in the simulator, I kinda had that memory... altered," Kaito admitted, "I made myself think he got in a car crash. Same with my ma, even though she's not even dead... Anyway, so I sorta just went about, letting people kill each other because I forgot how awful it felt."

Korekiyo hummed for Kaito to continue.
"So, now that I'm awake and all... I guess I feel like a dumbass," Kaito sighed, "I knew that murderers are awful people, but now that I know people who were pushed to even attempt killing someone else... everything feels off. Someone like Gonta killing someone. Shuichi giving out death sentences. Even myself, dude! And you... you were changed so much in there!"

Both of them were silent for a moment.

"Okay..." Korekiyo for once seemed to be at a loss for words, "but isn't the killing game over?"

"That's the fucking problem!" Kaito snapped, "and nobody has shown any signs of wanting to kill. Not even Ouma! Maki is even trying to have her talent changed... I just don't know anymore."

Korekiyo looked uncomfortable, "well, for what it's worth, I think we all our own problems from that simulation."

Actually, being an anthropologist, Korekiyo knew everyone had their own problems. He probably knew it better than everyone else. He didn't say it though, weighed down by problems of his own. Plus, he had known Kaito long enough to know that he's put himself in a situation he didn't belong in if he knew of it. Korekiyo was glad to see the astronaut, who had tensed up considerably over the course of the conversation, relax a bit. The two sat in silence for a moment, neither of them in the mood to delve further into the unsettling truth.

"That comet you were talking about earlier," Korekiyo spoke up, "it's almost gone."

"Shit, you're right!" Kaito cursed, scrambling to his feet.

Korekiyo followed the other boy as he made his way to a nearby bench. The comet was little more than a small dot with tiny wisps chasing after it. It was almost amusing to Korekiyo how much the sight lit up the astronaut's eyes. There was more quiet as the come to slowly flew away. Korekiyo wasn't sure when, but at some point that night, Kaito stopped seeming like a pillar of betrayal. For the first time in a while, the faintest twinkle of happiness crossed the boy's lips as he looked at the sky as well.

"You didn't show much interest in space back when we were friends," Korekiyo said absentmindedly after the comet was out of sight, "what happened?"

"Oh, that... well, it's sorta cheesy," Kaito muttered bashfully.

"I'll have you know I love cheesy things," Korekiyo replied.

"No you don't! You laughed at Mufasa's death when we watched it in school!" Kaito cried.

"That was merely a ruse," Korekiyo smirked.

"We were five!" Kaito added, laughing a bit, "I don't think you knew what the word ruse meant!"

"Very well," Korekiyo gave in, "I'm still curious though."

"Alright, fine!" Kaito grumbled, "I was... talking about stars and stuff with my Ma and it was... well, it was the first time I saw her smile since my pa died... That's all you're getting out of me though!"

"I'm content with that," Korekiyo responded, "still, that's quite the benevolent reason."

"Benevolent?" Kaito pondered, "that sounds like it means something bad!"
"No need to worry, it doesn't," Korekiyo assured, "it's getting quite chilly out, so this is where I'll take my leave."

"Oh, night," Kaito answered.

"Are you not coming in?" Korekiyo asked, raising a brow.

"I'll be there in a second," Kaito replied.

"Very well," Korekiyo huffed, "goodnight, Kaito."

"That mean I can call you Kiyo again?"

"I suppose."

With that, Korekiyo made his way to the door. It was only then when he realized that his mask was still pulled down and that his hands were still uncovered. He hummed in acknowledgment, but made no moves to adjust anything. For once he didn't feel the need to. He knew why and knew he'd have that need the moment he stepped away, but indulged for a second as he took slow steps to the door. His face wasn't hardened into a disgusted expression either. Kaito remained oblivious to this though, too busy looking at the stars and pushing away the fact that they reminded him of Korekiyo's eyes.

<Yes, in the Japanese version of the game, I believe it's canon that Kaito called Korekiyo a fag. I felt like it was necessary to touch upon it. I'd like to warn you guys that this won't be the last time you hear these sort of things relating to Kaito in this book.>

"Ultimate Nightmare Fuel," May 18th, 2:03

**ThingPurple:** When play golf, the goal is to play the least amount of golf...

**ThingBlue:** Ouma-Kun, go to sleep.

**Weeb:** Aren't you awake as well?

**ThingBlue:** Yea?

**Weeb:**

**Weeb:** Do you not see my point here?

**ThingPurple:** Since humans only know color exists because of their eyes, are we completely missing some part of the world because of something we don't have???

**ThingBlue:** Ouma-Kun, no...

**Weeb:** Doesn't technically help us with that sort of thing?

**Weeb:** Then again, some people write fan fictions as they manipulate every little thing we say and do...

**ThingBlue:** What?

**Weeb:** What?
ThingPurple: Hey, you wanna know what's wacky?

ThingBlue: Please, no more shower thoughts.

ThingPurple:

ThingPurple: Never mind!

Weeb:

Weeb: Oh my god, Ouma-Kun!

ThingBlue: What did he do?

Weeb: This damn normie just sent me, and I quote, "Strap-on spelt backwards is no parts."

ThingBlue: OUMA-KUN!???

Weeb: It's just plain obvious that he's blushing right now...

ThingPurple: Adorable~!

Weeb:

ThingPurple:

ThingPurple: That's aliethough

<For those of you wondering about Kaito's mother (who yes, is alive) and Korekiyo's full backstory, both will be explained later on!>

Maki came through the door at around five thirty in the morning. Her hair was messy and she had bags under her eyes as she stumbled inside. She took off her blazer and rolled up the sleeves of her dress shirt with little to no awareness of what she was doing. Kirumi, the only one downstairs at the time, rushed over with obvious concern. The maid paid no mind to Maki's arms, which were littered with scars, some newer than others. Instead, she grabbed the other girl's jacket and hung it up somewhere before guiding her to sit at the kitchen counter. Typically, Maki would insist she could do it herself, but she couldn't bring herself to care as she hoisted herself onto one of the high stool.

"You can chose not to answer if you would like, but where have you been?" Kirumi asked as she rinsed out the kettle Korekiyo had been using only hours earlier.

"I had to go to these officials in order to verify the change of my talent," Maki sighed, "it took forever, so I was tired, so I got lost and missed the last train so I was up all night waiting because I didn't know when it reopened."

"I see," Kirumi hummed, refilling the kettle and placing it on the stove.

"How long have you been down here for?" Maki pondered, absentmindedly tracing one of the scars on her forearm, forcing down the memory of how she had gotten it years back.

"About twenty minutes," Kirumi replied, "Momota-Kun is not awake if that is what you are wondering, though I guess that is sort of a given. Nobody is up that I know of."
"I wasn't wondering about that," Maki murmured, "he gets plenty of sleep. It's you I'm concerned about."

"Pardon?" Kirumi paused wiping the counter to look up at Maki. Her eyes reminded the former assassin of the greenery that came with springtime.

"You've been up since around five, working your ass off," Maki deadpanned.

"I am doing just fine," Kirumi assured, getting back to cleaning the counter, "thank you for your concern though."

Maki softened her tone, "Tojo, you've been cleaning that same part for nearly five minutes," she said, "are you sure there's not a chance you could have OCD or something...?"

"Please do not worry," Kirumi requested, "you probably just could not not see the prints from your angle."

"Whatever," Maki quit prying, "in that case, I have a request."

"I am all ears," Kirumi smiled politely.

"Have tea with me," Maki spoke, "I have a date with Kaito later and it'd help if I were calmer. You're one of the only chill people here, so being around you should help."

Kirumi, albeit reluctantly, accepted Makis clever bait and took a seat on the stool next to Maki. She felt restless and tapped her foot silently in the air as she waited for the water to boil. When steam sent wisps through the air, Kirumi stood up, stumbling in the process. She hurriedly poured the steaming liquid into two cups before adding the tea bags. Kirumi let hers sit for a moment, whereas Maki took a sip almost instantly, showing little to no care towards the burning drink likely hurting her tongue. She was almost glad for it. It served as a distraction from the fact she was comfortable showing her battle scars to Kirumi. It kept her gaze from the window, where the springtime resembled the green of the other girl’s hair.

<I do head canon that Maki has scars from being an assassin. She is also now officially the ultimate bodyguard!>

Maki and Kaito sat in the corner of a cafe by a window. They had been on multiple dates already and knew how and what to talk about. Yet somehow, the only chatter they heard came from the next table over, where a man with shiny, indigo eyes and styled blonde hair talked loudly with another man who wore glasses, had short cut blue hair and dark eyes with an equally loud voice. Maki and Kaito, on the other hand, remained quiet. Kaito poked around in his tea with his straw while Maki stared out the window.

“Sorry I couldn’t look at the comet with you last night,” Maki apologized, “if it helps, when I was waiting for the morning train, I left the station to look at it.”

“It’s all good,” Kaito grinned.

There was more suffocating silence.

“Guess we’re both sorta lost in thought, huh?” Kaito chuckled, getting a nod from Maki in response, “what’s on your mind Maki-roll?”

Maki paused, “just springtime and stuff, and you?”
Kaito hesitated, “the stars.”
Cliches

Chapter Summary

Rantaro somehow accidentally ends up hosting a sleepover, but things end up fine.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Rantaro was tired, but restless. He sat at the kitchen counter with dark circles under his eyes that remained covered by layers of concealer, and yet he found himself rapping his fingertips against the table top. Keebo stared on curiously, concerned for their friend, who would've typically had already struck up a conversation with the roboticist about one thing or another. Sighing the roboticist twisted in their seat so they were facing Rantaro and lightly tapped them on the shoulder. The adventurer jumped a bit as if snapping out of a daze before returning the others gaze with green eyes.

"Yea?" Rantaro's voice was hoarse from lack of use, but he quickly cleared his throat, "something the matter?"

"Sort of," Keebo replied, averting their eyes from sudden nervousness, "I just want to know how you're doing."

"Me? I'm fine," Rantaro was confused, "oh, by the way, I won't be back until Monday."

"Oh, did you reschedule your flight?" Keebo asked, tilting their head.

"Hm, no..." Rantaro mumbled, a dark look crossing his face, though it was gone before Keebo could ask, "I'm just going home to see my mom."

"Ah, is everything alright!?" Keebo cried, earning a confused look from Tsumugi, who had chosen to sit nearby them today.

"No, everything's fine," Rantaro insisted, throwing in a small laugh for good measure, but he was nervous.

Rantaro took a moment to think, paranoia getting to him. He knew Keebo would probably believe what he said, but he couldn't bring himself to lie to the other. However, Rantaro also didn't want to tell the truth,

"Besides, I'm inviting everyone in our class," Rantaro sighed, mentally cursing himself, "like a sleepover."

"The entire class?" Keebo said, "your mom probably wouldn't know how to react to Iruma-San and Ouma-Kun. Are you sure she'll be okay with that?"

Rantaro grimaced before lying again, "I hope so."

<Amami Rantaro is a disaster, pass it on.>
"A sleepover?" Rantaro's mother spoke over the phone.

"Yea, sorry," Rantaro apologized, "I didn't think you'd be okay with people knowing about what happened..."

Rantaro's mother paused, "let them come. I'd like to meet them."

"Really?" Rantaro was shocked, but tried to not let it show in his voice, "you could just say no and no one will have to come."

"Sounds to me like you're the one who doesn't want people to find out about Haru," Rantaro's mother reasoned, "if you don't want them to come that badly, just tell them I said no. I really am alright though, Taro."

"No, I'm fine," Rantaro claimed, "we'll be there in about two or three hours."

She knew her son was lying, but didn't comment on it, "it's been so quiet around here. It will be a nice change."

<Rantaro stop lying—>

"Ultimate Nightmare Fuel," May 24th, 10:23

ThingGreen: Guys, gals, and non-binary pals

ThingWhite: Nice introduction!

ThingGreen: Why thank you

ThingGreen: So I'm holding a sleepover at my house

ProfessorThot: HOLY FUCKING GUMMY PENISES, REALLY?!?!?!?!!

Kayaday: You seem happy

ProfessorThot: hell yea I am! assmami is fucking filthy rich!

ThingWhite: Iruma-San, you shouldn't share information about someone's finances without their permission!

Weeb: A sleepover episode? That's just plain cliche. It's better than a beach episode though, I guess...

MakiRoll: Silence

ThingBlue: What all should we bring?

ThingGreen: I'd say just the necessities, but if you have anything else you'd like to bring, it's fine

ThingPurple: Really? Some people might take that the wrong way and bring a nasty boy toy or something!

ThingGreen: Okay, nothing inappropriate

ProfessorThot: y'all are no fun!
ThingPurple: Say y'all again and I will fucking destroy you, you fucking soggy ass pizza roll.

Kayaday: Ouma!

ProfessorThot: ngl i am v e r y turned on right now

Gonta: Aren't all pizza rolls soggie wen yu eat thum becuse of saliva?

ProfessorThot: holy horse tits

NotTodaySatan: Can Angie bring her candle~?

ThingGreen: I don't see why not

Smoll: We're all leaving together, right?

ThingGreen: Yea

Smoll: When?

ThingGreen: When everyone's ready

DingusTheSecond: Kork stop lurking

Kork: You've been lurking as well.

DingusTheSecond:

DingusTheSecond: wHAT ABOUT TOJO CHABASHIRA AND YUMENO

Kork: All offline.

DingusTheSecond: DAMMIT

Kayaday: Oh, I'll go tell them about the sleepover

ThingGreen: Great. See you guys later.

<Don't really know what else to put here, so I'll say this. Thank you guys for your support. I don't think I say that enough.>

Rantaros house was strange. It was huge, but it didn't give off that sense of glamour. It's long driveway was paved and looked just like any other driveway. The front garden was beautiful, but had no extravagant statues, nor did it have any of those convenient beams of lights that made it look like something from a fairytale. The house itself was definitely large enough to be considered a mansion. However, there was something about it's atmosphere that made it feel less like one of those mansions you see in the movies. The ones where the protagonist is a selfish snob who needs to see the greater things in life, no. This house felt like a home. Nobody could shake the strange melancholic atmosphere though.

Rantaros stood on the front porch for a moment, hesitating before ringing the doorbell. The curtains were drawn, so the group could only make out a faint silhouette before the door opened. There stood Rantaros mother. Her hair was lighter than her sons went down her back in smooth waves. Her face was warm and content, but her eyes, which were startlingly similar in shade to that
of her offspring, seemed weighed down by experience and the cards that life had dealt her. Her
skin was clear aside from the occasional freckle. She looked so undeniably tired that nearly the
entire group was shocked by the bright smile that crossed her face upon seeing them all.

"Hello! Come in, come in," Rantaro's mother greeted, "I'm Amami Aina."

Aina's voice was bright and youthful. The woman herself looked quite young really other than the
obvious eye bags. Despite how much more talkative she seemed, the class could already see the
similarities she shared with her son. Her eyes were definitely the most noticeable of these. She was
quite a tall woman as well, around the same height as Rantaro. She even had a couple piercings of
her own. Above all though, Aina looked relaxed and unworried and something about it was
calming, yet unsettling to the class. She continued to chat in a friendly manner as she stepped aside
to let everyone in.

"Hey," Aina leaned down to whisper to Keebo, "which one's Idabashi?"

"I am," Keebo replied, "why do you ask?"

Aina blinked, "oh dear, this is awkward."

Ignoring Keebo's confusion, Aina left to go to the kitchen. Rantaro seemed stressed about his
mothers departure, but chose not to say anything as he led the rest of the group to the living room.
The house was clean, as if that's all that was ever done there. The walls were cluttered though.
Wall decorations, paintings that were made with the quality of a four year old. The drawings were
old and practically worthless and yet they remained taped to the wall with the importance of a
diploma. Then there were the portraits. Girls with green hair of varying shades caught in photos.
They were innocent, cutesy faced for the most part, but as Rantaro passed them, he seemed to
shrink a bit as if they were glaring at him. Nobody said anything.

The living room wasn't much different. There was a corner in the room full of toys that any kid
would love, but they were coated in dust. It was one of the only places that wasn't cleaned. It was
just like a timeless display captured in a museum. The room looked so large and empty from the
hallway, but finally felt full when everyone was in. The curtains in here were open, bathing the
room in the light of the spring sun and yet, it felt cold. Everyone set down their bags somewhere
before taking seats in varying parts of the room. There was a suffocating silence for a moment.

"This is boring," Kokichi sighed, leaning dramatically over on the armrest of a couch, "I'm gonna
have to stab one of you in like, three seconds if no one makes things not boring."

"You can't murder people, Ouma-Kun, that's illegal!" Keebo lectured, "we could take out a board
game if you're that bored."

"What?!" Kokichi shrieked, "board games literally have the word bored in them! Are you trying
to kill me Keebs?!"

"Of course not!" Keebo exclaimed, "don't be ridiculous."

"Hold on, I think I have a few around here somewhere," Rantaro resolved, standing up, "I'll be
right back."

"This blows. I'm leaving," Kokichi declared, leaving the room after Rantaro.

"That's what she said!" Miu howled.

"That little—!" Kaito made to stand up, but was stopped by Shuichi.
"It's fine," the detective assured, "he left his bag, so he's probably not actually leaving."

Rantaro returned a few minutes later with a multitude of board games in his arms. The boxes looked worn out, but it was soon revealed that the pieces were in perfect condition. CLUE was ruled out almost instantly, Rantaro apologizing for even picking up the game. The group soon decided on Monopoly and figured they'd play in pairs. However, the box had additional pieces, adding up to thirteen exactly. Rantaro grimaced at the figures, but no one caught it. Everyone put in their own ideas of how to handle the unbalanced amount of figures. Eventually, Rantaro thought up his own plan.

"I can sit out," Rantaro suggested, though it was more of a plea, "I have to go help out with lunch."

Kirumi looked as if she were about to say something, but Maki cut her off, "I will too. Kokichi is off doing god knows what, so he's out too. Now there's enough."

Maki broke away from the crowd to sit on the couch and received an impressed smile from Shuichi, to which Maki responded with an indifferent shrug and her own ghost of a smile. The two of them had apologized for their fight the day after it had transpired. It was an exchange of I'm sorrys and a fist bump (which was Kaito's idea, not theirs.) Despite this, both parties had an awkward air around one another. Their varying opinions wedge differences between them. They still acted normally though for their own reasons. Shuichi was hesitant to delve back into the topic and Maki knew that the conversation would inevitably be driven back to the game she's wished to forget so much.

Meanwhile, Rantaro slipped away from the group. He avoided looking at the portraits as he made his way to the kitchen. There he found Aina, but also someone else. She was smiling politely, albeit slightly lost looking, as Kokichi spoke animatedly about one thing or another. Rantaro cleared his throat, successfully gaining the duo's attention. Kokichi hopped off the stool he had been crouching on and ran up the other boy.

"Hey hey Amami-Chan, did you know your mom is mega boring?!!" Kokichi teased, "that's a lie though, she's like, ten thousand times cooler than you!" With that, Kokichi skipped out of the room to regroup with the others.

"He's... energetic," Aina mumbled, "very cheerful."

"You get used to it. He's not too bad," Rantaro explained, "you... didn't tell him anything about Haru and them, right?"

"No, don't worry," Aina said.

"I'm not worried," Rantaro insisted.

Aina pursed her lips, but didn't say anything.

"How have you been holding up?" Rantaro spoke up again, "I tried to get here faster."

"Well, I obviously haven't been great," Aina admitted, "it used to be so lively here, but now it feels empty. I actually considered moving."

"Don't do that," Rantaro interrupted, "sorry."

"It's fine, I didn't go through with it in the end anyway," Aina replied, reaching out to mess with her son's hair, "I figured you'd hate leaving this place behind."
"You're not wrong," Rantaro chuckled, dodging his mothers hand.

"I know," Aina responded, catching Rantaro in a side hug, "and listen... it'll get better. I promise."

Rantaro was quiet for a second before standing up to leave, "yea, I know."

He was lying though. He had no clue.

An hour later, footsteps crept up to the kitchen. Aina was working on lunch and was fixated on cutting vegetables. The afternoon light caught her face at an angle that made her look more tired than ever as it flowed through the kitchen window.

"Taro, could you—" Aina began before turning around, "oh, hello."

There stood Kokichi and Maki, the bodyguard looking rather annoyed with the supreme leader, but it was more of the type of look a child would give to another child who stole their toy.

"Heya!" Kokichi chirped, "long time no see, A-mommy!"

Maki elbowed him in the ribs, "don't be rude!" She hissed.

"Is fatally bruising my bones not rude?!" Kokichi gasped in pain.

Maki rolled her eyes, "Sorry about him."

"No, it's fine," Aina said, "may I help you two?"

"We came to drown you in your oven!" Kokichi cheered.

Maki pinched Kokichi's ear, "He kept throwing chance cards at people, so I took him away."

"Oh, well take a seat" Aina invited, "lunch will be ready soon."

The duo obliged. Well, Maki obliged, actually. She just dragged a wailing Kokichi by the ear with her. The two of them had begun getting along better after their conversation on the roof. Things were far from perfect. Kokichi still couldn't stop seeing Maki as a murderer and Maki still couldn't stand Kokichi lying. Still, they were making progress, even if it was slow and felt like almost nothing. Their own personal issues got in the way too and nothing was really going to work itself out until they got over themselves. Aina gave a huff of amusement as the two bickered about the smallest things.

"You know, I'm glad Rantaro has friends like you," Aina began, "he's one of those kids who can make friends anywhere, but he just never did..."

Kokichi and Maki quit bickering and listened.

"It's sort of my fault too," Aina continued, "he was a very happy kid. He was sweet and curious. Then one day, his dad came home with twelve little girls and left. Somehow, he wound up being more of a caretaker than I ever was. I made food and gave them the necessities, but it was like he was the one who raised them. He was the one they went to when they got nightmares and stuff like that. He was only seven. He had to grow up so much faster than most kids."

Kokichi nearly cut in with a snarky remark, but Maki kicked him under the counter as soon as she saw his mouth twitch.

"That's not a good thing," Aina added, "for the first year with his sisters, sometimes he was so
overwhelmed that he would start bawling out of nowhere because that's just how kids were. I tried to get him to rest, but then he'd get upset. It's like his life revolved around other peoples happiness. I spent so much time worrying over his sisters that I left him on his own and he got used to it. He never learned to care about himself, so I'm happy he finally has people like you to help him.”

Even Kokichi took a moment to process everything. It chilled Maki with how much Rantaro reminded her of herself. She had given everything to help the kids at the orphanage and forgot about her own well-being. Aina cast the two a sad grin before returning her attention to making lunch again.

"Where are Amami's sisters?" Maki couldn't help but ask, "I haven't seen any of them around here other than their portraits."

Aina hesitated, "they're... they're not home right now."

Aina gave another smile, but it looked pained and startlingly similar to her sons. She quickly encouraged Maki and Kokichi to leave and alert the others that lunch would be ready soon. The two of them both knew they were being shooed away, but complied, knowing the woman would want her space. They wound up staying in the room as they spectated the game of Monopoly. Rantaro was missing from the room, but no one commented on it as Kirumi, who was shockingly good at the game, got sent to jail.

Lunch came and went and Rantaro was still absent. Aina seemed to notice, but couldn't bring herself to search for her son. Soon enough, the group was back in the living room. The Monopoly game lasted until dinner because of there being so many players. Rantaro was absent for that too. The group carried on and Kaede had made a sudden comeback in when Miu traded her all her properties for virtually nothing and was able to take out Kirumi. So, after being crowned victorious, it was up for the pianist to decide what the group was to do next. She settled on the game LIFE, but once again, there was only enough for thirteen players.

"Kokichi and I can sit out again," Maki suggested.

"What? But you guys say out last time," Kaede exclaimed.

"Yea, come on Maki-Chan!" Kokichi whined.

"If you would like to play, I can take your place," Kirumi volunteered,

"Nuh-uh, I changed my mind actually," Kokichi sighed, "LIFE is mega boring and tooootally unrealistic!"

"Are you sure?" Kaede asked, "I feel bad. Neither of you have played anything today."

"Don't feel bad then!" Kokichi grinned, "just reach deeeep down in your head and restart on your emotions! Works like a charm!"

"Ouma-Kun, I don't think that's very healthy..." Shuichi commented.

"Well duh! I was lying!" Kokichi yapped.

"Anyway!" Kaede cut in, "Harukawa-San, truth or dare?"

"I thought you chose LIFE," Maki muttered.

"I did!" Kaede chuckled, "I still wanted you to play some sort of game."
"Eh?! What about me?!” Kokichi bawled, am I that invisible to you?! This must be what it feels like to be Shirogane-Chan!"

"That's just plain rude..." The cosplayer scolded.

"Dare I guess," Maki said dismissively.

"Kiss Momota-Kun," Kaede dared.

"Ew, no!" Maki protested.

"Hey! We're literally dating!" Kaito cried.

"Sorry, reflexes," Maki replied.

Maki leant down and pressed a chaste kiss to the astronaut's lips. It was met with cooing and cheering from the class (and some obnoxious gagging courtesy of Kokichi and Miu.) The gesture seemed awkward, like their lips didn't quite fit right, but everyone assumed it was due to embarrassment. After everything calmed down, Maki took a seat on the couch where Kokichi had been originally. It took the girl a moment to realize her friend(?) was no longer occupying the area and looked around curiously. The supreme leader was nowhere in sight. Suspicious, Maki made to excuse herself, only to realize no one was paying attention. Therefore, she just left.

It didn't take long for Maki to find Kokichi. He was wondering the second floor. He hadn't noticed Maki. She could tell based off the oddly peaceful expression on his face as he studied the walls and doors. They were littered with liveliness and childishness that reminded Maki of Kokichi himself for a moment. There were more scribbled drawings taped pathetically to walls and the doors were heavily coated in stickers and such, each one having its own charm to it. The hallway was dark though and made everything feel sad and heavy and forgotten. Maki took another step forward, which caught Kokichi's attention. Immediately, the peaceful expression was gone.

"Wel well well, if it isn’t Maki-Chan! Back from sucking faces with the bumbling idiot are we?!” Kokichi teased, his gaze returning to the walls.

“Oh shut up,” Maki scoffed, “what are you doing up here anyway?”

“Trying to find Haru’s room,” Kokichi replied as if it were obvious.

“Who the hell is Haru?” Maki raised a brow in confusion.

“No clue!” Kokichi exclaimed happily, “just heard the name come up when I was taking a whizz and figured it mattered!!”

“So you were eavesdropping on what was probably a private conversation?” Maki deadpanned.

“Eavesdrop is such a strong word... I was leaving anyway, I just took a wrong turn and had to retrace my steps,” Kokichi explained, smirking.

“You’re being too honest, it’s weird,” Maki said.

“Am I? Hm... well, I’ll just have to fix that!” Kokichi cheered merrily, “From now on, I’ll put my lies on calling cards then swoop in to steal everyone’s hearts!”

In actuality, Kokichi knew why he wasn’t lying as much. As much as he distrusted Maki, he knew her well enough to tell she wasn’t the mastermind. Of course, there was no longer a
mastermind to begin with, but that was an entirely different problem. On top of that, while Kokichi was paranoid, he knew that the chances of cameras being with them off campus was increasingly slim. He has subconsciously let his guard down for a moment. He mentally cursed himself for doing so and got back to work with his facade.

“Where do you think Amami-Chans room is?” Kokichi quizzed, “he probably keeps like, a lot of pervy stuff in there!”

Kokichi made to go to the third floor, but was stopped by Maki, “where are you going?!?” She hissed.

“To see the Wizard of Oz,” Kokichi snarked, “that’s a lie though!”

“Whatever,” Maki grumbled, following Kokichi up the stairs.

“Aw, is little old Maki-Chan following me like a puppy?” Kokichi cooed, “how cute.”

“Cut it out,” Maki snapped, “I’m making sure you don’t do anything stupid.”

“Me? Stupid?! Who do you take me for, Momota-Chan?!” Kokichi gasped.

“No, I take you as the type of person who would take the children out of people’s cars when playing LIFE while screaming the word abortion,” Maki spoke with a far too serious tone.

“Oh, good idea!” Kokichi praised, “I should do that after I finish!”

“Finish what?” Maki groaned with exasperation.

“It’s a secret!” Kokichi smirked.

Maki rolled her eyes as the two stepped onto the third floor. It was the same as the floor below, that meaning there was a hallway with three doors on the left wall, four on the right, and one at the end. However, there were a few key differences. For starters, the door at the end, which was marked with Rantaros name, was far more cluttered with low quality drawings than any other door or wall in the house. There was also the prominent fact that the third door to the left was swung wide open. The light was soft, but so out of place as it spilled out onto the wooden floor of the hallway the way a shadow would on a sunny day.

Suddenly quiet, Maki and Kokichi approached the open door. As they drew nearer, the name ‘Haruka’ became legible on the nameplate. The drawings on it were the worst and the stickers were characters from kids cartoons. Neither of the two were surprised about the sight that greeted them inside. There was Rantaro. He was staring blankly out the window, the only source of light in the dark room. Smile in even the deepest depths of hell. The boy looked so out of it and so undeniably tired that both of his typically straightforward classmates couldn’t bring themselves to move. Even Kokichi’s smile faltered for a moment. Wordlessly, the supreme leader whipped out his phone, earning a curious look from Maki.

Private Messages, “Harukawa Maki and Ouma Kokichi,” May 24th, 19:56

OumaKokichi: OwO wut’s this???

HarukawaMaki: Why are we texting?

OumaKokichi: My vocal chords are asleep.
HarukawaMaki: Fine.

OumaKokichi: Yippee!

HarukawaMaki: We probably shouldn’t be disturbing him

OumaKokichi: Hey! I thought we were going to trash talk him behind his back!

HarukawaMaki: Don’t make me punch you

OumaKokichi: Rude!

HarukawaMaki: Seriously, why are we texting?

OumaKokichi: I already told you! My vocal chords are sleeping!

HarukawaMaki: Kokichi istfg

OumaKokichi: I’m trying to think

HarukawaMaki: And what keeps you from doing that without texting me?

OumaKokichi: Be silent!

HarukawaMaki: What the hell are you even thinking about?

OumaKokichi: Wouldn’t you like to know, ass ass lint roller?

HarukawaMaki: Quit being an ass

OumaKokichi: Sucks to suck!

HarukawaMaki: I’m done with this bullshit. Follow my lead

OumaKokichi: Getting impatient now, are we?

HarukawaMaki: Shut the fuck up. I actually have a plan unlike you

<These two are problematic. Even if it doesn’t seem like it, Maki is actually trying to mend things, but Kokichi is too untrusting and messed up to form proper friendships at this point.>

Maki swiftly stepped into the room, Kokichi following with a cocky expression to mask his confusion. Rantaro didn’t seem to notice given that both classmates were very light on their feet, as well as the fact that the bedroom was carpeted as opposed to the hardwood in the hall. Kokichi watched curiously as Maki approached an a bookshelf that was covered in layer of dust. It was as if it hadn’t been touched in years. In fact, despite the clean downstairs and well kept exterior, anything remotely childlike looked as if it had been abandoned. Shaking off that chilling thought, Maki grabbed a stack of worn out papers from the bottom row of the shelf. She shifted through the pile as she confirmed her own suspicions. They were drawing.

Maki turned back to Kokichi, who stood awkwardly behind the other, standing on his tiptoes in an attempt to look over shoulder. Maki gave him an unamused look, getting a cheeky smirk in
response. The bodyguard pointed at the desk Rantaro sat at. She mouthed the word ‘tape’ as an order to the other boy. Kokichi rolled his eyes and sauntered over with excruciatingly slow steps just to rule up Maki. He finally reached the desk and grabbed the small roll of tape the rested on the surface. Rantaro finally caught sight of the supreme leader and nearly jumped out of his skin and falling out of his chair.

Kokichi burst out laughing, “Nishishi! Oh man! That was too good!” The boy wheezed dramatically.

Rantaro chuckled uneasily, “y—yea, you got me,” he said, “what are you—“ he noticed Maki “—two doing up here?”

“No clue!” Kokichi claimed, tossing Maki the roll of tape, “Maki-Chan insisted that I followed her endless list of demands, so I have forgotten my own purpose in the world.”

“Oh shut up, would you? You’ve been chill for the past two minutes,” Maki chided, working on something.

“See?! So bossy!” Kokichi wailed, “Amami-Chan, you’ve gotta help me dispose of her!”

“Yea, okay,” Rantaro agreed absentmindedly, already turning back to the window.

Kokichi pursed his lips for a moment, but it was gone in an instant. He skipped back over to Maki to see what she was doing, but got shooed away. The boy eventually resolved for standing next to Rantaro and making demonic faces in attempt to provoke the other boy. It was worthless though. Eventually, Maki rapped Kokichi on the shoulder and gave him a disapproving stare. Pouting, Kokichi spectated as Maki walked to an outlet by the shelf and studied the walls for a moment. Tracing her finger over something above her, Maki’s eyes eventually landed in a specific cord. She plugged it in and stood up to stare at the state of the room.

The dim room was suddenly lit up like the night sky. Thousands of stars danced around in the shape of string lights. Around the room were countless drawings that were likely done by this ‘Haruka’ girl. Rantaro looked up from watching time slip by him to stare at the world that he had never seen, even in his years of traveling. The bulbs must’ve been worn out, so the light wasn’t especially bright, but it was enough. After an eternity in this strange new world full of the imaginations memories and dying stars, Rantaro was finally able to muster out even the smallest of words.

“I... why?” Rantaro choked out.

“You just... looked a little lost,” Maki admitted, “it’s nothing, really.”

“Hm,” Rantaro hummed, “it looks nice.”

“Thanks, I worked real hard on it,” Kokichi claimed, earning another elbow to the gut from Maki, “ow! Quit harassing me, woman!”

Rantaro let the faintest laugh escape his lips as the pair left in a fit of arguing over nonsense. The adventurer appreciated then closing the door, closing him into this world where everything felt alright. Rantaro leaned back in his—well, her desk chair to study the lights and the colors and the stars and the memories. He sighed and let himself smile, if only for moment because in that moment he felt okay. It wouldn’t last, but it was alright. Because in the world created by Harukawa Maki and Ouma Kokichi of all people. One with a sky full of stars and a mind full of memories. In this world, for a moment. His house felt like home again. He smiled a real smile if only for a
moment. He’s nearly forgotten how it felt.

To have a family.

Chapter End Notes

It just like to clarify that Rantaro’s arc is not over. He’s just happy in the ending here.

Happy New Years! I hope you guys have a great decade!
A Year Past Passing

Chapter Summary

Ryoma has a bad day. Things aren’t as bad as he thought though.

TW: Mentions of suicidal thoughts, mentions of death, grieving and mentions of self harm.

It's been a year. The worst year of my life. I thought that after a year, things would be better. That life would be renewed and everything would be alright again. It was better sometimes. I've had happy moments, sure. Things aren't renewed though. When it comes down to it, nothing's changed. There's nothing there to tell me things can and will get better because let's face it, things might not get better. Things could get worse again. Even now, at the finish line of this old year, all I have to look at is the journey I've taken because now I can't tell myself to keep going because there's simply nothing left. I hate that. Now that a year has passed, I have to accept that things aren't going to magically go away. Everything still hurts and probably always will. I have to accept that this year will suck as well.

Ryoma almost didn't leave his bed that morning. He had been up later than normal, midnight stabbing through him in a harsh wave of reality. He didn't really sleep, honestly. The concept felt so welcoming, but the brunette couldn't force his thoughts away. For once, he felt restless. He felt nauseous from not eating enough the previous night and his head pounded from a lack of sleep. Nonetheless, he forced himself to get out of bed. He didn't want to. He really didn't. He did it anyway though. As he brushed his teeth, he found his thoughts growing darker, but he desperately pushed them away. He knew that giving in to those thoughts would put him right back where he started. For a moment, he thought the idea wasn't so bad, but left the bathroom before he could do anything he'd regret.

Everyone chatting at breakfast was all muffled to Ryoma, yet so loud. It tired Ryoma, but he was already tired anyway, so he barely felt it. He shrugged off Gontas attempts at a conversation, but he didn't care. Kirumi gave him a pancake shaped like a cat. He didn't care. It reminded him of the Russian blue cat that ran away into the afterlife far too soon. If Ryoma were anyone else, he'd wish the cat was really just with his friend and alive and well, but it was Ryoma. Ryoma dwelled on what happened, not what could've happened. He didn't touch the pancake after that. Ryoma could be indifferent indifferent on a lot of things, but that wasn't one. He gave the pancake to Angie, who scuffed it down faster than the bullets that cut the breath of everything Ryoma loved.

Ryoma finishes breakfast earlier than normal. He gets up to leave, but it feels like there's something pulling him down. Everything was coming at full force and for a moment he felt like he couldn't breathe. He wanted to collapse on himself and stare listlessly at the ceiling for hours as his mind drifted away. Throwing away his pride, Ryoma approached Kirumi. Each step felt slow and excessive, but he didn't care. He wanted to lie down and lose it, even if just for a minute. Kirumi looked down at Ryoma curiously. The two don't talk much, obviously. Ryoma was the more reluctant of the two when it came to initiating interactions, which made things all the more confusing and concerning for the maid.
"If anyone asks, I'm sick," the words were steady and even, but to Ryoma, they sounded slow and useless, "thanks."

Ryoma didn't wait for a response before trudging back to his room. He locked the door and flopped uselessly on his bed. He didn't notice or care about the faint light that flowed through closed blinds. He didn't know how long he lay there for. He didn't know if he had fallen asleep. Maybe it didn't matter. A lot of things didn't. Ryoma found that he didn't realize what was and wasn't important until it was too late. His thoughts were muddled and fell flat before they could become clear enough to hold onto for hours until lunch period came around. Ryoma had no appetite though, nor did he care about the time. It wasn't until a stern knock on the door echoed through the room did Ryoma make any conscious movements.

The tennis player debated whether or not he should open the door. He was in no mood to and he was already supposedly sick. Although, maybe that wasn't too far off given the pounding in his head and the nausea in his stomach. He could have easily pretended to sleep through the knocking, but his better judgement won out and Ryoma found himself reluctantly leaving his bed. Every step was like overcoming his own personal hell as he made his way to the door. There was no creak when he opened it and whoever was there was either observant and considerate or forgetful because there was no harsh light shining aggressively in his eyes. To Ryoma's surprise, he found two people. Kirumi and Korekiyo.

"Hello, Hoshi-Kun," Kirumi's voice was softened more than usual at the sight of the bags hanging below Ryoma's eyes, "I am here to carry out a request from Gokuhara-Kun."

Ryoma showed no interest as he swung the door the rest of the way open. He sat on his desk chair as the duo made their way in.

"He requested that I helped you out with whatever may be troubling you," Kirumi added, "however, I can not do so until I understand what exactly that is. Nobody bought the lie that you had fallen ill either, so my only choice is to understand the truth."

"What makes you think I'd ever tell you anything?" Ryoma grumbled, not caring for how resigned and pathetic his tone must be.

"I do not think that," Kirumi replied, although her face fell a bit at the remark, "that is why Shinguji-Kun is here."

"Hey there," Korekiyo said awkwardly.

"So basically, you want me to tell Shinguji everything so he can tell you after?" Ryoma deadpanned, unimpressed.

"Yes. I cannot back down from a request, but I would still like you to be somewhat comfortable," Kirumi admitted.

Ryoma narrowed his eyes, "whatever, Shinguji can tell you afterwards. Just don't say anything about it to Gonta. Don't want him worrying about me..."

"Very well," Kirumi exhaled in relief, "I will be downstairs, so just get me when you are ready."

With that, Kirumi left the room with a silent grace, shutting the door soundlessly behind her like a ghost. The still air held itself in the air, full of a thousand unspoken words and permanent regrets staining it. Korekiyo stared curiously around as it he could see the stains and hear the words. He had a knack for that. Ryoma leaned on his chair, hand raking through his hair, which was no longer
covered by the beanie that rested a few feet away. The tennis player swiveled around absentmindedly in the chair until that began to add to his seemingly perpetual headache. He stopped and looked down at his lap for a while until Korekiyo cleared his throat.

"I could come up with a lie if you'd like," Korekiyo suggested, "Tojo-San is stubborn when it come to requests, I suppose..."

"Nah, it's alright," Ryoma sighed, "I'm honestly too tired to give a fuck right now..."

"Alright, well in that case," Korekiyo leaned against the wall, "enlighten me. What's going on with you?"

"There's no big story to it," Ryoma grunted, "it's just the one year anniversary of my family's death. So, naturally, my day has been shit."

"Oh," Korekiyo muttered, a bandaged hand coming to hold his masked chin.

"Yea," Ryoma agreed, "that's all..."

"I'm assuming you would rather avoid as much conversation with Tojo-San as possible," Korekiyo observed, "So before we go down, I guess the right thing to do would be to ask if you'd like to talk about it.""No, not really" Ryoma denied, "things just sort of suck right now."

"I see..." Korekiyo trailed off, "shall we get going now?"

Ryoma nodded, sliding off the desk chair with ease. Korekiyo went first. His many notes on his classmates reveals that when Ryoma hears footsteps behind him, he grows uneasy. So, Korekiyo chose to respect wishes that he never vocalized. Kirumi was concentrated on something on the fridge when the duo made their way downstairs. Korekiyo cleared his throat once more, getting her attention relatively quick. Kirumi walked over in an orderly fashion, feet hitting the ground in a pleasant rhythm. Korekiyo caught a look at Ryoma's attempt at an indifferent expression, which was ultimately betrayed by his eyes occasionally flickering to the anthropologist and the maid as he awaited either of them to speak.

"Erm..." Korekiyo hesitated, tearing his gaze off the boy, "hold on."

Korekiyo whipped out a notebook from his book bag he had slung over his shoulder. He rifled through the pages for a moment before reaching a page around the middle. Golden eyes trailed the paper for a moment as Kirumi and Ryoma watched in confusion. Then, out of absolutely nowhere, the boy took off, leaving through the dormitory doors with no context or explanation. Ryoma muttered something under his breath at the absurd action and even Kirumi seemed at a loss for words. However, before either of them could recover, Korekiyo returned, clutching something in his arms.

"I apologize in advance," Kirumi breathes, "but why the hell do you have a cat, Shinguuji-Kun?"

"Watch and learn, my friend," Korekiyo's mouth was covered by his mask, but it was obvious that he was smirking, "here, take her."

Ryoma gave Korekiyo a look mixed with confusion, fascination and being absolutely dumbfounded. The taller handed the cat to Ryoma. It was a cream color and beautiful green eyes that looked yellow depending on the lighting. It was quite thin as well, but Ryoma didn't mind. The cat leaned into Ryoma's touch as he reached out to pet them. Soft purring filled the air and
Ryoma set the cat on the ground. The creature wandered around the new territory curiously, 
Ryoma tailing them quietly as the world seemed to brighten a little bit. Astonished, Kirumi looked 
at Korekiyo, who merely lifted his notebook to show her.

*Hoshi Ryoma, note 6- Kicked Iruma in the shin to pet a cat. He loves cats.*

"I am not sure whether or not I am disappointed or impressed," Kirumi sighed disapprovingly.

"That's no surprise to me," Korekiyo chuckled, flipping to another page near the back of the book.

*Tojo Kirumi, note 1- Uses the word disappointed a lot. Almost a motherly thing at this point.*

Kirumi gave him another disappointed look before returning to the kitchen to clean. Korekiyo 
snorted, letting true satisfaction for the world go for moment. Although it didn't take long for the 
anthropologist to catch himself and harden his expression as angry thoughts flooded back to him. 
He located Ryoma in the common area. He was crouched down in front of the cat, petting it's head 
gently while listening to it purr. Korekiyo took a few steps forward. The cat didn't care though that 
 didn't surprise Korekiyo. The cat didn't run when Korekiyo had picked it up either. The 
anthropologist took a seatbelt on the couch to spectate the scene before him for a moment before 
commenting.

"I see you like her," Korekiyo said, "I found her in a bush."

"You could've found her wandering the streets of Disney World and I'd still love her," Ryoma 
replied, continuing to pet the cat.

"That says a lot," Korekiyo muttered.

*Hoshi Ryoma, note 14- Drop kicked one of the Chuck E Cheese mascots. Those kind of costumes 
freak him out?*

Korekiyo relaxed on the couch a little while longer before checking the time. There were ten 
minutes left of the lunch period. With that, the boy bid the other farewell before going to collect 
Kirumi. As he suspected, she was cleaning in the kitchen still, wiping down the same spot she had 
been before. Frowning under his mask, Korekiyo urged Kirumi to leave. She complied after 
Korekiyo used the word 'request' and the two of them left the dormitory together to return to 
school. This left Ryoma to his own devices as he sat with the cat. Even if his burdens from the day 
were still hanging over him, they weren't nearly as heavy anymore.

Ryoma gave a huff of amusement. Maybe things will be better.

<Ryoma is underrated. I seriously love this dude so much and want to give him the world.>

*"Ultimate Nightmare Fuel," May 26th, 18:34*

**DingusTheSecond:** guys wuts the answer to 20 on the hmwrk?

**ThingPurple:** 87.25!

**DingusTheSecond:**

**DingusTheSecond:** Really?

**ThingPurple:** Do you dare doubt my credibility?!
Kayayday: Momota-Kun
Kayayday: We only have Japanese homework tonight...

DingusTheSecond: yea?
Kayayday: Oh god
Kayayday: Can someone please tell him?

DEGENERATE: Japanese isn't about numbers you idiot! (Yw Akamatsu-San!)

DingusTheSecond: O

ProfessorThot: oh my god, this virgin is fucking pathetic!

Weeb changed DingusTheSecond to BuzzLightyearIsBae

BuzzLightyearIsBae: isn't buzz lightyear a dude?

ThingPurple: No, she's a real pretty lady!

Weeb: Buzz Lightyear is a guy, why?

BuzzLightyearIsBae: im not into dudes???

Weeb: I know. You're dating Harukawa-san.

BuzzLightyearIsBae: then y is this my name?

Kayayday: It was a joke

Kayayday: Are you homophobic?

BuzzLightyearIsBae: no of course not!

ProfessorThot: i'm sure.

BuzzLightyearIsBae: im serious! my grandparents are sort of behind on this sort of stuff so i ended up being raised that way. im working on things though

Kayayday: Oh

Kayayday: I didn't know that...

DEGENERATE: So you're working on improving right?

BuzzLightyearIsBae: yea!

ThingPurple: Prove it!

BuzzLightyearIsBae: ill prove it bi keeping the name

<I didn't mean to do that...>
Kayayday: Did he just-

BuzzLightyearIsBae: what?

Kayayday: Never mind

Weeb: Are you sure about the nickname? It's plain to see you're uncomfortable with it.

ProfessorThot: don't fuck things up, shittygane!

ThingPurple: Don't fuck things up, Plain Jane!

Weeb: Oh dear, we were so focused on Ouma-Kun, Saihara-Kun, Idabashi, and Amami-Kun being in sync that we didn't see this one coming...

ThingPurple: Ew, don't put me with the dollar store brand condom!!!!

ProfessorThot: ew, don't group me with that virgin gremlin!

Weeb:

ProfessorThot:

ThingPurple:

Weeb changed ProfessorThot to ThingPink

ThingPurple: N O  N O  N O

ThingPurple changed 2 names

PianoKeyayday: Did you have to change my name too?

PianoKeyayday: It's not even that different

MediocreLintRoller: jokes on you, you're off your game!

ThingPurple: Silence, you moldy eggplant.

MediocreLintRoller: NNNNNNNNEEBERRMIND

DEGENERATE: Please, whatever you do, do not change her name to that...

BuzzLightyearIsBae: DONT GIVR HIM IDEAS

DEGENERATE: DONT tELl me WHAT TO D  O

Weeb: All I wanted to do was change some names ;)

PianoKeyayday: Where are all the reasonable people (other than Shirogane)

ThingPurple: Well, Saihara-chan is off being emo somewhere. Hoshi-chan is sick. Tojo-chan is never online to begin with. Keebs is helping with dinner and Gokuhara-chan is as well.
**ThingPurple:** In other words, you're stuck with us!

**PianoKeyayday:** I just noticed

**PianoKeyayday:** You don't use Gonta's given name anymore

**ThingPurple:** Oh, that?

**ThingPurple:** I just don't like him enough anymore! Too stupid for my tastes!

**BuzzLightyearIsBae:** I DID IT!!!!

**Weeb:** Did what?

**BuzzLightyearIsBae:** I SAW THROUGH OUMAS BULLSHIT!!!

**MediocreLintRoller:** OH SHIT

**ThingPurple:** Momota-chan, aren't you the one who believed me when I told you that the answer to a JAPANESE homework question wasn't words, but a number?

**DEGENERATE:** oh

**PianoKeyayday:** You guys disappoint me

**PianoKeyayday:** So much...

<You know, now I feel awkward when I have nothing to put in my dividers...>

Ryoma sat on the rooftop, staring at the lamp lights as they lit up one by one. The day was almost over and he figured he'd feel some sort of relief with that sentiment in mind, but he didn't. In turn, he felt even worse knowing that these feelings of grief aren't going to magically disappear with the day on its tail. Ryoma stared listlessly at the sky. He didn't understand Kaito's ramblings about space and how it could take your worries away just by looking to the stars. Here he was, staring at the stars, but his worries were still there. He didn't expect much anyway. The cat, which he had named Azumi, was almost instantly swarmed by people when the group had returned to the dorms and was probably being cared for, which was reassuring.

Ryoma continued staring at the stars. The night was cooler than usual for late May, but Ryoma didn't particularly care. If anything, he thought it fit the mood. However, with Azumi away and no longer sleeping on and off again in his bed, Ryoma found himself growing heavier yet again. Gravity came crashing down on him full force as his head began to hurt again. He had eaten more during dinner, so he wasn't nauseous anymore, but he didn't notice. Sighing, Ryoma stood up, moving to the edge of the roof and looking down the railing. His mind felt heavier and heavier, almost enough to knock him over to whatever lay beyond the rooftop.

He wasn't going to jump, though he'd be lying if he said he'd never thought about it. Ryoma never did though. He's glad for it too, but sometimes regrets it, as awful as that sounds. Happiness was a strange thing to Ryoma. It's a reason for him to keep going, but also something that makes him hesitant to. The happiness itself was a beautiful savior to Ryoma's life and he's grateful for it existence. However, the anxiety of it drove a wedge through Ryoma. Wondering how long it'd last and how uncertain and sudden it can be was damaging to Ryoma. He still didn't jump though. He held the thought in his mind that he's the last of his blood relatives alive and that jumping would be a waste.
Still, the heavy thoughts spun like a broken record. Bits and pieces. Although before things could go too far, the door to the roof swung open. As opposed to Korekiyo and Kirumi from earlier, there was at least one pair of loud footsteps her. Turning around, Ryoma was met with three gazes. The first of them was Azumi, green eyes peering out at Ryoma. Then there were actual people. The loud footsteps had come from Kaito for sure, who now adorned a scratch on his cheek, which Ryoma could only guess was from Azumi. Next to Kaito was Shuichi, who held Azumi. Nobody really knew why, but the cat was especially fond of the detective, nearly as much as she was to Ryoma.

"Hey, we figured you'd want her back," Shuichi claimed, handing Azumi back to Ryoma with care.

"Hopefully she doesn't fall," Kaito murmured, taking a look over the edge of the roof, "I'd hold on to her if I were you."

"She's a cat, but she isn't stupid," Ryoma huffed, placing Azumi down, "see, she's fine."

"Huh..." Kaito hummed thoughtfully, "oh, by the way, what's been up with you today?"

"Oh, that," Ryoma said, "today's the one year mark of my family's death."

"Oh," Kaito shifted uncomfortably, "you up here to grieve?"

"Kaito-kun..." Shuichi muttered at the other's bluntness.

"I am, actually," Ryoma admitted, "you said all that stuff about stars and I figured I'd see what all the fuss is about."

"Did it help?" Kaito took a seat next to Ryoma, looking to the sky.

"Nope," Ryoma deadpanned.

"It didn't?!" Kaito gasped, "hold on, tell me what you were doing!"

"I was looking at the stars," Ryoma explained, "and then thought about my family."

"There's your problem!" Kaito exclaimed, "alright, I'll help you."

"I—I don't think you should tell people how to grieve..." Shuichi sighed, but either nobody heard him, or they were just ignoring him.

"Okay, so look at the stars," Kaito instructed, "and just... imagine your family."

"That's what I was doing," Ryoma remarked.

"No, I mean really imagine them!" Kaito repeated, "like... imagine that they're alive and just in the stars."

"But they aren't alive," Ryoma narrowed his eyes.

"I know," Kaito said, a sad look briefly crossing his eyes, "just... try it."

Ryoma looked at the astronaut to deliver a retort, but then saw his face. Kaito was staring at the stars with a solemn look in his eyes, but he was smiling. It was different from his encouraging smiles that everyone was used to. This one felt real. Not real as in a doll resting in a nightside table, but real as in the thousands of time the girl or boy that owned the doll had played with it.
Something about it brought Ryoma's eyes back to the night sky to stare. He imagined his family. His mom. His dad. He imagined them smiling in the same real way that Kaito was. Ryoma hated to admit it, but in that moment, it felt like everyone was still there. He wasn't worried about them going away. They were just there and that's what mattered.

"It worked, didn't it!?" Kaito grinned, "see, what'd I tell you?"

"Yea... it did," Ryoma confirmed, "guess I've still got a ways to go, huh?"

"Nah, you're good!" Kaito assured, "I had a hard time believing it for a while too..."

"What do you mean by that?" Shuichi asked, concerned by the last part of Kaito's sentence.

"About what?" Kaito answered.

Shuichi pursed his lips, "n—never mind."

"Alright, well, we better get going. Training's about to start," Kaito added, "Maki-roll's going to be pissed if we're late again!"

With that, Shuichi and Kaito made their way to the door. Ryoma watched silently, contemplating his next move. With his mind no longer weighing down on him so aggressively, he found himself facing another dilemma. There's something he had been putting off in his head, too distracted by the ever approaching anniversary of his family's death. It had only been a few days since he'd noticed, but in that moment, he knew he had to do something. His head was finally clear and he finally had enough peace to share. So, before the duo could leave, Ryoma spoke once more, hoping he was being loud enough.

"Hold on," he said, "Saihara, I want to talk to you."

Shuichi jolted a bit at the mention of his name, which Ryoma found concerning. Although, that's not what he was worried about. The detective muttered something to Kaito, but his voice was too quiet for Ryoma to hear. Kaito nodded at whatever it was before leaving. Shuichi took uneasy steps towards the tennis pro. Azumi nuzzled his leg affectionately, which did little to calm the stiffness in the blue haired boy's posture. Shuichi eventually reached Ryoma, taking a seat next to him in the same spot Kaito had been in only seconds before. It was just the two of them, as well as Azumi.

"Wh—what is it?" Shuichi tried to keep a steady voice.

Ryoma took a moment to decide how to go about his, "you know," he began, "when my family was killed, I wasn't doing too hot for a long time. Still not, but things used to be a lot worse."

"I see," Shuichi affirmed, voice calmer as he realized the conversation likely didn't concern him, "that must've been tough..."

"Yea, things were at an all time low. I stopped eating, I couldn't sleep," Ryoma listed, but then he sat up straighter and looker Shuichi dead in the eyes, "I cut myself."

Shuichi broke out into a cold sweat quickly, "th—that... sounds awful," he breathed and even though his voice was barely above a whisper, Ryoma could hear it shaking.

"Do you see what I'm getting at here?" Ryoma already knew the answer, but asked anyway.

Shuichi looked shamefully at his hands, "yea," he muttered, "I do."
"I'm not here to lecture you because I know that that's not going to work," Ryoma explained, leaning back again, "I know that we aren't exactly good friends, so chances are, my words won't mean much... I just want you to know some things."

"O... okay," Shuichi choked out fearfully.

"Alright, so I'm not going to sugarcoat things," Ryoma spoke softly, "things are going to suck. A lot. Trust me, I have a point here... the thing is, sometimes you just have to accept that. Once you do that, you can start to think about things getting better. Don't think that things will stay the same. I thought that way for a while."

Shuichi hummed in acknowledgment, knowing that if he tried to say anything, he'd end up sobbing.

"Something else you should know is that at the end of the day, you're still here," Ryoma continued, "we’ve already established that life... sorta sucks, but you don’t. If you don’t believe that, think of the people around you. Life sucks, but they don’t. Sticking around is a big fuck you to all the things in this sucky world that want you dead. You don’t want to give the world what it wants..."

Shuichi chuckled weakly, wiping a couple of tears from his face.

“Point is, life itself is a bitch and sometimes seems like it wants you dead, but you just have to concentrate on counteracting that,” Ryoma had a smile on his face through it all.

Shuichi wiped his eyes, “th—thank you...” he whispered, “a—and I’m sorry.... f—for this... especially on s—such a bad day...”

“It’s cool. I think I needed to hear those things myself,” Ryoma’s face fell a bit, “see ya round, kid.”

Shuichi gave a weak smile as he stood up, “y...yea. See you.”

Neither of them gave life what it wanted that night.
Two Decently Intelligent Fools

Chapter Summary

Rantaro and Keebo have changed a bit, but at least they have each other. Right...?

Idabashi Keebo was feeling a bit off. They had woken up later than usual at six fifteen and their head hurt. They had been sleeping less, worry and sorrow and anger all bubbled up in their head as they scrambled for answers on one thing or another. Their mind was foggy as they mindlessly prepare themselves for the day ahead. Their reflection was a harsh reminder of everything they'll never have that made them want to scream. They didn't though. They weren't the type to randomly scream like a child. Their bag was halfway empty and the homework was probably only partially correct, but they didn't care. They nearly forgot to lock their door before leaving. It's fine though, because they had Rantaro.

Amami Rantaro was feeling off. He had woken up at two in the morning everyday for that week and their heart hurt. He had barely slept at all, regret and sorrow tumbling through their mind as their fell deeper into the seemingly hopeless future. His mind was heavy and troubled as he laid in bed until he finally willed himself to get ready. His reflection brought a fresh wave of shame to his mind full of bitter memories that made him want to cry his heart out. He didn't though. He was never the type to break down crying. His bag was stuffed and overly heavy on his shoulders, the homework barely touched, but he didn't notice. He nearly forgot to fully shut his door before leaving. It's fine though, because they had Keebo.

Rantaro is the first of the two downstairs. Kirumi asks him where Keebo may be, but had got no solid answer in return. He sat at his typical seat. Second one to the left between Kokichi and Keebo. Of course, Keebo was currently missing, leaving Rantaro to stare absentmindedly at their empty stool. He didn't pick up in Kokichi's snide comments, so he couldn't reply. He wasn't watching whatever he and Shuichi were doing that morning, so he couldn't chuckle at whatever might've been said or done. If he were staring at himself from within a glass box, he definitely would've willed himself to move. However, with no other Rantaro and no glass boxes, he remained staring blankly at the counter.

Keebo frantically rushed downstairs as if they were being chased by the world itself. Kirumi gave them a look before returning to wiping the counter again. Apologizing for being late, the roboticist hurriedly grabbed themselves some breakfast. Their appetite had been thrown away by the horrid thoughts that gnawed at their brain, so Keebo only took the minimal amount that would avoid suspicion from the other students. They slid into their typical seat and picked at their scrambled eggs with disinterest. The sound of Keebo's chair scraping against the floor had grabbed Rantaro's attention. The adventurer spared his classmate a single glance though and could tell they weren't in a talking mood.

This abnormal pattern continued as Rantaro stood outside. He was waiting for Keebo instead. The boy had left the dormitory earlier than usual though, so that came with little surprise. There was no time for him to be sucked into any nonsensical shenanigans the class might throw at him. Not that Rantaro would have the energy to notice. Still, even though he had begun waiting earlier than the typical time of seven, Keebo showed up later yet again. Rantaro raised a brow at the state of the other. Their eye bags were noticeable considering the roboticist didn't own anything to cover them
and their movements were jolted, yet sluggish as they made their way to Rantaro.

"Have you been doing alright?" Rantaro asked the moment Keebo finally quit apologizing, the two of them already making their way to the building, "you've been so tired lately."

"Not really," Keebo admitted, but chose not to evaluate, "on top of that, there was this whole thing in the dorms just now."

"Hm? What's going on?" Rantaro continued, "in the dorms, I mean."

"Ouma-kun has just been being... well, Ouma-kun," Keebo sighed, the two of them drawing nearer to the main building.

"Oh. Sorry I left you to deal with that," Rantaro apologized, rubbing the back of his neck awkwardly.

"No, it's fine," Keebo insisted, passing the gardens, "his target was Akamatsu-san, so people rounded on him pretty quick."

"Figures," Rantaro chuckled, but it didn't sound like his heart was in it, "what was it about?"

"Ouma-kun is still insisting that Akamatsu-san is in love with Saihara-kun," Keebo explained, "I'm unsure as to why he's so insistent about that..."

"I dunno," Rantaro replied absentmindedly before biting his lip, "hey... Idabashi?"

"Yea?" Keebo turned their head to face the other as they neared the doors to the front entrance, "what is it?"

"Have you..." Rantaro looked away sheepishly, but played it off as him searching his bag for his keycard, "have you ever been in love?"

"I... I don't know," Keebo muttered, "I'm not exactly sure what it means to be 'in love' as people say despite being human myself... How about you?"

Rantaro sighed, "I think so. I don't know if it'd too soon."

Keebo hummed in response, waiting patiently for Rantaro to fish out his student keycard despite being fully capable of taking out their own. There was just something about Rantaro that made Keebo want to stay in that moment though. They didn't quite understand what it was. Besides, Rantaro seemed so deep in thought that Keebo figured that if they were to open the door, they'd wind up leaving without him. Something about leaving the adventurer behind bugged Keebo, but they once again didn't quite know why. However, before they could delve into anything, Rantaro's phone began to ring. It caught the boy off guard as he grabbed the device, checking the caller ID.

"Ah, it's my mom," Rantaro reported, "you can go on without me."

"That's alright," Keebo smiled tiredly, "I'll wait here for you."

Rantaro spared the other ultimate a grin as he tried to stem the flow of worry from his mind. As soon as the adventurer left their sights, Keebo let their face fall. The heavy burdens that had come from barely an hour of being awake already felt worse than life itself to the roboticist. Keebo soon relaxed though and settled for standing awkwardly as their classmates passed them by. Shuichi lecturing Kokichi for teasing Kaede. Korekiyo talking to Kirumi about something he'd found out about someone. Not in a gossipy way, just the creepy way Korekiyo was known for. Kaito was
rambling about space to Miu for whatever reason, the inventor responding with a string of curses every now and again despite looking at least somewhat interested. Keebo's heart ached with discontent at the sight of all the human normalcy.

However, before these feelings could destroy Keebo, Rantaro returned and immediately these feelings were replaced with something else. Worry. Keebo could tell something was off with their friend. Rantaro's face was pale and he looked as if he might be sick. His entire body seemed to be shaking, though he tried to stifle it by stuffing his hands in his pockets. The thing that terrified Keebo the most though, were Rantaro's eyes. The boy was blinking rapidly, green eyes shining with tears of sadness and terror of his own. Keebo made to say something, but was shot down by Rantaro letting out a shaky sigh. The other ultimate seemed to realize talking wouldn't help anything and nudged his head in the direction of the classroom before continuing down.

Keebo's worry was nearly drowned out by heavy and numbing thoughts that tried to drag it down, but it prevailed nonetheless. The moment the pair reached the classroom door, Keebo turned to ask for an explanation, but they were too late. Rantaro, seemingly able to read the other's thoughts, had almost instantly bolted into the classroom in the most casual manner. Keebo sighed. Even with their less than average social skills, they knew Rantaro well enough to understand that prying for information would do more harm than good, especially so in front of a crowd. Of course, there wasn't exactly a crowd in the classroom in that moment, though Miu, Kaito, and Kokichi were all notoriously loud.

The more Keebo thought about things though, the more confused they grew. Despite being so close to the adventurer, Keebo realized just how little they really knew about the boy. He had sisters, that they knew, but not the amount. They knew no names. No interests. Though there was this one time Rantaro said something when painting Keebo's nails (as to why Rantaro was painting Keebo's nails, even they didn't know.) The adventurer had mentioned something about family. He changed the topic pretty quick afterwards though. That wasn't to say Keebo didn't know anything about their friend. They also knew Rantaro only lived with his mother.

The lack of information Keebo has on their classmate was worrying to them. Typically, Keebo would blame themself for being inadequate in data collection, but this felt different. Keebo had tried to get to know more about Rantaro. The boy just always shrugged them off by subtly changing the topic. Keebo wouldn't realize until later though, when the conversation was long over. This confused them. Keebo, naturally being curious, wanted to know why Rantaro was so closed off like that. They didn't have the information Kokichi and Maki got from Amami Aina. They had nothing to use to make connections. No way of understanding. Keebo sighed, sitting down quietly in their seat while Rantaro stared out the window.

The bell still had five minutes until it rung, so Keebo sat awkwardly as more people trickled into class. Yes, Keebo was the type to bring books to class to read when they're bored, but something about that felt unappealing to the roboticist that morning. They weren't concentrated enough to talk to the other students and wasn't devoted enough to the idea of reading. Keebo was just too concerned for Rantaro, who had swiped at his eyes many times already, but still had tears shining sadly in the sunlight that streamed through the window. He'd rubbed off some of the concealer as well, which was probably easier due to the moisture that came with the tears. Keebo could still barely make out the eye bags though.

Courtesy of Miu pointing it out for them, Keebo realized that they had been staring at Rantaro's face for a minute. Keebo refuted all of her claims about the two of them, tuning about half the things she said for both their own health and because they were panicking over the possibility that the boy in question may overhear. It wasn't that they were afraid of Rantaro thinking there were any romantic implications of Keebo staring. Keebo didn't believe they held those emotions to
begin with. No, Keebo was nervous that the adventurer would discover that they were trying to figure out what's up with him. Rantaro may be scatterbrained and occasionally reckless or forgetful, but he was also observant.

Sighing, Keebo waited out the bell as their head scoured with possibilities, as well as the occasional self-deprecating remark. They couldn't shake the strange feeling of dread that overcame them as they thought more and more about it. Rantaro had been off for a while. Since the day he had gotten the phone call during lunch, if Keebo remembered correctly. What could Rantaro have heard that would put him off so much. Then now, with his mother just calling. What more could've been piled onto his plate? What could be running through his mind. Keebo didn't want to think about it any longer, opting to drop their face onto their desk hopelessly, earning some sort of jab from Kokichi as he took his seat behind them.

Keebo felt eyes on them, but they didn't raise their head. They knew whose they were, that they were green and used to shine like the forest in the sunlight. Now they shone with tears and held so many burdens. They always looked like they held burdens though, if Keebo really thought about it. Keebo wanted to ask about that. What makes something a burden? Was Keebo the burden? Keebo threw away that possibility before it plagued their mind too much and soon enough, they no longer felt the eyes on them. The bell still hadn't rung yet. It had only been three minutes, though it felt like a thousand years had passed.

Takumi took attendance as he normally did (lazily and noncommittal.) At this point, Keebo raised their head, but found themselves staring worriedly at the back of Rantaro's head. The first half of the school day was dedicated to improving talents, so Keebo's classmates were already beginning to exit the room to go to their labs. However, Rantaro stood up instead and approached Takumi before he could climb back into the ceiling. Keebo didn't wish to eavesdrop, so instead they waited until the two were finished talking. Then, as the adventurer approached the exit of the classroom, Keebo stood next to him. Rantaro caught sight of the roboticist and a sad look crossed his face.

"Was hoping I'd run into you..." Rantaro mumbled quietly, Keebo noticing he now had his bag slung over his shoulder, "I have to go somewhere real quick. See ya..."

Keebo cut straight to the chase, "Is everything alright? You've been acting odd..."

"Have I?" Rantaro chuckled, but it sounded forced, "my bad. It's nothing, really."

"If you say so," Keebo sighed, "just know that I'm always here if you need me, okay?"

Rantaro hesitated before nodding, "right... goodbye, Idabashi..."

Something about the way the words rolled off Rantaro's tongue made Keebo feel a terrifying sense of finality. As if that was the last time they'd hear that voice. Rantaro grew further and further away from Keebo's line of sight and it was almost as if he was growing further and further away from Keebo themselves. That this was the last chance that Keebo had to say anything. Before things go wrong. Before they go so terribly wrong. There was a grim atmosphere that gnawed away at Keebo's mind as a hundred unsaid words screamed louder than anything they had ever said. Keebo knew they should do something. They thought they should do something. Anything, really.

But instead, they turned around and walked away, too plagued by their own doubt and uncertainty.

<Oh dear, I'm so sorry for what I'm about to put these two through... This arc is Rantaro-centric, but Keebo suffers a lot as well. They originally got together at the end of the arc, but I scrapped the
concept. What do you guys think? Should I have these two begin to date now or later? I'm not sure if I'm rushing things or not. Sorry for the long note.>

_Private Messages "These Names Still Confuse Me," May 29th, 15:22_

3: You missed class. You can borrow my notes.

3:

3: You there?

3:

3: That's alright. Hope you feel better.

< is online

<: I'm fine

<: Talent stuff

3: Oh, again?

<: Yea

<: Keep your notes

3: Are you sure?

< is offline

3: I assume that's a yes...

"Ultimate Nightmare Fuel," May 29th, 15:20

_Weeb:_ Something's up here!

_Kork:_ Please do tell.

_Weeb:_ The time on the chat right up there ^^^ is actually at an even 10 for once! That never happens!

_Kork:_ I was expecting you to mention Amami-kun, but I suppose that is rather unusual...

_Weeb:_ Oh yea, that plain heccing normie

_Kork:_

_Weeb:_

_Weeb:_ You're trying to change my user to that, aren't you?

_Kork:_ Perhaps.
Weeb: Only Akamatsu-san, Ouma-kun and I have admin rights

Kork: Oh.

Weeb:  

*Weeb changed their name to NormieHecc*

Kork: 

NormieHecc: I caved, okay?

Kork: No, it's just that you said "heccing normie," not "normie hecc."

NormieHecc: This plainly sounded better

Kork: Alright, I'll accept that.

*ThingWhite is online*

ThingWhite: Hello. Who all is on?

Kork: As mainly only irritating teenage boys like to say with no irony, "What's up fam squad? It's your boy, Shinguuji Korekiyo."

NormieHecc: Holy anime girls, it'd be just plain impossible to surpass that greeting...

ThingWhite: Shirogane-san, is that you?!

NormieHecc: Yep

ThingWhite: 

NormieHecc: It's a long story...

Kork: No, it really isn't.

ThingWhite: Before I hear anything else, can I ask you guys a question?

Kork: How do I summon a demon?

NormieHecc: How do you remember your CrunchyRoll password? (not sponsored!)

ThingWhite: No!

Kork: Okay, allow us to continue guessing.

Kork: You're the one I saw vacuuming up people's hamsters, aren't you?

NormieHecc: You got that power from All Might, didn't you?

Kork: An anime reference?

NormieHecc: What else would it be? You wanna watch it?
Kork: I have no reason to object.

NormieHecc: My dorm in twenty minutes?

Kork: Alright.

ThingWhite: You guys!

NormieHecc: Oh, right. Sorry!

Kork: Apologies.

ThingWhite: It's fine.

Kork: So what is this question of yours?

ThingWhite: Okay, promise you guys won't judge?

Kork: I'm silently judging all of you half the time, but I can do that.

NormieHecc: I only judge fictional characters.

NormieHecc: Fictional characters in our universe, I mean.

NormieHecc: Point is, I won't judge!

ThingWhite: Okay, so I have a problem. I have a friend, who will remain nameless, that I'm very confused about. They've been sort of distant and sad lately, but rather than feeling just sympathetic, I'm upset as well. Like it's not in an empathetic way, but I just miss hanging out with them even though we still talk often enough. Even when they're walking away, I miss them already. There's also this warm feeling I got when they were happy that's not there anymore. On top of that, I get way too worked up and I don't realize they're lying about how they're feeling until later because I trust them that much. I'm worried for them, but that's not what I'm asking about. I want to know what this feeling is exactly. Do either of you know?

NormieHecc: That's more words than a slow burn fan fiction...

Kork: A what now?

NormieHecc: Hey Idabashi, can Shinguuji-kun and I discuss this real quick?

ThingWhite: Sure?

Private Messages, "Shinguuji Korekiyo and Shirogane Tsumugi," May 29th, 15:38

ShiroganeTsumugi: Okay, so we both know they're talking about Amami-kun

ShinguujiKorekiyo: Oh yes, obviously.

ShiroganeTsumugi: We plainly can't tell them they're in love with him right now, as much as it pains my shippy heart to do

ShinguujiKorekiyo: And why is that?
Shirogane Tsumugi: Remember when you showed me a few of your notes on some of our classmates so I could practice writing fan fiction skits for an upcoming convention?

Shinguuji Korekiyo: Yes. I also recall us agreeing to never speak of that again.

Shirogane Tsumugi: Don't sass me, normie

Shinguuji Korekiyo: Yes ma'am.

Shirogane Tsumugi: Okay, so remember note sixteen on Amami-kun?

Shinguuji Korekiyo: You memorized my notes?

Shirogane Tsumugi: You didn't? They're your notes

Shinguuji Korekiyo: Very well. Continue.

Shirogane Tsumugi: So I know that that note is only a theory, but if it's true, Idabashi will be just plain miserable (more than they already are) until Amami-kun gets better

Shinguuji Korekiyo: Of course! That dynamic would be interesting to witness, I must admit, but it isn't worth the well-being of our classmates.

Shirogane Tsumugi: Is it bad that as I read that, I imagined your voice raising in pitch the way it usually does when you get excited?

Shinguuji Korekiyo: Yes, very bad.

Shirogane Tsumugi: Hm and we're on the same boat with not telling Idabashi they're in love until Amami-kun is better?

Shinguuji Korekiyo: Yes.

Shirogane Tsumugi: Oh, and before we go back, can you send me note sixteen of Amami-kun again?

Shinguuji Korekiyo: I thought you had it memorized

Shirogane Tsumugi: I do. It's just that it'd be an ominous way to end the conversation


Shinguuji Korekiyo: Amami Rantaro, note 16: He accidentally chucked Kaito's plant, Matilda, out the window and couldn't look anyone in the eye for a day despite the plant being unharmed. This isn't confirmed, but he likely uses isolation as an approach to negative emotions, even if they're minor. Worse emotions could lead to terrible consequences.

"Ultimate Nightmare Fuel," May 29th, 15:48

Normie Hecc: We're back!

Thing White: Oh good! Did you figure it out?
NormieHecc: No, sorry. We tried

ThingWhite: Thank you anyway.

Kork: It’s no problem.

ThingWhite: Must be pretty difficult if a professional on humans couldn't find anything.

NormieHecc:

Kork:

ThingWhite: Oh well. Sorry for dragging you both into this.

Kork: It's quite alright.

ThingWhite: Maybe this is something I'm not meant to understand.

NormieHecc: NO, I THINK YOU SHOULD UNDERSTAND IT EVENTUALLY AND MAKE SURE YOU UNDERSTAND IT WELL

ThingWhite: Okay?

Kork: Perhaps this is something you're meant to figure out on your own.

ThingWhite: Maybe. Thanks again you two!

<Oh dear, Keebs is catching feelings at literally the worst time possible... :):)...>

Keebo spent the rest of the night thinking about Rantaro. They were oblivious to what the pounding in their chest meant and the way their mind trailed off into depths of yearning. They eventually had to tone it down as they went downstairs to assist Kirumi with dinner. The kitchen wasn't exactly crowded. Typically, Kirumi doesn't mind people helping her with meals, so there's often at least three people there. Tonight it was Keebo, Maki, Tenko, and Kaede. They were the most common group anyway, so Keebo didn't notice. The others didn't either, at least not until Keebo burned their finger on the stove. Maki rolled her eyes before guiding the roboticist away to handle the burn.

"You're lucky it's not that bad," Maki grumbled, "you've been distracted these past couple weeks ever since Amami started acting dumb as well. You're worried about him, aren't you?"

"Amami-kun isn't dumb, but yes. I have been worried about him," Keebo admitted, "he got another call this morning from his mom and afterwards, he looked like he was about to cry."

Maki bit her tongue. She was tempted to tell Keebo about what she knew. To explain the strange air of melancholy that surrounded the Amami household. She didn't think. Maki knew it wasn't her place. Even if it might've helped speed things along, she didn't risk it. Rantaro himself didn't know that Maki and Kokichi knew these things. She didn't know everything either. Even if it seemed like it wasn't the case, Rantaro's sisters might've just been out for the day. Surely mixing a bunch of teenagers with rather... in your face personalities with a bunch of smaller girls would be interesting, to say the least.

"Sorry I've been so weird lately," Keebo added, face distraught, "with Amami-kun acting the way he has, things have been very... I don't know, hectic? No... well, I don't really know how to describe
"Shut up, it's fine," Maki snorted, "geez, you sound like Shuichi when you talk like that."

"Do I? Well, that's not necessarily a bad thing. We could all be a bit more like Saihara-kun," Keebo chuckled, although it was weak, "I can stop working with dinner if I'm acting that off though."

"No, it's fine," Maki said, wrapping the other's finger gently, "the more people helping Tojo, the better. Just... be careful. If you keep getting distracted or whatever the hell you said, you're not going to have anymore fingers."

Maki stood up to leave before turning her head to face Keebo again, "oh, and," she hesitated, looking for the right thing to say, "things will get better with Amami. Just give it some time."

Keebo took a moment to process that. They smiled though. It was a real smile. Not an awkward one that was used to mask their problems. Keebo looked around for a moment for Rantaro, only to remember the boy was probably in his dorm. Keebo didn't let that ruin their mood though. Even though Rantaro didn't show up for dinner, they didn't worry. They held onto the hope of things getting better. It felt nice, like everything would truly be okay. Yea... it's only been a few weeks. That's enough time. Things would be better from here on out. Keebo clung to that. Things will get better.

Those words meant nothing the next day though.

Idabashi Keebo woke up at six. Just like every other morning. They were in high spirits as they put on their uniform and combed their hair. Kirumi even commented on this positive attitude as Keebo helped her with breakfast. They held it together with Kokichi's teasing longer than normal, only stopping to scold him after the small boy suggested Keebo was high and that was why they were so upbeat. That was one thing though. Shuichi got Kokichi to quit it anyway by showing him another interesting passage from his book. Things were okay. Keebo was at ease and happy and content.

That was a lie though. Beneath that hope, Keebo was worried and distressed and tired. Their eyes flickered to the stairs every few seconds to check for Rantaro and they would yawn every five minutes. Their green haired classmate didn't show up though, which made Keebo all the more anxious. The clock ticked on for a while as Keebo ate breakfast and soon it was nearing seven. Keebo cursed themself for getting their hopes up, and it showed on their regretful expression. Shuichi and Kokichi each spared them the occasional look of concern and sympathy towards them. Keebo didn't notice though.

Seven o'clock came and went and Keebo stood outside the dormitories, wishing that at always, Rantaro would be late and as always, he would have a reason. He didn't though, so Keebo couldn't pretend to be mad like they always did and they couldn't laugh at whatever crazy event had come up. Outside was suddenly very cold to Keebo and so they began to walk to school with a heavy heart. The trip felt longer than normal and excruciatingly lonely with no chatter to accompany it. Keebo sighed, opening the door to the classroom. Even though they'd somehow left earlier than the rest of the class, Keebo was still worried about being late for whatever reason. Overly anxious tendencies, they suppose.

On the other side of the door, a shocking sight awaited Keebo. There was Rantaro, staring out the window with a blank face. It became clear in that moment just how severe things had gotten. Rantaro's eyes were red rimmed and still glossed over. His concealer was barely even on anymore, revealing terribly dark bags under solemn, half lidded eyes. Rantaro's hair, which was typically a
mess to begin with, but at least an organized mess, was unruly and knotted. The thing that worried Keebo the worst though was the haunting expression on Rantaro's face. He didn't even notice Keebo as they walked in and approached them. Cautiously, Keebo wandered over to him, reaching out to touch his shoulder.

"Hey, Amami-ku—"

Rantaro stood up so fast that his chair fell to the ground with a loud thud that echoed throughout the room. The boy ran a hand through his green hair with stress as the turned to face Keebo. Almost instantly, any sign of calamity was gone from his face. Rantaro didn't look terrified more than he looked in pain. However, the look was gone instantly as the adventurer set his chair back up properly, retrieving his bag from the back, likely to check if nothing inside had been damaged by the sudden fall. Keebo made to speak, but before they could, Rantaro had casually slung his bag over his shoulder and was leaving the room.

"Wait!" Keebo cried and they could tell by the tension in Rantaro's shoulders that he had heard it, but he still left, "or not..."

Keebo considered going after Rantaro. They really wanted to, but then remembered that the adventurer had taken his bag, which meant he had probably gone back to the dormitories. Keebo didn't have enough time to go then, nearly certain that Rantaro could and would begin to run. Defeated, Keebo slumped into their seat, which earned a few comments from their classmates. Everyone was quite worried for both parties, but didn't speak of it. Then, about ten seconds before the bell rang, Rantaro made an appearance again, hurriedly taking a seat at his desk as everyone stared curiously.

Rantaro was missing during the first block of the day. Keebo looked for him for a while before giving up. It wasn't like them to give up, but things were just so heavy and Keebo just didn't want to think about it longer than they should. So Keebo found themself in the researchers lab, also known as the library. Keebo knew Rantaro probably wouldn't show up there despite it being their own lab. The library always made him uncomfortable, and given how on edge he was, the chances of him even trying to enter seemed highly unlikely to Keebo. Nonetheless, the roboticist took a seat on a small chair in the corner. The countless books that contained knowledge of the world soothed Keebo and any comfort was better than none.

Lunch rolled around and Keebo figured that Rantaro would be there. He was. He was at the same table as always, but instead of his usual place between Kokichi and Keebo, he was in the middle of Maki and Miu, away from Keebo. The roboticist sat next to Rantaro anyway. Maki didn’t seem to mind sitting closer to Kaito. However, as Keebo made attempts to start conversations with Rantaro, all they got were short answers and everything fell flat within seconds. The entire table soon noticed this, but even Kokichi and Miu spoke nothing of it. Rantaro excused himself halfway through lunch, claiming he had to help out somewhere. Keebo went back to the library shortly after. They weren’t hungry anyway.

The last block, which was dedicated to your typical subjects, was somehow the worst. Keebo couldn’t concentrate, too focused on the back of Rantaro’s head. Takumi was the type of teacher who called on kids at random if they seemed like they weren’t paying attention. Keebo and Rantaro both fell victim to that at least twice and fumbled around with their words before apologizing. Normally, the class would giggle a bit when this sort of thing happened, but instead they just stared with worry. Takumi even ended up cutting them some slack by the end of class, no longer picking on the two of them.

Keebo didn’t try to catch up to Rantaro on the way back to the dorms. They’d given up for the
day, too tired to bother anymore. They knew that helping with dinner would do nobody any good, so they found themself staring blankly at the ceiling of their dorm. When Keebo wasn’t thinking about Rantaro, they were thinking about themself. How they could’ve avoided this whole thing if they had just stayed in the dorms, locked away from society. They didn’t know what to do anymore. They were sad and scared and anxious. After dinner, they broke down for a while, crying themselves into an uneasy sleep.

Rantaro regrets everything because deep down, he knows this isn’t right. He can’t bring himself to leave his room though. He grabs dinner from the kitchen and eats it in his room, cleaning the dish after finishing. He doesn’t cry when he returns to his room afterward. He thinks about everything before. With Keebo. With everyone. Back when everything was simpler. It took a while for Rantaro to find the truth, but even then, he denied it. He knew that Amami Rantaro and Idabashi Keebo lived life near each other and they were more than content with that. He erased the thought all together, writing it over with something new.

Amami Rantaro and Idabashi Keebo shouldn’t talk. It’s for the best, even if it hurts at first.
Two Weeks (Side A.)

Chapter Summary

Two Weeks (Side A.)

Chapter Summary

TW: Existential angst and suicidal ideation.

June 1st. Sunday.

I end up waiting thirty minutes after breakfast for Amami. I doubt he'd show up, but there was some sort of hope. He wasn't here yesterday and had been off since Friday. I help Tojo by doing the dishes, but it's more to slow down my thinking. It doesn't really work and I nearly cut off one of my fingers on accident. I can see where Harukawa is coming from now. I can't help but be distracted though. When your best friend (sorry, Iruma!) is acting so odd all of a sudden, you naturally grow worried. People keep giving me sympathetic looks. They shouldn't though. It's Amami they should be worried about, not me! I guess I shouldn't dwell on it though. Everyone's gone off to do their own thing now that breakfast has been over for the better part of an hour.

It's apparent that Amami isn't going to show when it's closer to lunch than it is to breakfast. I can't handle everyone staring at me like that, so I return to my dorm. I just try to keep Harukawa's words in mind. I just have to give Amami some time to get better. Things might get worse before they get better, but at least things will be better, right? I do hope it's soon though. I guess that's sort of a given though, isn't it? It's just human nature to not wish suffering on others. I am a human, so that's how I am. I'm just a human... just a... no! Now is not the time to go that way. I have to eat lunch and even then, I'd prefer to not deal with negative thoughts. Then again, that's another thing that's just natural for a human to think. No one likes negative thoughts.

Amami isn't at lunch either. Has he been eating enough lately? Has he eaten? I feel bad for not helping out with cooking, so I apologize to Tojo. As you'd expect, she said it was fine and then got back to work as if nothing happened. I'm not sure if I'm relieved or insulted by the gesture. I don't see as many people looking at me now. They probably realized how unsettling it was and stopped. Amami's empty seat makes me feel weird. I miss him. I don't know why I miss him so much despite only seeing him yesterday, even if it was brief. I can hear Ouma saying his typical robophobic remarks, but I tune it out. The empty seat is still there and it's like the stool had grown eyes and was staring right at me. Okay, weird metaphor, but I'm uncomfortable.

I don't really understand how, but the stool staring me down (might I remind you that this is merely metaphorical and the stool doesn't actually have eyes) was enough to make me leave. My first instinct is to find Amami, who was probably in his dorm, but instead, I found myself in the library again. It was empty, though that was to be expected given that it was a Sunday afternoon and everyone probably had better things to do than read. It just reminds me of Amami though. The library, not people doing random things. Amami is a little random though, but that's not really what I'm going for. The library was just sort of a place we hung out a lot. It had this strange amount of knowledge like Amami, as well as the fact that it's... aesthetically pleasing?

Okay, that's a strange thing to think about, isn't it? I exhale before picking up a book. It's one about traveling in Europe and all the cool places to go. I was telling Amami about this book. I
doubt he'll be reading it anytime soon, so I flip to the first page. I sort of lost track of time though because I didn't stop reading until I heard the door open. It was a good break, I got my mind off Amami for a moment, so that's a plus. I set down the book after marking my page before looking up to see Harukawa. I wasn't really expecting that, but I'm not opposed to talking. She's a lot more relaxed than the vast majority of my classmates. Don't get me wrong, I enjoy the company of all my classmates, but sometimes someone calm like Amami or Harukawa is a nice thing.

"Hey," She doesn't sound extremely enthusiastic, but that's to be expected.

Harukawa sits down next to me. She looks at the cover of the book for a moment, but I can't read her expression, but once again, given her tendencies and my inability to properly communicate, that's to be expected. She eventually stops and now it seems like she's thinking about something. Her mouth is pressed into a thin line and she was glaring at something. I tried to see what she was glaring at, but there's nothing particularly interesting in whatever direction she was looking. It's probably just a sign that she's lost in thought. Amami did something like that. He would furrow his brow and stare a lot when he got concentrated on something. It's slightly frightening, honestly, but now I would be perfectly fine with it as long as Amami's happy.

"Remember what I said yesterday?" She asks. I do remember, "things always have a strange, bullshit way of working out. It'll happen though."

Harukawa sits with me until dinner. She doesn't say much else, but oddly enough, I feel a little better.

June 2nd. Monday.

Maybe Amami will be better today. Hopefully. It's always good to have a hopeful attitude, right? I don't hurt my fingers at all when I help prepare breakfast. It's a school day, so I can at least see Amami and try talking to him again. Unless he doesn't show up... no, he will! He did on Friday, so there's no reason for him to not show up today! Unless things have gotten worse... that's just a negative way of looking at that though! No need to think about that. It's just like Harukawa said, things will get better. Maybe I shouldn't hand onto her words so much, just in case, but she's always been relatively reliable. She might not always be correct, but she doesn't seem to bother lying with the intentions of sparing someone else's feelings.

Just as I thought, Amami does attend breakfast. He didn't on Friday, so things are looking up already, aren't they? Maybe I hadn't just blown this whole thing out of proportion! No, that can't be right. He still looks tired as he walks into the kitchen. At least he's integrating himself with the group again though. I greet Amami as he enters the kitchen. He doesn't respond. He probably didn't hear me. He sits next to Saihara instead of me. Okay, maybe he's avoiding everyone. He at least acknowledges Saihara though when he greets him. Does that mean it's just me he's avoiding? Why? Actually, I don't know if he heard me that first time, so I can't make that judgement. I go over and try to strike up a conversation. He ignores me. Oh.

That's alright! Things will get better, remember? I just have to... give it time. I still wait for Amami outside after seven. Everyone ends up leaving, so I wonder if he decided not to go last minute. Because of me. Or! Something else! Something that isn't me...! No, it's probably me. Still though, I go to class. I'll greet him with a smile when he walks in. He's already in the classroom. When did he get there? He probably went with the crowd, didn't he? Was all of that to avoid me in particular? That... I don't know what to say to properly explain that feeling. I really don't. Maybe I would if I were a robot still. Maybe Amami wouldn't be avoiding me if I were a robot still. No. We didn't get along as well as we do now back when I was a robot...

I can't get the idea out of my head though. I try to talk to Amami again before the bell rings. He's
reading something though, so I don't bother him for long before going back to my seat. At least he didn't run away this time... Sensei finishes attendance and Amami leaves before I can try again. I don't know where he went. Probably the same place as Friday, but I don't know the answer to that either. That's okay though! Just more time in the library... alone. Was it always this spacious in here? I haven't finished the book from yesterday, but I'm not in the mood for that one. I look for a fictitious novel that Yumeno recommended me about a week back. I doubt that our tastes really line up, but the sound of a world different from this one seems alright.

Once again, I don't stop reading until I hear the door of the library crack open. I assume that it's just Harukawa again. I give a quick hello before returning to the page. Typically, I would look someone in the eyes as I greet them, but things have been off enough, so this seems like only a minor change. The sound of the page flipping is the only sound I can really hear aside from footsteps. I could hear a lot better as a robot. It got irritating if I think about it now, but I didn't have the capacity to care back then. I stop thinking about that and focus on the other person. However, as the figure approaches and I do ultimately decide to look up at whoever it is, it isn't Harukawa.

"Keebo?" It's Gonta. He sounds concerned, "Gonta came to check on you. You've been away a lot lately and Gonta's getting worried."

"I'll be okay," I feel as if those words are directed more to myself than they are to Gonta. It's not a lie though. I will be fine.

Gonta sits next to me in the same spot Harukawa was yesterday, "what book are you reading?"

I tell Gonta about the plot. It's mediocre as far as writing goes. Gonta likes it though, so I keep reading it. Maybe I'll see what he finds appealing about it. Even after another half an hour of reading, I still don't see it. I could just be interpreting things differently. I have been told I don't understand metaphors very well. I believe I've already mentioned that though, haven't I? It's unfortunate, really. Sarcasm, metaphors and such are said to make society confusing, but also keep things entertaining. I still don't see it though. I sigh after I finish reading the next page aloud to Gonta. He doesn't read at the same speed as I do, so I found this to be a reasonable solution. I can't help but ask him about the whole metaphor dilemma I'm facing.

"Oh, Gonta doesn't get metaphors that much either," he admits. He must get it better than I do though if he enjoys this book so much, "Gonta just thinks about bugs when he thinks about metaphors. A lot of Gonta's friends remind Gonta of bugs..."

"What bug do I remind you of," I'm not exactly interested in the answer due to my limited knowledge on entomology, but I ask anyway.

"Hmm..." Gonta seems to have to think about that. Does that mean I wasn't one of his friends he thought of before? No, he must've forgotten... "can Gonta explain Gonta's answer?"

"Of course," Maybe we can both understand metaphors better.

"Gonta thinks Keebo and Amami-kun are like love bugs," he... he what?! "Love bugs are always together, just like you two!"

"H—hold on!" I'm flustered, okay? I don't even feel that way about Amami anyway, "what?!"

"Oh, Gonta's sorry!" Oh, he realized his mistake, "Keebo and Amami-kun aren't exactly like love bugs!"
I'm about to accept his apology, but then he continues, "one of the love bugs die a lot earlier than the other, but Gonta thinks Keebo and Amami-kun are going to live long, happy lives! Also, humans don't lay eggs when they mate..."

"When they what?!?" What what what what what what what what what what what? Is he talking about... oh my gosh.... NO. Who told this boy about humans "mating?!" It was Ouma and Iruma, wasn't it?

I don't know when, but I'd begun to laugh. Gonta did too. Good. It was getting a little quiet.

June 3rd. Tuesday.

Amami is still avoiding me. What did I do? I find Harukawa on the way to class. She always walks a bit behind everyone unless she's with Momota, so speaking to her privately wasn't difficult. I tell her that things are still bad. She tells me that she knows and that I should just be patient. She isn't wrong, which is the upsetting part. Ouma then takes Harukawa and pulls her to the side. I don't really focus though on what they're talking—or arguing, I guess—about. It's very sunny out today. I have the strange impulse to stare directly into it. It's one of those strange things that humans call whims. Or, well, impulses. With all this sunlight, I'd probably be talking to everyone happily, but today, I just don't feel up for it.

I return once more to the library after having a similar bout of the silent treatment from Amami. Why do we call it the silent treatment? The word treatment is normally used to describe something better than a—uh... well, better than this. Like when you're sick, you receive treatment, and that one time I went to the spa with Iruma (long story short, she wanted the couples discount and I was feeling rather tense anyway) we got celebrity treatment. It wasn't what I think a celebrity would feel like, but that's beside the point. Point is, I don't understand why it's called the silent treatment when the word treatment is so commonly viewed as good. The silent treatment doesn't feel good.

"Yo," I nearly jump out of my skin (or however that expression goes) when Hoshi speaks, "woah. I'm not that intimidating, am I? I just wanna talk."

I don't really want to talk, but I don't say anything, so Hoshi continues, "listen kid, I've seen what's been going on with you and Amami."

Before he can continue, he gently placed his cat on the ground, Azumi, I think her name was.

"Listen kid," Hoshi sits down where Gonta and Harukawa had sat, "I don't know what's up with your buddy, but he just needs some time."

"I know that," I do know that, "Harukawa-san's told me that multiple times."

Hoshi hums, "alright, s'long as you know. He just needs some space for a while and things will work out in the end. Take it from me."

Give him space. I did not know that.

Hoshi stays a while longer. He doesn't say anything else, but that's fine. His words have given me something to think about.

June 4th. Wednesday.

I'm tempted to try again with talking to Amami. Then I remember my conversation with Hoshi yesterday (if the few words we exchanged can qualify as a conversation.) I don't talk instead. I keep eating quietly as he enters the kitchen. He sits next to Saihara again though, but I guess I saw that
one coming. It still hurts, but he gives Saihara a small smile because I didn't cut him off like I did before. I get a strange feeling in my chest at the sight, but I don't mind it. It leaves as soon as Amami lowers his gaze and gets on with breakfast. That's alright. As long as he's happy, I'm happy. I don't know why that is, but now's not the time to think about it again.

I find myself in the library again though because it's the only place I can really think of. I haven't tried to speak with Amami once today, which makes me feel... sad, actually. It will help him in the long run though, so I try to not to think about it too much. I want to read more of that book about Europe from the other day, but I can't find it. Great. No, it's not great. I don't know why I said it was great when it really isn't. Sarcasm. I suppose the effect was ruined though when I had begun to backpedal immediately after. My head hurts, which only worsens when a loud, cheery voice echoes through the room. Rude, I know, but it was very loud!

"Ya-ha!" Yonaga is really quite loud, "Atua said Angie would find you here, Keebo~"

I greet her as best as I can as she comes skipping over to me. Her face is unreadable for the most part. I'd say that she's joyful, but something about her eyes makes me think otherwise. I might just be crazy though. I haven't been sleeping a lot so that wouldn't be too far fetched. She's shockingly quiet for a moment after she sits down in the same spot everyone else has. I'm almost relieved when I realize just how awful silence sounds. Of course, silence doesn't have a sound, but I've heard people use that expression countless amounts of times, so I figured I'd try it out as well. Just like my other attempts at figurative language, it's unsuccessful.

"Oh? What's with the loooooong face, Keebo?!" Yonaga's tone makes it sound like she's scolding me, "Atua thinks things should always be happy! That's why Angie is always happy!"

"My mind is just a little out of it right now," I don't know if she understands sadness. Surely she's felt sad before, right? "I'm sad, but it'll be okay. Hopefully."

"Ah, great positivity!" She's still loud, but I'm almost used to it now, "it's a shame that you are sad though! Perhaps Angie has a trick she can teach you?"

She leans her face close to me and smiles, "sing."

"Sing?" It seems absurd, but I don't really have a reason to object, do I? "You know what? Alright."

Yonaga ends up singing more than I do. I end up feeling a little better though.

June 5th. Thursday.

Amami looks happier today now that I haven't been talking to him. He seems more aware of things than before. I guess Hoshi's advice did help. So, with the false impression that he's doing better, I try to talk to Amami again. It doesn't work, as one could imagine and now he's back to where he was before. So it's my fault then. Nobody seems to mind that I broke Amami. I do mind though. What did I do to make him like this? What if I do it again without realizing? No... it's just me talking to him. Fine. I'll try to... keep my distance until I'm sure Amami is better. Or at least try to. It probably wouldn't be very appealing if I made the rule so strict. Humans my age (I am a human, I remind myself,) tend to rebel against strict rules a lot.

I reach the library and still can't find the Europe book. I get a bit more upset than I should. It wasn't a tantrum, but I let out this long sigh that sounded a bit like a growl at the end. It was strange... I wonder if someone else is coming today. It's happened everyday this week other than Saturday, so probably. I don't want to get my hopes up though. I've already cried a couple of times
from this whole Amami thing. It'd be embarrassingly for me to cry over something like this. However, Tojo then walks in. She's carrying a book with her. The Europe book I was looking for! She looks at me as she makes her way over.

"Hello, Idabashi," I'd nearly forgotten how formal she is, "I have just come to return this book for Amami-kun, then I will be out of your way."

"Oh, actually," Amami was the one with the book, huh? "Can I have the book please?"

"Of course," she hands the book to me. It suddenly feels a lot more valuable when I think about how Amami has read it. The concept it confusing, but at least I'm handling the book more carefully than before, "I did not expect you to be interested in traveling to Europe."

“I’m not really,” I tell her, “Amami-kun and I were just planning on reading this, but he’s been acting... different lately, so...”

“Oh, I see. Apologies for having you discuss that,” she looks embarrassed? I can’t read facial expressions very well, "would you like to read with me then?"

“Huh?” I’m confused.

“No offense, but you have seemed rather lonely as of late. It is likely linked to Amami-kun’s strange behavior, so, allow me to repeat,” and Tojo does repeat, “would you like to read with me.”

“Are you sure? You might not even like this book,” in truth, I really am sorta lonely. I’d rather not interrupt Tojo’s day and make her stressed though.

“I will be alright. I have always enjoyed serving families in Europe,” oh, well that’s good.

I agree to read with Tojo and so she takes the same spot as everyone else before her. I open the book and a bookmark falls out. It’s Amami’s. I stare blankly at it for a moment. Tojo is obviously confused, but I think she’s trying to hide it by staring out the window. I pick up the bookmark gently (not that I think it’ll break I’m just... worried it’ll break. I don’t know...) and hand it to Tojo. She looks away from the window and back at me. I open my mouth to say something, but it takes a moment for any words to come out. Why? It’s just a bookmark!

“Can you...” I trail off at the end, “can you bring this back to Amami-kun after we’re done reading?”

“Yes, I will be sure to do that.”

Tojo and I read. It feels nice to talk about the sights. I wish it was Amami though...

June 6th. Friday.

I don’t know what happened, but this morning, Amami wasn’t at breakfast. Is this because of the bookmark? I end up getting kicked out of the kitchen because I can’t concentrate. I end up just sitting at the counter with my face slammed down on it. It’s the closest I could get to closing my eyes without actually closing them. If I really did close them, I’d probably fall asleep. Everything I try is just making things worse, isn’t it? I don’t want to think about it. Instead, I try to remember what Hoshi and Harukawa said. Just give him some space. Things will get better over time. Nearly a week has passed and things still aren’t fine.

Iruma is already in the library before I am. She’s reading a book in that same exact spot. Her face looks a little bit calmer when she’s focused on reading. She doesn’t even notice me as I make my
way over to the spot next to her. However, the moment I sit down, the calm look goes away and she looks angry? Well, she always looks angry, actually. My bad. She looks normal again (by Iruma standards.) Then she gives me this look that I can’t quite read, mainly because Iruma has a smaller pallet of emotions than most people. I know she’s probably going to say something about Amami, which I’m beginning to get tired of.

“I haven’t seen ya all week, Keebs!” Something tells me that’s not what she was originally going to say. I don’t know what, but that’s what I was thinking, “I have an idea for an invention that you’ve just gotta hear.” I noticed she isn’t cursing as much. “It’s a motherfucking game changer.” Oh dear.

I don’t think this was her first idea, but not talking about Amami for a bit was nice.

June 7th. Saturday.

I end up going right to the library after breakfast. There’s no classes today, so there wasn’t really any need to, but it’s become some form of comfort. If I were a robot still, I wouldn’t have to have this strange attachment to the library. I’m not a robot though. If I were a robot, I’d be complaining about how I’m not human enough. If there were a middle ground to this problem, I’d love to hear it. For now, I’m just going to be discontent with life and dreading every waking hour... wondering if it’s worth it... or if death would be easier—NO! Nonononononononononononononono. Happy thoughts! Be hopeful! Amami will come back!... Would—NONONONONONONONONONONO—

“There you are!” Who? “I’ve been looking for you all... day? Hey, you alright there?”

“Me? Oh! Well, I’ve certainly been better,” I’m glad I didn’t begin crying. That would be difficult to explain.

“Oh, well. You can keep crying if ya need to,” oh, I was crying. It’s Momota who’s talking, I now realize, “I’ll be here after you’re done.

“No, I’m alright now!” I’m not completely alright, but I’m better, so it’s not exactly a lie, “Why? Did you need me for something?”

“Uh, sorta?” What does he mean by that? “It’s up to you, really.” He sits down in the spot and I realize he’s waiting for a response, “oh—yea, I’m alright. I’ve been in here for—” I check the clock, “—over twelve hours.” I’ve what?! 

“Yea, I know,” oh thank goodness he isn’t judging me...

Momota helps me stand up and we end up walking back to the dorms. I’m exhausted. We reach the dorms eventually, but we don’t stop there. Momota leads me up multiple flights of stairs until we reach the rooftop. I’m beyond confused now, but he keeps looking at me like I’m supposed to understand what’s happening, so I almost feel bad for asking him what’s happening. His answer doesn’t help much. He just says that he’s helping me feel at ease. I ask him to be more specific about what he meant. He looked at me like I was crazy, but I’m not too sure of that.

“I was actually going to have you come train with Maki roll and Shuichi,” oh. That’s surprising... “then I figured you’d be sorta worn out, so I went with stargazing instead.”

He really thought I was in that much pain? Well, I guess the fact that I was crying when he found me sort of supports that. He isn’t exactly wrong either, which is the problem. Amami is the one struggling, not me. It’s probably make Momota feel better if I went along with it though, so I look
at the stars.

Momota and I spend the night stargazing. For the first time in a while, I felt at ease.

June 8th. Sunday.

Akamatsu sat down in Amami’s spot this time. It was almost exactly after I entered, which led me to believe she was either waiting for me or close behind. I’m grateful, albeit confused. The disgusting thoughts I have on a daily basis won’t reach me as long as I’m having a pleasant conversation. Akamatsu is a pleasant person to be around, so I’d probably be correct in assuming that speaking with her would be a nice change of pace. I sit down in my normal spot as always and wait for her to speak. It doesn’t take long. Thank goodness for Akamatsu Kaede.

“Hey, I saw Amami-kun the other day,” oh, maybe this will be a bit stressful, “I can’t even imagine how upset you probably are.”

She looks at me, “people have probably been telling you that a lot though, haven’t they,” something about my face must be funny because she laughs, “yea, I figured as much. If you’re up for it, I can teach you some piano instead.”

I nod and Akamatsu looks ecstatic. I’m glad I made someone happy.

June 9th. Monday.

Shinguuji is here now. He’s in the same spot and now that it’s Monday, I only have so much time until I have lunch and have to sit across from Amami as he keeps ignoring me. This whole space thing is still not working. I’m beginning to become uncomfortable with the silence, so for the first time in a while, I’m the one to break it.

“What are you doing here?”

“This is my lab,” oh. It is.

“Sorry,” yea, an apology is probably needed here.

“It’s alright, I’m not here to work on my talent,” he isn’t? “I’m here to tell you some folk tales in order to brighten the mood.” He’s joking.

Shinguuji wasn’t joking, but the stories were nice. They took my mind off of bad things.

June 10th. Tuesday.

Chabashira nearly jumps on me after I sit down. Amami is still avoiding me. My thoughts are still sudden and intrusive. I’m still sad. I’ll be alright though. I think. I don’t know how to try and talk to Amami if he’s just going to turn away right after. No matter how much I try to stop, I can’t. What’s happening to him? Why is he only avoiding me in particular? Why does he look so sad all the time?

“Hey, you spaced out!”

Today I realized how numb my mind has become. I barely realize it when it’s time for lunch.

June 11th. Wednesday.

I think I know what’s wrong with me. The reason why Amami is avoiding me. Actually, I knew it all along, but this just confirms it. I was better as a robot. Plain and simple. I will never have that
now. I will never be that smart. I will never be that confident (I wasn’t exactly confident then, but this is a huge step down, whatever that means.) I will never measure up to that. Amami realized that. So he left. Amami isn’t that kind of person either. That just means I’m that inferior to who I was made into in that game. I hate who I am now. I’m pathetic. I hate it. I hate it. I hate it. I hate it. I hate it. I hate it. I hate it... I hate me. I hate me. I hate me—

“K—keebo!” Oh crap.

Yumeno rushes over to sit down in Amami’s spot, “d—don’t cry! Your tears are contagious and I’m all out of mana!”

I don’t know how, but I found myself asking, “was I a better robot than a human?”

Yumeno looks like she remembered something upsetting before a terrified expression replaces it, “y—you’re still thinking about what I said to you?...”

Oh god. She did say that. Now I made her feel bad. She apologized for it too. Fix it! “No! Nonono! I—I was thinking about why Amami-kun has been so... distant, and I just thought... It wasn’t because of what you said though!”

“Oh—okay,” Yumeno looks relieved for a moment before going all scared on me again, “wait, no! That means you think it’s true now!”

“Why else would be leave?” I can’t think of anything else. I probably could if I were still a robot.

“Amami wouldn’t do that!” She looks angry?

“Exactly! That’s how awful I am!” I’m glad she gets it.

“No, stupid! Oh, sorry... Still, no!” She is getting even louder than I thought was possible for such a small person, “I... I like you better as a robot than a human, so why shouldn’t everyone else?!”

Himiko and I took a moment to cry. I still don’t know why Amami left.

June 12th. Thursday.

“Have you tried texting him?” Shirogane has filled the spot today.

I feel foolish when I shake my head. It was such an obvious solution, too! Shirogane laughs a bit, which is uncalled for! I take out my phone afterwards though. She asks me about the names of Amami and I’s chat, but I still don’t know. She helps me type out the message. I hit send. Amami blocked me. Of course he blocked me. Shirogane apologizes. I’m upset, really. I mean, we were Keebo and Amami. We were the roboticist and the adventurer. We were < and 3... oh my god, I just got that. <3... It’s a heart....

“Shirogane-san,” I’m about to cry, “Shirogane-san... Shiroga—“

“I’m here. What is it?”

“I’m in love with Amami-kun...” I’m crying, “I’m i—in love—“ there’s a sob “—with him... b—but he’s—“ I’m choked up “—he’s gone now.”

“I...” She seemed like she wanted to say something, but chose not to, “It’s okay.” No. It’s not.

I ask Shirogane to leave. For the first time that week, I’d rather be alone.
June 13th. Friday.

Nobody is here today.

"Hey," Never mind, "Idabashi."

It's Saihara. He's already sitting in that same spot. The spot where Harukawa sat. And Gonta. And Hoshi. And Yonaga. And Tojo. And Iruma. And Momota. And Akamatsu. And Shinguuji. And Chabashira. And Yumeno. And Shirogane. He doesn't say anything. He's probably waiting for me to speak. I don't though. If I were a robot, I wouldn't have this problem. I'm human though. I do have this problem. I hate that I don't talk. I hate me. Stupid me. I just want to feel loved. I want to be loved the way I love Amami. I'm not though. Because that love's been rejected. Before I can even realize it existed too. Stupid... I hate this. I hate this. I FUCKING HATE THIS—

"Hey," I hate this, "it's... going to be okay..."

"No, it isn't!" I'm done with pretending. I just hate this. I'm probably crying, "I've... I've been telling myself that the past two weeks, but it isn't working!"

"I..." Saihara doesn't have anything else to say. I wish he did. I hate that there's no positive way to look at the situation.

"You know, everyday, someone else has come here," I tell him.

"I know," how does he know? "This is my lab." Oh.

"I—I'm sorry I never helped you," it's alright with me, really, "feeling like you've been... left behind is definitely not the greatest." He speaks as if he knows what it feels like. Does he?

"It's fine," I say. Saihara doesn't say anything back.

"Can... c—can I hug you?" A hug. I don't hate that... I nod.

Saihara hugs me. I feel warm for a moment. I feel colder than ever though when he pulls away.

June 14th. Saturday.

Ouma is here today. I didn't sleep. He says stuff. I'm not listening. He leaves. I don't care. It doesn't matter because Amami won't come back.

My chest hurts. Everything hurts. I go back to the dorms. I crash onto my bed. If I had just thrown myself off the roof, I never would've had to feel this.

Would anyone care? I don't want to imagine that. If I were dead, I wouldn't have thought about that.

I'm not dead though. I wish I was. I don't want to live like this. I don't want to die like this. I just want Amami back. I start to cry, curled up into a pathetic ball.

I don't care if he doesn't love me. I just don't know how much more of this I can take.
Two Weeks (Side B)

Chapter Summary

Amami is having a bad time.

TW: Very depressive behavior, and emotional numbness.

June 1st. Sunday.

My head hurts. Again. It was before. An hour ago. I went to bed though. It helped. I should sleep now. That'd help. I've been sleeping a lot. It helps. There's nothing else to do. I have nothing. No reason. No purpose. It hurts. So I sleep. I sleep some more. It's noon. I'm so tired. I can't sleep though. Can't think. Can't feel. I had it coming. I really did. This is karma. For everything. For being selfish. For being stupid. I wish I was smarter. I wish I was selfless. I'm not though. So I sleep. Sleeping helps. I hate sleeping now. Or I would. I don't hate many things anymore. I could even go for a car ride. They make my head hurt. My head already hurts though. So it's fine. I'm fine. She's not. She's dead. It's my fault.

I feel useless. I am useless. A failure. My phone rings. I don't pick up. Because I'm selfish. I'm being selfish right now. Not moving. That's what I want. I could do something. I don't though. Because I'm useless. And selfish. And a failure. That could have been mom. Calling just now. She could've been crying. I should call back. I don't though. Because I'm useless. And selfish. And a failure. I sleep some more. It's five in the evening now. It's Sunday. I think. No one has to worry about me not showing up to class. There was none. There's class tomorrow. I have to go. I don't want to. I have to though. I can't be useless. Or selfish. Or a failure. I'm fine. I'll be fine. I check my phone. It was Idabashi. I don't call back.


"Do not force yourself to move," oh. Tojo, "is it alright if I come in?"

Is it alright? Why wouldn't it be alright? No. It's not alright. I don't want to be seen. Not like this. No. It is alright. Because I am fine. I have nothing. No reason to not let her in. There's nothing stopping me from walking. Just a couple steps. It's fine. I'm fine. I'm always fine. The door won't work. It's not my fault. Oh. It was locked. My fault. The lock is so loud. I shouldn't complain. I have no right to. Because I'm fine. Tojo's sort of fuzzy. The hallway is bright. Hurts my eyes. She has a plate of food. Smells good. Makes me feel like throwing up. Didn't eat anything though. Not hungry. She sets it down in front of me. She keeps talking. I should listen. I can't though. Useless. She leaves. I eat as much of the food as I can without throwing up. That way she doesn't feel bad.

I leave the plate outside. I'd probably run into Idabashi if I went downstairs.
June 2nd. Monday.

I really didn't want to wake up. Of course, that would be selfish of me. I don't want to be selfish, do I? So I get up. Maybe no rings today. A necklace is simple enough. I brush my teeth, but not much else. I didn't shower yesterday. I'll do it after school. My bag is heavier than normal. It's fine. I'm fine. I don't want to go downstairs. There's a lot I don't want to do though. I do it anyway. Idabashi tries to talk to me. I don't deserve that. I'm fine though. I just sit next to Saihara today at the end of the counter. He looks concerned too. My fault. He doesn't say anything though. I ignore Idabashi until they sit down. It's... really for the best. Is it? Yea. It is. I miss them. I shouldn't.

I can feel people staring at me. I don't like it. My head hurts. I drink water. No Advil. Then people will know. No need for them to know. It's my problem. I'll be fine. I ignore Idabashi more. It hurts. It's fine though. I'm fine. Idabashi tries to talk to me again. Ignore it. It's fine. It's fine. See? They're gone... Just like her. No. Don't think about it. You're alright. Just get through the day and you'll be fine. Fine fine fine. Suddenly the word fine sounds sort of empty and useless. Like me... Okay. Not really funny. I make it through the day. I don't talk to Idabashi. I hate it. It'd be selfish to talk to them tough. After what I did.

I finish my homework. It's probably wrong. I can barely form a coherent thought. I finished it though. What am I doing? Feeling sorry for myself. I have a chance. At life. She doesn't. None of them do. It's my fault too. So why am I sulking? I stand up. I nearly fall. I don't though. I will do something. So I'm not selfish. I don't know why I'm so sluggish. My bad. It's always my bad. I'm tired. I want to sleep. I'm lethargic. There it is. Useless. I nearly get knocked over when the door opens. Saihara walks in with a plate of food. Strange. He doesn't seem like the type to just barge into places. He would at least knock.

"O—oh good! You're alright... I knocked on the door and you didn't answer," oh, "so I just came in... S—sorry about that."

I assure him it's fine. It is fine. The word still feels fake from overuse. It's still there though. I poke at my food. Saihara isn't leaving. I don't know why. He's looking at me. He's giving me that look. The one where he's trying to figure something out. In this case, it's me. For such a shy dude, he looks sort of intimidating. He catches me staring. He looks away and keeps thinking. I think he knows I'm not going to eat my food. Saihara walls over. He sits next to me on my bed. He looks me in the eye. That's when I know something's up. He doesn't like eye contact. Everyone knows that.

"Amami-kun," oh boy, "would you like to paint my nails?"

I... wasn't expecting that. Guess that's the ultimate detective for you. I agree. He talks about how Akamatsu told him about how enjoy painting nails. Is that why he asked me? He shouldn't waste his time with that. I'm fine. It'd be rude to wave him off though. Just in case. He lets me chose the color. Yep. This is more for me than it is for him. I don't say anything still. Just in case... I choose a dark blue color. He probably wouldn't like bright nails very much. Saihara mumbles a bit as I add the first coat. The room feels... relaxed. If he did this on purpose... I have a newfound respect for him.

For a moment, things feel fine, in the true sense of the word. I thank Saihara reflexively. I don't say why. He doesn't ask.

June 3rd. Tuesday.

Today I thought things would have improved. I can form a complete thought again without spacing out, which is a plus. Then Idabashi tries to talk to me again and I'm all over the place. I don't do
anything aside from brush them off, which definitely isn't the best thing I've done. They look upset when they walk away. I know it's my fault, but in the end, it's for the best, right? Yea. Things will work themselves out and Idabashi will be happy again. Only this time, I won't be there and I won't have any chance of ruining anything. Not again. Man, that sounds kind of negative on my part, doesn't it?

One of the things that help with this sort of thing is reading. It works at night most of the time when I wake up a bit earlier than I want, so why shouldn't it work here. I'm closer to my lab than I am to the dorms, so after Idabashi loosens track of me, I go there. The lab and it's large door... it's shelves full of old books... just like the—There are windows here though. There were no windows in the game... Well, that was random. The only book I can think of is this one about traveling through Europe. Idabashi and I originally planned on reading it together. Guess that's not happening anymore though, huh? I find it chilling around the corner. Hm. This isn't too bad. Heck, I feel fine enough to have a brief conversation with—

I hear footsteps and immediately bolt. I left the book behind.

School is over. I did all the homework the best I can, not because it occupied my brain or anything, so now I really wish I grabbed the book before. Well, it's my own fault. Just like a lot of other things. I settle for a different novel that I'd read way too many times, but still get a relative amount of enjoyment from... Enjoyment, huh? She can't feel that anymore. Why should I? Funny. This is turning into the Idabashi thing all over again. I put the book away and flop uselessly onto my bed. With nothing else to do, I just lay there. I'm forced to think about thinks I don't want to, but I guess that even things out even the slightest bit.

About an hour before dinner, I get another knock. It's sorta weird. Three days. Three knocks. Probably just because I've been sulking up here. I let the person in and this time it's Gonta. He doesn't have any food with him (good, I have no appetite right now) and instead has a book. The Europe book. He explains how he saw me looking at it earlier and since I left so fast, he felt bad. Way to go, Rantaro. Couldn't have just picked up the darn thing? I tell Gonta it's okay and he puts the book on my desk before leaving. I'm not sure if I want to read this book though, but eventually my boredom gave in and I almost instantly saw some changes in my mood.

The book reminds me of Idabashi, which makes me feel miserable yet comfortable. Perfect.

June 4th. Wednesday.

Strangely enough, Idabashi doesn't try talking to me today. Does that mean they finally realized that it's better that we didn't talk? That... sort of sucks. But hey, it's for the best. Just relax. No way that I don't have to worry about that, I stop throwing this pity party and smile at Saihara. Sort of random, yea, but I'm a smiley person. Smiling means you're doing just fine and I am doing just fine. I don't know what to do after attendance, so I sort of just wander the halls. I'm not a huge fan of my lab and I feel better doing something than doing nothing. I'm means I'm not wasting time just sitting around.

"Hey, degenerate!" I'm going to take a wild guess and say it's Chabashira, "what are you doing?!"

Yep, it's Chabashira. She runs up to me as I'm about to pass my lab. She's fast. She doesn't even break a sweat by the time she reaches me, which to be fair, didn't take very long. She looks frustrated, well, more than usual, so I probably did something that made her particularly upset. Guess I'm just a token of bad luck now, huh? I should probably answer her question though. She's talking about me avoiding Idabashi, I know that I haven't exactly been subtle about it. I'd rather not delve into the details about that though, so I play dumb. It'll probably just make her more upset. It's better than burdening her with silly stuff anyways.
“I’m pacing the halls,” I’m not lying when I say that, “Why, wanna join?”

“Of course not!” She doesn’t sound too mad, “why would I want to go walking around with a degenerate?!”

“Because you’ve been relatively chill around guys lately and you were looking for me anyway,” I might be pushing my luck her. I don’t even want her to join me. I’m not lonely or anything like that... “unless you came to get me somewhere else.”

Chabashira looks surprisingly thoughtful. No offense to her, “you know what? Fine! I’ll join you and your... weird... pacing!”

I wasn’t really expecting that, but okay. I don’t mind the company. She keeps asking me what’s been going on, which is irritating because things are okay, but I always get her off topic. I don’t think I’ve realized how much Chabashira talks, which I’m not opposed to, I’m just saying I never picked up on it. My bad for being ignorant. I should work on that a little more. Chabashira isn’t all that bad when she isn’t yelling all the time, so I didn’t realize how much time had passed.

“So you’re telling me that—“ you and Akamatsu have swooned over mannequins in the mall. That’s what I would’ve said if I didn’t get sidetracked by the sound of singing.

I stop walking and Chabashira does too. We’re next to the door to my lab and it is, in fact, people singing. I can tell that it’s Yonaga singing right away. She has a nice voice, actually and remember her getting a lot of praise that time we went to the karaoke bar. That’s not what I was paying attention to though. Idabashi was singing too. During the screening, we saw this one clip of them singing to Saihara and everyone had a good laugh out of it, but their voice, now that they’re human, is different. Idabashi definitely wasn’t as experienced with music as Akamatsu and Yonaga might, but I think their voice is sweet. They sound a little awkward and embarrassed, but in a nice way and... wait, no. Don’t think about them. You don’t deserve—!

Chabashira grabs me by the shoulders and guides me away from the door. I try to forget about the perfectly awkward voice behind it, but it doesn’t work.

June 5th. Thursday.

I thought things were going to be alright when Idabashi didn’t talk to me yesterday. Shouldn’t have gotten my hopes up. They’re positive and persistent to a fault because Idabashi tried talking to me again this morning. It was a sudden hello and I almost responded, but caught myself at the last second. They gave up pretty quickly after that though, so not too bad. Could be worse... much, much worse. I can’t ignore how upset they look as they walk away though. I did that. I feel bad, but then I remind myself what all of this for. I can’t have any of that. I can’t be overly selfish.

I stay in the classroom when lab time begins and read that Europe book from the other day. I sort of gave into my selfishness after this morning and wanted to be reminded of Idabashi. I finish it pretty quick though, so I think about bringing it back. What if Idabashi’s in there though? They were yesterday. I have no reason to believe they’re in there other than that, but I also have no reason not to believe their in there. I’m not really proud of myself when I end up dumping the responsibility onto Tojo because I was too selfish to just go and face the person I’ve been avoiding like the plague for up to thirty seconds.

After dinner, I find myself in my room again. I’ve been in here a lot more lately, but I guess that’s to be expected. I don’t have a good reason for it though. I should really be up and about. Who cares
if I run into Idabashi? Before I can get anywhere, I hear a knock on my door. Again? I’m not complaining, but all of this is sort of getting weird. I open the door and it’s Shinguuji. He greets me before handing me a bookmark with a note attached to it. He claimed that Tojo was busy with cleaning, so she had him return it to me instead. I thank him before closing the door. I feel guilty because it looked like he wanted to say something else, but it was too late to turn back.

I detach the note from the bookmark, which I realize is mine, and set it aside to read in a moment. I sit down in my desk chair before grabbing the note again. Written in slim, neat handwriting was:

Idabashi was the one who found this. They still wanted it to get back to you, even though your relationship has been strained as of late. Despite you not talking, they still care. I just figured you needed to know that. -Shinguuji Korekiyo

Idabashi still cares after everything? Why? I thought they’d be smart enough to forget me.

June 6th. Friday.

I need to get Idabashi away from me. I can’t indulge in being around them and I can’t have them being miserable because of the process. I need to take things further. I can’t really do much better/worse than complete silence though, can I? Maybe if they don’t see me as often, that’ll work. I can’t miss class though. I’m not in my lab during lab hours because that’s where Idabashi may be, so I’m in the clear there. I’ll just have lunch at the dorms today then. That won’t affect anything I don’t want it to affect. I don’t end up eating much though and spend around the first ten minutes staring at the ceiling of my room. I probably would’ve fallen asleep if it weren’t for the voice.

“Hey, Amami-kun,” I should really remember to lock my door, “there you are! Where have you been??”

I sit up just in time to see Akamatsu crouch down next to my bed. She looks a bit more worried than she does angry, but only by a little. She lets out a huff of air. Oh. She actually wants me to answer. I figured it’d be obvious to her that I was chilling in here, but apparently not. I tell her just that, but a bit more polite and calm sounding. I shouldn’t be rude to her anyway. Somehow, that made her angrier though. I know that because she slapped me across the face nearly right after I finished talking.

“Ow!” Curse Akamatsu and her surprising amount of upper body strength... “what was that for?”

“Oh god, sorry! I wasn’t expecting to hit so hard...” she realized she was apologizing and then almost instantly sat up in a humorous attempt to look professional, “that’s not what I meant by that. I’m asking where you’ve been for the past week! You’ve been distant and completely ignoring Keebo. We’re all worried sick!”

“All of you?” I ask. Shit.

“Yea, of course!” She says it like it’s obvious, but I’m still confused.

“Hm, my bad for worrying you,” yea, my bad, “sorry, I’ll try harder not to.”

“Good, but more importantly,” Akanatsu looks me in the eyes again in a chillingly motherly manner, “take care of yourself.”

I nod, but I think I’m lying.

This is affecting the others too. My fault...

June 7th. Saturday.
Iruma nearly breaks my door after breakfast. I’m not the type to exaggerate either. I actually saw splinters on the hinges and there might be a dent in my wall from when the door knob hit it. She insult me in her strange Iruma ways as she storms in to stand in front of me. I’m sitting at my desk, doing homework, so I almost have to look up to meet her eyes. She’s leaning down anyway though. Her face is beyond her normal irritated look though. She was pissed.

“What the fuck, Assmami?!” Ow, volume, “seriously, what the fuck?!”

“You’re gonna have to be more specific there,” I have no clue what’s happening right now.

“You fucking broke Keebs, what else did ya think, you fucking shitty ass, moldy bread looking moron?!” How did I break Idabashi?

“What does that even mean?” I ask, but I think I know the answer already.

“Why fuck else do I mean?!” Oh god, that made things worse, “they’ve been holed up in the library all the damn time, moping around like a fucking emo because your shitty ass abandoned them!”

“I didn’t abandon Idabashi,” Not exactly at least. I’m helping them out, really, but I don’t say that because that would lead to an uncomfortable conversation. Well, more uncomfortable than it already is.

“Bullshit. What else do you call suddenly ignoring the shit out of someone to the point they’re on the verge of a mental breakdown half the damn time?” She’s quieted down, but I ignore that part. Is that really what’s been happening? Good going, me. You made them miserable, just like everyone else.

“When you put it that way—“

“Oh save it, asshat! My golden brain doesn’t wanna waste any brain cells of motherfucking abandoners like you!” She’s halfway out the door when she turns around and mutters, “just get over yourself and talk to them, okay. For fucks sake dude...”

I’m an abandoner. It’s the best thing I can do for them though.

June 8th. Sunday.

After yesterday, I remind myself to lock my door before anyone could break in and yell at me, but Yonaga squirms inside before I can do it. She skips around my room for a minute, commenting on all the souvenirs I have in my shelves and asking a whole lot of questions that I don’t even know the answers to. She eventually stops and walks up to me. I’m still in the same spot as before, but that doesn’t last long. Yonaga grabs me by the arm and without warning, drags me around the dormitory to her own room. I don’t know what else to do other than let her push me out onto her veranda.

“Should I ask why we’re over here, or do I not want to know the answer?” I’m guessing it’s the latter, but hey, I’ll give her a chance to speak.

“Just listen! Listen loooouuuud and cleeeeeeaaaar! Atua says it’s starting soon!” Yonaga keeps on confusing me, but there’s no harm in playing along.

“What’s starting soon—“ a piano melody fills the air. Akamtsu’s playing from her veranda.

“Perfect! Do you know the song, Rantaro?” Yonaga asks me. She’s jumping around so much that
I’m shocked the veranda isn’t shaking.

“Yes, I do,” I like the song a lot, actually, but I don’t say that. It’s sort of just useless information about me.

“Weeeellll?? What are you waiting for?” What? “Sing! Sing your heart out, Rantaro!”

“I’m not really in a singing mood,” is this what she was doing with Idabashi the other day?

“What?! Nonsense! Come on, come on! Angie will even sing with you,” true to her word, Yonaga starts singing, so I have no choice but to sing with her.

It was strangely the most enjoyable moment of the two weeks. Just singing with Yonaga.

June 9th. Monday.

“You’re grieving,” way to be blunt, Momota. Can’t get too mad though, he doesn’t know everything.

“Makes you think that?” He’s right, but I’d rather not have that conversation right now when I’m in my own room.

“I just know the signs and stuff,” that’s suspicious, but the sooner this conversation is over, the better I guess, “just don’t keep sulking around and avoiding people, got it?”

“Okay,” I’m about to close the door on him, but he shoves his foot in the way. Okay, I’m guessing he has more to say then. It’s be strange if I didn’t let him talk, so I open the door again.

“Hold on!” Yes, I am holding on, “I have something for you.”

I wasn’t really wishing for any gifts and I tell Momota that. He doesn’t listen though and grabs something I can’t see from behind the wall. I’m still a little off put by the whole thing until he whips out a houseplant of all things. Now I’m just kind of confused as he hands me the small potted plant. I know he likes houseplant, which explains the proud look on his face, but this whole thing is strange, even by my standards. He gives me this look, so I think he wants me to say something. Oh wow, I can’t speak. Why am I like this? I’m finally able to talk normally and am about to thank Momota, but then he starts talking again.

“It’s Matilda!” Who the hell is Matilda? “She’s one of my plants and I’m letting you borrow her for the night!”

“Oh, thanks. I know you’re pretty attached to all your houseplants,” I pause before taking some sort of leap of faith, “especially Matilda.”

“Yea, I know,” okay, I was right, but Momota’s face looks serious all of a sudden. Not a look I’m used to seeing on him, “but Matilda was given to me by my cousin at a certain point in my life, so I figured that you’d outta have that sorta thing... anyway! Take care of her.”

There were a whole lot of red flags in that, but I don’t have time to say anything and end up standing in my room with an emotional support houseplant named Matilda. I was too caught up in my own head to say anything. It’s my fault if that dug up any bad memories for Momota. I sigh. The least I can do is... chill out with Matilda? The whole thing seems weird to me still, but if that’s what he wants, I have no reason to not do it, right? It’s better than moping around here doing what I want rather than something that would make another person happy.
So I sit with Matilda the houseplant and somehow, I feel peaceful, albeit confused.

June 10th. Tuesday.

Harukawa keeps glancing at me and Idabashi throughout the day. It’s sort of giving me the creeps. She doesn’t say anything either. Just staring. She’s obviously curious about something, but I don’t know what. I try not to let it bother me though and concentrate on my schoolwork. If I spent all of class thinking about random stuff, I might as well just skip. That would definitely make things easier, but I don’t think it’s worth missing lessons. So I do my best to ignore Harukawa staring into mine and Idabashi’s souls and the rest of the day remains relatively uneventful.

Harukawa sort of worries me actually. She saw me moping around in Haruka’s room during the sleepover and who knows what mom could’ve told her. She and Ouma hung around her a lot, which is nice. I haven’t seen mom that happy in a while, but she could’ve told the two of them a bunch of unnecessary stuff that will just make people worry. There really isn’t any need to worry over me though, which is what makes it such a problem. The way Harukawa is glaring at me tells me she knows something though, which means that there’s going to be some sort of inevitable encounter.

As I suspected, Harukawa does hunt me down eventually. She catches me on my way to seek solitude in my dorm after dinner and she doesn’t even greet me and just stands in front of my door, trying to look as casual as she can. Her eye twitches a bit and now I’m genuinely concerned that she’s going to punch me. Akamatsu slapped me and Harukawa is a lot more physical with her emotions. The whole thing just makes what actually happens even more absurd. Harukawa drops her gaze before mumbling out a few words that I couldn’t really hear very well from where I stood.

“Stop being stupid.”

I don’t think I can promise that. I say that and she rolls her eyes before walking away. She looks disappointed. Good job messing up again, Rantaro.

June 11th. Wednesday.

“Hey.”

Hoshi walks into my room right after I open the door. Interesting, but better than Iruma or Yonaga bursting in without warning again. I don’t think Hoshi’s ever been in my room, but he’s one of the only people who haven’t taken a moment to look at all the random souvenirs on my walls. I’m grateful for it because they don’t exactly hold any great memories to them anyway. Instead, he just goes to my desk chair and sits down on it, leaning back a bit. We sort of just stand there for a second, which is a little awkward. Then, Hoshi sort of looks me dead in the eye, which is less awkward and more terrifying, but I don’t say anything. He does though.

“You wanna talk about it?”

I don’t answer and we end up sitting in silence. I don’t even know what Hoshi was asking.

June 12th. Thursday.

Classes have been very quiet lately. I don’t know if it’s just me or not, but it’s almost like everyone is holding their breath like I used to as a kid when I had nothing better to do. I can’t help but wonder if this is my fault. No. Things started changing with me about two weeks ago, so it probably isn’t. It isn’t really fair of me to automatically assume things are all about me, is it? Besides, it’s Idabashi people should be worried about. They almost miss the bell and look like
death came knocking on their—no, don’t get that thought in your head! Jeez, how stupid am I? It’s almost laughable, really.

I sit around in the classroom during lab time. I’m not alone though. Yumeno is here. She looks upset. Her eyes are narrowed and she’s looking down at her desk. She looks more annoyed than upset, actually, but hey. If the boot fits. I didn’t use that right, did I? My bad. What am I doing? I’m just sitting here uselessly as something is bugging Yumeno. See, this is why things turn out the way they do. I get caught up in my thoughts, I don’t give every second to the things that really matter, I selfishly go with what I think is right. This is why everything is messed up. I know it’s my fault that she’s—

“Hey, are you alright?” I ask Yumeno, sitting backwards in the chair in front of her.

Yumeno looks up at me. I can see that her eyes aren’t narrowed anymore now that they aren’t covered by the brim of her hat. I don’t think she knew I was here. Sure, I was sitting barely five meters away, but I can’t say I’m that surprised given how concentrated she was. It takes another minute for her to process my words by the looks of things. I wait for her though. There’s no use in rushing things. I have plenty of time... now that all my efforts have no purpose... and everything is—

“Do you ever... uh...” Yumeno looks out the window, “have you ever said... or done something that you thought you made up for, but it really didn’t help much?”

What is she talking about? Probably something from the simulator or what happened earlier this month, “Yea, I have.” We all have, so there’s no harm in admitting it.

“Do you see what it did to other people... and regret it?” She looks like she’s about to cry.

I flash her a smile. It’s the best I can do, “every day,” I tell her, “every day.”

June 13th. Friday.

Shirogane knocked on my door at nearly three in the morning. Today was a little random and I was awake, so it was no biggie. When I opened the door though, what I saw was... concerning. Shirogane had definitely been crying. Her eyes were all red and so was her face. She was dressed in her pajamas and her hair was messier than normal, so she was probably trying to sleep. Was it a nightmare? Yea, probably. I look at her face again and she looks distressed. A bad nightmare then.

Shorthand pushed past me and into my dorm, which was surprising. Was it really a nightmare? Then again, I was never told it was a nightmares to begin with. My bad for assuming things. Shirogane looks at me for a moment.

“I—I have a question!” She yells if, which is odd, but I don’t comment on it, “oh sorry, that was loud.”

“It’s all good. Ask away,” she couldn’t ask anything too crazy, right? Clearly, I was ignorant to the fact that it was three in the morning. Shirogane was crying and was being kept awake by this very question.

“Are you in love with Idabashi?” Woah there, that’s... that’s sudden.

I... hm. That’s not an easy one to get around. Shirogane’s looking at me. She wanted my answer. I had the answer. I’ve had it for a while. I’m not supposed to talk to Idabashi anymore though. They make me so happy and warm. Things that she... that Haruka will never have. All because of my own ignorance. I don’t deserve that warm feeling... Shirogane quickly apologizes for asking, but I
barely hear it. I hate that I have this warm feeling. That I indulged in it for so long even as I learned more and more that I’m not fit to be close to people without fucking it up! That being close to me is a curse! Shirogane leaves before I can give her an answer.

Yes, I love Idabashi Keebo. That’s what makes this so fucking difficult.

June 14th. Saturday.

...

I sleep all day. It doesn't matter anymore. Nobody comes to see me.

.
June 15th?? Sunday...

???
?
...

No. I'm not doing this. Amami and Keebs can work it out eventually.

*No. Just... let yourself do this. Please.*

...

Well, because I'm being so insistent, I guess I have no choice.

*Yay! One point for me, the useless bastard himself!*  
*It's been a while since I've done what I really wanted.*

Not like this will ruin my plans anyway.

Not like seeing them sad is upsetting me.

Whatever, let's get this over with!
Day Fifteen

Chapter Summary

Woot woot.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

TW: Suicide (not any of the main cast.) Don't hurt yourselves guys.

June 15th. Sunday.

Rantaro didn't know what to think anymore. He didn't know what to feel, what to say and what to know. He stood out on his veranda now. Sleep felt like a monstrous demon that tore away and his frail and troubled mind as it screamed out his wrongdoings, cutting him down to nothing. That option scratched off the dwindling list of things to use the dead hours of night where the only thing alive were the streetlights, Rantaro did what he'd normally do. Get some fresh air. However, it was like finding a song you like. You play it and play it and play it until one day, it's just noise. Rantaro didn't have the energy to move again though, so he settled for the lukewarm feeling of being outdoors and very much awake.

This false feeling of calamity was shattered as if it were nothing by a dull thud of metal. Alarmed, Rantaro turned to face the source of the noise, which echoed throughout his mind that he had worked so hard to clear. It was Kokichi. Checkered and purple and very much there as he regaining his footing on Rantaro's veranda. It was beyond him how he hadn't noticed the supreme leader beforehand, but deep down he knew he was far too lost in the loud, harsh truths he chanted in his head. Chants that condemned him for crimes he didn't do. Chants that belittled his very being. Chants that claimed the world was better without him. Kokichi paid no mind to that though as he fell into his typical string of theatrics and lies.

"Amami-chan, is that you?! I didn't think you'd be here!" Kokichi yelped dramatically, walking up the subject in question with a tilt of his head, "that's a lie though. Of course Amami-chan would be here! It's his dorm after all!"

"Yea, well I'm going to head to sleep in a moment," Rantaro lied. He was in no mood for sleeping, but in even less of a mood for talking, "you can just tell me what you need real quick and then go."

"Hm? Who said I wanted anything?" Kokichi mused, feigning innocence, "I just came to kill Amami-chan and go! Come on, don't you even know me at all?"

"Oh no," Rantaro deadpanned, "I cant believe this betrayal.... Alright, I'm heading to bed now. Goodnight—"

"Wait!" Kokichi suddenly cried out in a completely different tone that screamed desperation and fear, but it was gone in an instant, "come on, Amami-chan, don't be like that! I didn't even get to go all stabby stabby on you... I can't believe you would do such a thing!"

"Fine," Rantaro sighed, "do I have any time to get my affairs in order?"
"Pfft—As if! I'm on a really tight schedule here!" Kokichi explained, rolling his eyes, "I'm like a murderous Santa. I have to go murder Hoshi-chan in like, twenty seconds!"

"I see," Rantaro huffed, "well, goodbye world.

Kokichi burst out laughing, "did you really think I'd kill you outside where anyone can become a witness?!" He cackled, "what do you take me for, an amateur?! Jeez, just go inside, your idiocy is almost as bad as Momota-chan's."

Rantaro, who was too confused and too tired to know any better, complied and opened his door for Kokichi. Rantaro followed the smaller boy in as he immediately took a seat backwards in the adventurer's desk chair, spinning around in it so fast that Rantaro felt sick from watching. He chuckled in amusement nonetheless and sat down on his bed, waiting for the chair to stop spinning so he could see what Kokichi really meant when he said he'd murder him. Then, suddenly, the chair stopped all at once. Kokichi wheeled it foreword in one fluid moment. It took a moment for Rantaro to realize that he had messed up. Kokichi's face was blank as he stared down the green haired boy for a moment.

"I just walked into something terrible, haven't I?" Rantaro laughed a bit to cover up how nervous he was.

"Hey! Weren't you the one who let me into your room to murder you?! Hm, Amami-chan," Kokichi smirked, but it didn't have the same playfulness as before, "besides, technically this is a murder of your privacy! You wanna know why, Amami-chan?"

No, he didn't want to know why, "Why?" Rantaro asked anyway though.

"Because I'm not leaving until you tell me what's wrong," Kokichi's face was serious again for a moment before reverting back to the same childish tone he was known for, "silly Amami-chan is like, really bad at lying. You've been spewing out all this crap about being fine and it's getting boring, so I've decided to take matters into my own, nurturing, amazing hands!"

Rantaro pinched the bridge of his nose, "what are you expecting me to say?" He replied, "I'm fine."

"There you go again with the lying!" Kokichi exclaimed, "only one of us is supposed to be a no good liar and that one of us is me! So come on, out with it, Amami-chan!"

"It's nothing. Just drop it," Rantaro glared at Kokichi, getting a little upset himself, "even if I am lying like you say, how do you know it isn't just a white lie. One of the harmless ones you always talk about. They don't hurt anyone, so they're perfectly fine by your standard."

"You think your lies are good, Amami-chan?" Kokichi narrowed his eyes a bit, "wow, you're stupider than I thought."

"What the hell are you talking about?" Rantaro mumbled angrily, eyes darkening as he stared at Kokichi.

Kokichi was silent for a moment, looking like he was thinking a lot about his next words. Wheeling even closer to Amami to the point the chair was nearly touching his bed before leaning foreword... "Amami-chan, your lies sting like a bitch," the words were spoken carelessly, but quietly in a way that chilled Rantaro to the core. The fact that Kokichi of all people was the one who delivered this chill was an enigmatic feeling on its own.

"No, they don't. It's for the best anyway—" Rantaro glared harder at Kokichi, hoping that by
some miracle, he would just phase the boy and he'd go away.

"What the fuck does that even mean?!" Kokichi cried, anger taking over for a second, but he quickly composed himself, "that's obviously stupid, so would you care to explain why? Well, Amami-chan?"

"Because I'm not a good enough person for these people!" Rantaro hissed, still pinching the bridge of his nose as he tried to look anywhere at Kokichi.

"You... ha?!" Kokichi choked, leaning away from Rantaro's face. He worried for a moment that had bitten off more than he could chew here.

"Whoops, my bad," Rantaro chuckled, immediately backpedaling from his outburst, "it's nothing you need to worry about."

"Amami," Kokichi's voice was so steady that it seemed to shock him as well, "why do you think you're not good enough for our class?"

"I mean it. It's nothing," Rantaro spat, sitting up and averting his eyes, "just go back to your dorm, okay? You need to sleep."

"Nope! Can't sleep!" Kokichi sang, but it lacked its usual gusto, "also, didn't I say I wasn't going to leave until you spill the beans, Amami-chan? As a supreme leader of evil, I don't go back on my promises."

"Well, you're not going to get any answers, so I'll save you some time and ask you to leave," Rantaro tried to sound as carefree as possible as he laid down in his bed, "see you tomorrow."

"No no! Nuh-uh! No way Jose! I'm not gonna just let you slip out from between my fingers like some kind of snake toy!" Kokichi declared, "now spill!"

"I'm not telling you shit, Ouma, end of story," Rantaro seethed, irritated by his classmates persistence.

"No! You will tell me whether you like it or not!" Kokichi retorted, "can't you get it through your thick fucking skull that you're making everyone else miserable too?"

"It's for the best tho—"

"I don't give two shits what you think is for the best right now. All I know is that whatever the hell you think is helping everyone, is actually making things worse," Kokichi growled angrily, his desire to stop this growing stronger than his desire to keep on his mask, "Keebs starts crying out of nowhere and has had multiple breakdowns these past couple of weeks! Saihara's stress levels are through the roof and he hasn't properly slept in forever. Yumeno keeps looking guilty for no reason whatsoever! I could go on, but hopefully I don't have to and I've actually gotten something through that thick skull of yours... Oh wow, that's a lot of truth. I think I'm going to be sick."

Rantaro didn't say anything in response he looked around desperately for any form of escape from this situation, but there was none. All there was was him, his room, and Kokichi staring him down. Rantaro wasn't angry anymore. He didn't know what he was. His hands shook as everything he had done was laid out in front of him to gnaw away at him and strengthening the shackles of guilt that pulled him down further and further into an ocean of sadness and anguish. Everything was heavy as the words echoed through Rantaro's head. He thinks about how much she's made Keebo cry. The shackles strengthen and strengthen and Rantaro falls fast and faster until Rantaro can't stop it and —
"I..." despite having spoken only seconds ago, Rantaro's voice was raspy and he had to clear his throat, "I have twelve sisters. They're younger than me and they're all step sisters, but there's twelve of them. Well, there was twelve..."

Kokichi knew the situation was out of his grasp and he contemplated leaving right then and there before he said or did something that he might regret. He didn't though. He was too invested in what the taller boy had to say. He was too hopelessly worried about what had broken such a level headed person down to nothing. So, Kokichi took a moment to pretend like the rest of the world didn't exist. The rest of his millions of worries were gone for a moment and he just listened. He listened to the woes of Amami Rantaro because he felt he had to. His classmate and unspoken title of his friend was pouring out his troubles to Kokichi and he was going to listen, even if he regretted it ten times over in the morning.

"I was... a shitty older brother. I wasn't always there for them and I overwhelmed my mom when I had to take more time doing homework. Then, one day... I lost one of them on a boat trip. Her name was Haruka. I wanted to find her, so I went on some more trips and some more boats, but you know what happened, I lost every single one of my sisters. Can you imagine that? Jeez, I felt useless, which well, wasn't really off," Rantaro chuckled weakly, obviously uncomfortable, "then, I get the news that all my sisters are found dead... except for Haruka. This was about a month before the KGS. I had the memory of them being dead removed in there as a pathetic way to cope because I knew it was my fault."

Kokichi hummed in acknowledgment. He worried that if he spoke, he'd ruin the present with a lie or ruin forever with the truth.

"Yea, so Haruka was still alive when we got out of the KGS, so I started to do some research on where she could be. I remembered the place that I lost her, so I figured I'd start there. I had to think of a specific location though, so it took a while... I finally got a lead the day before we started those group projects. I remembered this spot. It had flowers and lots of greenery. Haruka always liked those things. I knew the city so I booked the flight before Sensei announced the project. After that, for some stupid reason, I cancelled the flight. Then... the day we actually did the project... I... I got a phone call. Uh, it... it said." Rantaro's voice wobbled and he took a deep breath.

"The police found her dead in that exact spot. She would've lived if I took the flight."

"Holy shit," Kokichi breathed, but Rantaro didn't hear that part, "that was like a month ago though, why are you only acting like this now?"

Rantaro was quiet for a moment, "well, I... I got another phone call. It was just last Friday from my mom," Rantaro's voice was getting higher as he grew more and more hesitant, "she said the doctors and police and stuff... they um... they figured out what killed her. Turns out... she killed herself."

Kokichi tried to keep a steady gaze as Rantaro rested his forehead in the palm of his hand, glaring at the ground and very obviously hold back tears.

"She was only seven, Ouma, seven..." Rantaro choked, but he didn't cry, "I drove my seven year old sister to suicide... b—because I was too fucking useless to save her. I killed all my sisters, r—really... I shouldn't have lost them to begin with... B—but now that I had all the clues this time and just stood by, it hurts... so... so much worse. So, I figured... hey, wh—what if this is what happens when I get close to people? I just... ruin their lives with my own selfishness..."

"That's why you avoided Keebs..." Kokichi trailed off, trying to look as uninterested as possible.
"Uh... sort of," Rantaro grimaced, "Idabashi is someone who makes me very... happy. Guess what though? I just indulged in that happiness when my sister was suffering. Why am I the one who gets to feel that?! She has nothing anymore! So—so I decided that I wouldn't talk to them and we'd just... drift apart, you know? Besides, they'd probably hate me if they knew what happened..."

Kokichi grimaced for a second as Rantaro leaned against his wall, running a hand through his hair and letting out a shaky breath.

"If... if this is all you came for, can you leave now?" Rantaro asked, "I just need a moment."

Kokichi was at a loss for words. He stared at his friend for a moment before pressing his lips into a thin line. He didn't know if he could do anything else in that moment. Sighing, Kokichi left without a word. The moment he did though, Rantaro looked down. He was never the type to cry. He was the type of person you'd go to to cry or go to to stop yourself from doing something that would make you cry. In that moment though, the shackles of guilt had just dragged him so far and he was so tired. So, Rantaro just sat there as tears streamed down his face. He didn't sob though. Just tears as he sat alone in his room, his sorrows now out in the open and large enough to suffocate him.

Kokichi paced back and forth in the second floor hallway, awaiting a certain white haired roboticist to open their door. Most of the time, the chances of Keebo being awake at such an ungodly hour was highly unlikely, but given how things have been going, the idea no longer seemed too fetched. There was no turning back now. Kokichi had already written a note. Kokichi has already slipped it under Keebo's door. Keebo had probably already read it. Standing in the middle of the hallway wasn't doing him any good though, so Kokichi hid behind a large houseplant that Kaito randomly bought one day. For once the supreme leader was somewhat thankful for Kaito and his irritating habits.

About five minutes had passed and Kokichi was beginning to get impatient. Would the note even work? No. It would. Kokichi had forged Rantaro's handwriting, requesting that Keebo went to talk to him in his dorm. The note said specifically not to knock, so Kokichi was fairly certain that there would be little to no room for error. Of course, he failed to anticipate the possibility that Keebo would be asleep or just ignore the note altogether. However, just as Kokichi was about to move from his spot, Keebo made an appearance. They looked exhausted, but determined as they slipped away without a word. Sighing in relief, Kokichi stood up from behind the potted plant.

Kokichi wandered around the second floor for a moment, picking rags that covered the lenses of the security cameras. Even with a completely unrelated objective, Kokichi couldn't bring himself to do much without the sense of security he got from knowing nobody was watching. As soon as he heard the door click from the floor above, Kokichi wandered up there and imitated his same actions from before, removing the washcloths from the cameras that he had covered to erasing his deeds. Dusting off his hands, Kokichi put the rags back in the kitchen. On his way back to his room he spared a glance at the door next to his. Rantaro's. For a second, Kokichi's heart ached with the idea that someone would help him. He shook the thought away though.

Ouma Kokichi doesn't wish for the impossible. He isn't Momota-chan.

Normally, when a door opens in the movies, it creaks. The creak is all you can hear over the silence as the protagonist is face with yet another challenge. Keebo thinks it's to build up suspense for what happens next. The creak always sets up some sort of atmosphere. However, when Keebo
opened Rantaro's door, there was no creak. There was nothing to prepare them for what was yet to come. Nothing to prepare them for the heartbreaking sight that would greet them on the other side of that very door. Keebo nearly gasped at the sight. They probably would've if the whole situation didn't feel so surreal. If they didn't think that they'd wake up any second to Rantaro ignoring them again.

Rantaro was crying, eyebrows knitted together as he stared harshly at his lap. Keebo's eyes widened in mixture of fear and concern at the absurd sight. Keebo had never seen their friend so defeated. No one has seen Rantaro this defeated. Keebo felt their heart break a little at the sight, but for a while they just stood there, frozen in place by worry. This would be their first proper interaction in over a week. Keebo wasn't expecting it to go like this. Keebo didn't know what they were expecting to begin with. Too caught up in their own thoughts, Keebo didn't even realize the note was, in fact, a fake and they had walked in on something that they—that no one—was ever meant to see.

"Amami-kun?" Keebo breathed after a period of silence that had lasted far too long for their liking.

Rantaro looked up and his breath hitched as Keebo wordlessly closed the door. The adventurer wiped away his tears as Keebo cautiously approached him. He had nowhere to run. He couldn't just not say anything anymore and hope for the best. He couldn't retreat to his room and sleep his feelings away. No. This was the inevitable karma of Rantaro's actions and he hated how much it hurt. The happiness that came from Keebo being there, followed by the guilt for feeling said happiness twisted viciously through Rantaro's very being. Rantaro had no time to think before Keebo sits down on his bed a respectable distance away. Rantaro knee he had to backtrack. He knew he had to escape this.

"I—it's nothing," Rantaro cursed himself for stuttering, "I just watched the third movie with toys and all that."

Rantaro brought his forearm to his face, covering his eyes as he used his free hand to dismissively wave Keebo away. The roboticist wasn't having it though. They had spent two weeks with their best friend (sorry, Iruma-san!) ignoring them with no explanation. They had spent two weeks with the person they'd come to love acting like they didn't exist. The thought sent anger surging through Keebo's head, but they ignored it in favor of speaking. They knew Rantaro didn't do things without reason and while it pained Keebo that there was a reason Rantaro didn't want to be around them, they had to think rationally.

"Toy Story 3," Keebo corrected, clearly not reading the move, "but that's not the point. Why were you crying?"

"I already told you. Toy Story 3 is one hell of a tearjerker," Rantaro chuckles, but his heart wasn't in it.

"There's nothing in here that you could've watched it on other than your phone, which is on your desk," Keebo deducted, "please don't lie to me. I hate seeing you upset like this..."

Keebo's words made Rantaro remember his and Kokichi's conversation earlier. About how Rantaro's lies hurt people. About how Keebo had broken down crying. Ignoring the feeling that the supreme leader was the one behind Keebo's sudden appearance, Rantaro let out a sigh. Taking a lot less time than he did with Kokichi, Rantaro explained what happened to him. To his sisters. To Haruka. Rantaro couldn't bring himself to mention his guilt towards the whole thing and why they avoided Keebo though. The self loathing feelings that would come from it was too horrible. By the end, Rantaro's tears had subsided and he looked up at Keebo. He wasn't surprised by the confused
expression the other had.

"That's awful..." Keebo started the obvious, "but you only started being distant after the second phone call... why didn't you tell me?"

Rantaro was almost ashamed to say what he did next, "I thought you'd hate me," it sounded so ridiculous now that Keebo was right there.

"Wh—what?!" Keebo cried, "I could never hate you!"

"Hm... thanks," Rantaro murmured, "I guess it's just difficult to understand why you wouldn't hate me."

"What... what do you mean?" Keebo spoke nervously, afraid of the answer that might follow.

"You do know what happened, right?" Rantaro asked, hoping they did so he wouldn't have to explain. He grimaced when he was met with silence, "I drove my own sister to suicide, Idabshi... I was too late and she just... she just lost hope."

"You speak as if not being able to predict the future makes you a bad person," Keebo replied, staring solemnly at their friend.

"That's not the problem, Idabashi," Rantaro sighed, "the problem is that I was too selfish to get things done sooner."

"That's wrong!" Keebo exclaimed, "don't think for one second that you're selfish, okay?"

Rantaro didn't reply. Tears were beginning to gather in his eyes again.

"You're one of the most selfless people I know," Keebo whispered, "you spend so much time looking out for other people that you forget about yourself. It's foolish, but I can't say I hate that about you..."

Rantaro chuckled, "thanks, you can go back to your dorm..."

"... You don't believe me," Keebo accused.

"..."

"Why are you trying to push me away again?!" Keebo cried.

"You're better off without me..." Rantaro admitted.

"I'm what?!"

"You're such a nice person to be around... do you really think I can compare to that," Rantaro's voice cracked and he began to cry again.

"O—of course you can..." Keebo begins to cry as well.

"No. I can't," Rantaro's voice is stern, but shaky as he grabs a fistful of his hair.

"No, you can!" Keebo's heart wrenches.

"Idabashi, have you even looked at yourself?!" Rantaro's expression pained and broken and tormented, but he keeps going, "you just have this ability to... m—make everyone's day better just
by talking... You've got so much curiosity for everything... Y—you're always so kind."

"So do you!" Keebo sobbed, curling in on themselves a bit from all the pain and sadness that flooded down their face.

"No, I don't," Rantaro looked down painfully, hand still raking through his hair, "I'm a selfish son of a bitch whose entire existence is just a... fucking inconvenience, Idabashi! I don't understand why you won't... j—just hate me! Just go to your dorm, o—okay. Go to sleep... forgot about me. I—I don't deserve to be around someone... like you. You're t—too good for m—"

In that moment, Idabashi Keebo had an epiphany. Amami Rantaro didn't think Keebo would hate him... Amami Rantaro wanted Keebo to hate him because Amami Rantaro thought he deserved that. Nobody hated Amami Rantaro other than Amami Rantaro himself. Keebo's heart broke at that. Rantaro continued to belittle himself for his wrongdoings. He continued to call himself useless. Call himself an idiot. Call himself pathetic. Keebo shook with sobs. They just wanted Rantaro to feel loved. They wanted Rantaro to feel happy. Keebo had another epiphany. They loved Rantaro. Rantaro said Keebo made people happy. For once, Keebo took the compliment. It was their last hope.

Idabashi Keebo kissed Amami Rantaro.

The entire thing was sloppy. Both people were sobbing messes and Rantaro was still hysterically degrading himself. Keebo tried not to think about it though. They threw all their love for the boy into their gesture. Every hour spent in the library as they discovered their feelings. Every awkward silence from the early parts of their friendship. Every tear they shed whenever they broke down crying. Every reassuring remark they could muster. Everything went into that kiss. Keebo didn't care if they came back with nothing. They wanted to give Amami Rantaro the world. Keebo didn't realize just how much it hurt. They didn't care. They just wanted Rantaro to feel loved. They tried to ignore their heart breaking when Rantaro quickly pulled away.

"I'm sorry!" Keebo sobbed before Rantaro could speak, "I—I just wanted you to know someone loved you... a—and it's alright if you don't love yourself... Y—you don't even h—have to like yourself ei—either... I—I just... I don't want to be the reason you hate yourself!"

Keebo broke down. Rantaro was stunned, staring down as the person they love cried their heart out. Lip wobbling, Rantaro pulled them into a tight hug that felt so firm, yet so frail. They sat there for a while, sobbing as Keebo shakily return the hug. Rantaro trembled slightly as he pressed a small kiss to the top of Keebo's head.

“I—I love you... s—so much...” Keebo choked.

Rantaro cried harder, “I... I love you too, Idabashi.”

Keebo laughed weakly, “call me Keebo. Everyone else does...”

Rantaro smiled, “okay... call me Rantaro then.”

Keebo yawned, “okay...”

With that, the pair fell into their first peaceful slumber in what felt like forever. Their hearts were still broken and their faces were still stained with tears, but they were together. That’s how they knew things would be okay. Because Idabashi Keebo and Amami Rantaro lived life near each other. Sometimes things go wrong, but they’re still more than content with that.

"Ultimate Nightmare Fuel," June 15th, 22:34
ThingWhite: Hello everyone.

Mother: There you are. I have been unable to locate you all day. You missed dinner.

MakironiAndCheese: Where were you (it's Maki. Kokichi changed my name.)

ThingWhite: I'll get something to eat. I've been with Rantaro all day.

NormieHecc: YOU HAVE??!!??!????!!!!???

NormieHecc: FIRST NAME TOO???

ThingWhite: Yes, why?

ThingPurple: Oh? Did you two finally kiss and make up? That's a twist I didn't see coming!

ThingWhite: Yes!

ThingPurple: Wait a miNUTE—

MakironiAndCheese: Did you two...???

Mother: This was unexpected...

NormieHecc: DID YOU TWO KISS??!!

ThingWhite: Yep!

ThingGreen: Ye

MakironiAndCheese: How are you still lurking when Keebo is literally right there?

Kork: So you two ignored one another for weeks, made up, and now you're dating?

ThingPurple: Woah! Another lurker! Shinguuji-chan edition!!!

ThingWhite: Yes, that's sort of how it went.

Kork:

Kork: This is exactly why humanity is hideous.

ThingGreen:

ThingPurple:

ThingWhite:

NormieHecc:

Mother:
MakironiAndCheese:

Kork:

Kork: Oh fiddlesticks.

Kork deleted 4 messages

Kork is offline

BuzzLightyearIsBae is online

BuzzLightyearIsBae: fuCk gOTta BLasT

Chapter End Notes

Yea, so Kork’s backstory is next... It’s going to be pretty messed up, just a warning. I’ll have trigger warnings at the beginning of the chapter, but still. Watch out. Thanks for reading lovelies.
Shinguuji Korekiyo learns a lesson.

See the end of the chapter for notes.

TW: Emotional manipulation, child abuse, sexual abuse, verbal abuse, psychological abuse, psychical abuse, implied/referenced self harm, bloody stuff, not exactly gore, but it's pretty bloody, suicide, suicidal ideation, psychological torture, severe bullying, homophobia (f**got is used multiple times,) panic attacks, a very morbid outlook on life, and extreme self deprecation.

Before an object can move another object, it has to build up force. However, if the force grows too strong, one or both objects could break.

Korekiyo sat on a bed of grass. Not the real Korekiyo. The real Korekiyo was sitting on a bench as he stared in shock at what he had just broadcasted to his classmates. The Korekiyo here is the Korekiyo in his head that ran through his thoughts. This Korekiyo looked much younger. Wider eyes that were glittered with wonder, not spite. Healthier, but much shorter. This Korekiyo was only three years old when the world that lived in his mind thrived with his faith in humanity.

This Korekiyo was only three years old when it all went to hell.

Weak and naive, Korekiyo had let someone into the world of his thoughts. Miyadera, otherwise known as sister. She helped the faith that brought his mind forward grow and grow, so Korekiyo didn't see the harm. He didn't know what fertilizer looked like, so he never recognized the weeds that hid behind the promises of growth and health. Before he knew it, Miyadera had planted herself into Korekiyo's mind, gaining control of his faith and happiness. But Korekiyo didn't know. So he kept watering the nasty weed that had embedded itself in his brain.

In the garden, there was fence that went higher than the eye could see. It was more of a wall than anything, with it's slick metal lining. Behind it lay Korekiyo's words. Korekiyo's actions. The garden was never meant to go beyond the wall. Not the garden of faith. That was something that people kept to themselves to keep their happiness and trust intact. Other gardens nearby were the ones meant to be vocalized. Necessities. Whims. Common sense. Never faith in humanity. That was only allowed if the actions and words behind the wall opened the gate and welcomed it.

But alas, Miyadera had other plans. Her roots leached at Korekiyo's thoughts, leaving only her ideas to live. Only then did Korekiyo realize that his faith and happiness was crumbling, leaving him with something that wasn't even his own. He began to try and remove the weed he had been watering for four years, but it was too powerful now. It fought back with force that Korekiyo couldn't handle. He was spending so much time growing the weed that he couldn't grow himself. The force was so overwhelming that it crushed the gates. Knocking them to the ground and leaving Miyadera to freely access his actions and his words. She spread her roots to the gardens of his whims. Of his common sense. Of his necessities. This Korekiyo was seven. This Korekiyo was
barely even Korekiyo anymore.

When Korekiyo was at school, he didn't have time to tend to the weed that was wedged in his mind. However, at school, the sun never shone bright enough to move his garden there. The other kids were cold and would stomp on his plants because they took up too much room in their minds when Korekiyo so much as talked about them. Korekiyo had a larger garden for that than most people because of the toxic fertilizer that Miyadera had used to grow it.

For years Korekiyo sat there with just him and Miyadera, fighting the monstrous weed he had nurtured as it bit back ten times harder. With words of criticism so harsh that Korekiyo didn't want to be Korekiyo anymore. Words that made him want to change to be more like Miyadera rather than himself. She told him everything he mustn't do. He mustn't stutter. He mustn't raise his voice so high when he got excited. He mustn't disagree. He mustn't run away. He mustn't resist.

Other times, it was physical attacks. Slaps. Kicks. She'd force her lipstick into the boy and force him to wear it to school. If he came home without it, the result would make his head go numb for days as she screamed his flaws to the world. School grew colder as the other kids taunted him for his ever growing hair and red lips. It only got worse when word got out about his sexuality. The word fag was thrown at him and the garden in his mind grew darker. The school contacted Miyadera. Korekiyo still has the scar on his arm and words screaming through his head. Faggot. Disgrace. Wimp. Korekiyo was forced to agree because Korekiyo knew he mustn't disagree.

When Korekiyo was twelve, Miyadera started to touch him. The feeling sickened Korekiyo, but he knew that defying would make things worse. He gave up on trying to pull out the weed rooted in his head. Korekiyo was no longer Korekiyo. He wasn't even Miyadera. Korekiyo was nobody. Stuck at the mercy of the monster that's controlled him like a rag doll. The grass underneath Korekiyo's limp body shriveled and he was getting ready to destroy the weed by killing the very thing it leeches off of. Himself. His head ran with ideals of death, but his mind could never form a solid enough thought before being stolen away by the weed. There was no human left to kill inside of Korekiyo. All that remained was the broken shell of a person and a weed.

When Korekiyo was thirteen, Miyadera was arrested for sexual abuse.

Korekiyo was moved to his aunt and uncle's house, which probably should've been done when Korekiyo's parents had died. It didn't take long for him to hear that Miyadera had taken her own life before her sentence could begin. Korekiyo remembered the stirring in his head at the sight of her body. She had driven a knife into her gut up to the handle. It looked like it had been twisted as blood gushed from the wound even though her face was cold with death. Korekiyo hated the way he thought her death was good. Death was never good. On her wrist, she had carved a final message into her own flesh. A farewell to Korekiyo written in pain. Even if the words were engraved in her arm, they tore into Korekiyo’s mind sharper than a knife.

In her will, Miyadera left him her lipstick. Driven by terror, Korekiyo could never bring himself to destroy it. The weed was still stuck in his head, but it didn't fight back when he approached it anymore. Korekiyo wasn't trying to remove it though. He had already given up. A kid from his school lived in his neighborhood and heard about Miyadera's arrest. The words got twisted though and all that remained was the fact that Korekiyo was a monster. Korekiyo didn't deny their words. His mind was all gone except for the dying weed of Miyadera, so what could he do? He had no self anymore. He sat there and took it as people called him names. Terrible. Monster. Faggot. Korekiyo believed it too.

It took a year for the Korekiyo in Korekiyo's mind to finally start moving again. His frail hands tried to remove the weed, but it was still too strong for someone so weak. It was around this time
that he was notified of his acceptance into Hope's Peak. He felt nothing though. The talent came
from Miyadera. She always told him about humanity and just how beautiful it made things.
Korekiyo never understood it. Humanity was flawed and according to the weed in Korekiyo's
brain, all of his flaws are what made him ugly. They're what made him need fixing. So why was it
that humanity was so beautiful?

Korekiyo didn't have time to dwell on the question. He had to finish his final year of middle
school three months early because of the KGS. He started wearing his mask. That way, Mayadera's
hands could never reach him with her lipstick. The teacher never questioned it and went on with
their lessons. Korekiyo didn't pay attention to the wreckage in the rest of his minds. He paid
attention to his studies.

Before he entered the KGS, Korekiyo altered his memories. He removed every trace of
Mayadera's abuse. All the yelling. All the criticism. All the punching and kicking. All the touching.
Of course, he failed to remove the weed in his mind and how it was the only whole thing that
remained in the hurricane that swam through Korekiyo's head. The singularity of the figure was
mistaken for obsession and obsession was mistaken for infatuation. Korekiyo woke up feeling
lower than he ever had in his life. He had been forced to embrace the very thing that had ruined
him in that damned simulator. Only then did Korekiyo finally get back to thinking clearly.

Korekiyo cut hair after that. He wanted to erase the traces of Miyadera that had haunted him for
so long. He could never remove his mask though. He tried, but the feeling only made him think of
the numb hours he had spent, stuck in the hands of a monster. For the first time in Korekiyo's life,
he could see all the great things happening around him. All he could think about, though, was how
they were just like Miyadera. Claiming humanity was beautiful and just looking over it's flaws?
How come only Korekiyo had to be kicked for his flaws? Why does humanity allow them to be
happy, but Korekiyo was made to suffer? The emptiness in Korekiyo's head was replaced with
disgust for the very thing he was told to love. It soon became too much for the gates that Korekiyo
took so long to rebuild and it all came crashing down again, but this time he was the one who held
the malice.

Which brings us to now. The real Korekiyo. Sitting on a bench. Oceans of emptiness swam
behind his golden colored eyes, the disgusting words he had sent to the chat mirrored onto his
corneas. Korekiyo knew it was his mind, his flaws, that had one this. He could only imagine the
agony the two of his classmates must be feeling. All because of his flaws. This was the problem.
The more Korekiyo let out his flaws, the more Korekiyo flawed humanity itself.

"Hey, Kiyo," Korekiyo knew that voice. That nickname.

It made the wilting plants of his faith tilt up the slightest bit as the words echoed through his mind
in a shower of rain. Of course, the rain hydrates the weed as well. It pained Korekiyo to know such
a melody existed in such an awful world. Kaito took a seat next to him, not really giving much
respect towards Korekiyo's personal space. The pair's shoulders brushed once or twice before the
melody rushed through Korekiyo's garden once more.

"So uh," even at a time like this, Kaito didn't seem to have a clue what to say, "what you said in
the chat. I saw it."

"I figured as much," Korekiyo really didn't find himself in the mood for speaking, but knew that
that was an impossible wish to grant when in the company of Kaito. Normally, he'd be glad to
listen to the other talk about space or something like that, but now Korekiyo found himself hoping
to sink into the ground.

"You don't have to act all calm," Kaito encouraged. He's always been people smart like that. Not
Korekiyo knew the answer to that. He's known it for a while, but never dared to vocalize it. Kaito knew it too. At least bits and pieces. He had watched it all unfold. He stood by as Korekiyo withered away. Korekiyo wished he could bring himself to hate Kaito for it, but he couldn't.

"Listen, you don't have to tell me everything... sometimes, things are just easier to understand you hear em aloud, ya know?" Kaito assured, leaning back in the bench, "I'll be here if you need me."

"Probably won't do much to make up for when I wasn't there, but... I'll try."

Something people forget about sometimes is the sun. They forget about how it's always there, even if you can't see it. Forget it or not, the sun is what keeps you going. It's what feeds your crops of life and, if you're lucky, it makes you feel warm inside. Everyone has a sun. Everyone has something that keeps them going, even if sometimes the clouds are too thick for one to find it. It's there though, and as long as you can feel it, even see it, you have a chance to thrive. For a while, Korekiyo thought Miyadera was his sun, despite actually being the clouds, but then, at the age of five, he met the real one. Momota Kaito. He was louder than Korekiyo was used to, but something drew him to the other boy.

However, at this age, Korekiyo was still nurturing the weed in his head. He didn't look through the clouds and at the sun because he figured it lay with him. It wasn't until Korekiyo began to resist that he noticed Kaito. The two had gotten on well beforehand. Kaito got on well with everyone though. He had so much warmth and so much light to go around that Korekiyo doubted he noticed the beam that shone through the clouds of Korekiyo's mind. One day, when he was sitting alone because the other kids had teased him for his hair and for his lipstick, Kaito approached him. He sat with Korekiyo and drew pictures of the stars. He said Korekiyo's eyes reminded him of the stars. Korekiyo felt like he mattered. It was nice.

Korekiyo cling to Kaito after that. Kaito didn't mind it. He thought Korekiyo was smart and Kaito had a whole lot of questions about the world. The garden of Korekiyo's mind, while it was dying, was warm in the embrace of the sun. Korekiyo remembered when Kaito first called him Kiyo. Korekiyo ask Miyadera to call him that. She declined and called the name stupid, leeching away a little more at the garden of his mind. In retaliation, Korekiyo insisted that Kaito kept using the nickname. The sun shone a little brighter. The weed of Miyadera sometimes seemed to shrink away from the bright beams.

Then things got worse. Clouds were forming in Korekiyo's head as he was forced further and further into the costume of who Miyadera wanted him to be. Then the rumors began. Oh the rumors. They spread like poison through the veins, but people went with it anyway. Korekiyo and Kaito were the topics. The victims. It was around the age where you stop thinking with your heart and your head and instead think with the air around you. The one where what you hear is what you know and what you know it what you say. All it took was a single ripple in order to form a storm cloud. All Korekiyo heard as he walked through the halls with Kaito were the rumors.

Most kids in Kaito and Korekiyo's area were raised in traditional household and while their careless personalities did little to show for that, their ideologies did. Essentially, rumor had it that Shinguuji Korekiyo had the hots for Momota Kaito. Even in his large circle of popular students, Kaito never heard the idea grace his ears. Korekiyo wasn't sure whether or not he was relieved. Part of him wanted Kaito to go and kick the asses of the giggling school girls with slurred voices and bone chilling laughs. The idiotic school boys who didn't think before they spoke. The clouds grew thicker as Kaito grew further away as Kaito began to hang out with other people. They were twelve. It was around the time Miyadera's grasp only grew stronger.
Now that Korekiyo is here now. With the weed and the clouds and his dying thoughts. He's come to realize something. The sun was still there. Kaito was still there. Smiling sadly at the sky. Korekiyo just never saw it. He was too focused on the clouds. He was too focused on his dying thoughts. Too focused on the everlasting weed of Miyadera. The words carved into her skin as he had stared at her lifeless body for only a second before being whisked away by terrified officials. When it came down to it, it was still Korekiyo’s mind. Korekiyo was still there. Breathing. Alive. Even with his flaws. So were the people around him.

Rantaro and Keebo finding happiness after their flaws and insecurities destroyed them wasn’t a sign of stupidity. It was a sign of growth. Korekiyo had neglected the growth of his own withered mind as he piled the clouds in front of the sun and never bothered to remove the weed of Miyadera. He was never given the blessing of knowing that time will change because he never moved forward. He never spoke his mind. He never recovered. All because he had refused to confront what had been in front of him the whole time. All because his own head was swirling with clouds of doubt and fear and hatred that blocked out all that was good in the world.

Korekiyo knew that now. It was shocking what just one beam of light puncturing through the dim could do. The warmth that seeped into whatever it touched. When you’ve been cold and in the dark for so long, you almost forget that there’s still a chance for light. A chance for warmth. Even when you’ve hit rock bottom, even when you just want to tear your hair out because you hate yourself so fucking much. Even when you want to collapse around all those voices screaming at you in your head. The ones that tell you that you mean absolutely nothing. Even when someone you thought was meant to care for you burns those words into your memory until you can barely wake up in the morning. Even after all of that, you have to be the one to stand up. You have to be the one to remember that the fucking sun is still there waiting for you and that one day, those clouds will clear and you will feel warm again. That’s the beauty of humanity.

Miyadera had it wrong. Korekiyo had fought against the idea of sharing her ideals for so long. That humanity was beautiful. He had been proven wrong so many times as more and more clouds tear out your mind and force you into nights of pure hatred and screaming your grievances and praying to a god you might not even believe in that no one hears. Shinguuji Miyadera believed it was the sun that made humanity beautiful. She thought that standing up was what made our species so special. She thought that flaws were just disgusting shadows and imperfection was disgrace and disagreeing was defiance. In that moment though, Shinguuji Korekiyo had a realization.

The thought arose from a withering plant. He had had it all along, he just never gave it what it needed to grow. But now, with the sun and with the time, it was finally time to face it. The weed of Miyadera grew smaller and smaller as the flower grew bigger and bigger. The sun grew clearer and clearer as the clouds grew thinner and thinner. Shinguuji Korekiyo was different for Miyadera. Humanity wasn’t beautiful because of our triumphs. Humanity was beautiful because of the obstacles. Even when you’ve been knocked down time and time again, you can still stand. After all this time it was the clouds that let you feel the truest warmth of the sun. It was the dark that made you feel safe when the light returned. Every fall you take, the more you grow when you get back up. Humanity is beautiful because of our flaws.

Korekiyo didn’t realize he was crying until Kaito told him. He remembered sitting there for a moment as he took in the thought. He didn’t believe it at first. He was coated in self loathing from the lifeless weed of Miyadera as the flower trying to take its place refused to fully bloom. He was a monster he was twisted. Humanity is what broke him. It’s what made him the way he is. Humanity is hideous. That’s what he believed. Everyone ignoring their flaws was disgusting. Everyone being themselves while Korekiyo was the only one tormented by his issues. Then Korekiyo remembered Keebo and Rantaro. Their beaten down minds. Their dull voices. Now they’re happy again. Despite that.
Korekiyo began to sob as Kaito hesitantly patted him on the back. He hated how even after knowing all the flaws, all the cracks, all the shadows of Momota Kaito, Korekiyo still thought of them as the sun. No, he didn’t hate it. He just wanted to hate it because it’s the opposite of what this wretched world would think. He really just wanted to accept this. But he mustn’t disobey. He mustn’t burden others. He mustn’t cry in public. He mustn’t step out of line. He mustn’t look a certain way. He mustn’t show weakness. His head was screaming at him and for once in his life, Korekiyo wasn’t afraid. He just wanted everything to go away. He wanted help. He wanted the sun to help him—

Suddenly, the Korekiyo in his head heard something. In the train wreck of his mind, he saw the weed of Miyadera twitch and for a moment he was terrified. For a moment he thought that just as he was figuring things out again, sister would return. It wasn’t that though. The sound was foreign and scratchy and sounded broken down and defeated. There was just this one, tiny spark of emotion though. Korekiyo didn’t know what the spark was. Hope? Desperation? It took a moment for him to realize it was his own voice, calling for help. His mind was finally ready to grow. It was finally read to share his story. To share his sorrows.

He shared them to Kaito, who listened as he learned the true story of what happened to him. Not the twisted version that painted him as a monster. He talked about what he thought about humanity and why. He talked about every single thought that ran through his head and everything was so heavy, yet so light at once and he felt like he could just fall and breakdown and die and scream and yell and kick and punch and cry and— Korekiyo couldn’t breathe. His burdens built in his chest. He tore desperately at the mask that’s covered his mouth. He didn’t care about Miyadera. Korekiyo just wanted to stand in the sun again. Kaito helped remove the mask seeing as Korekiyo was too frantic.

Kaito’s talking wasn’t working this time. His voice couldn’t reach Korekiyo. He panicked, naturally. He slung the taller boy’s arm over his shoulder and guided him into the dorms. The second the warmth of Kaito’s hand seeped through Korekiyo’s bandaged hands, he saw a figure in his head. Kaito has a shovel and was digging out the weed of Miyadera. Korekiyo stumbled in behind Kaito and was fussed over instantly by Keebo. They join in digging. Korekiyo still can’t breathe properly and black dots viciously encircle his vision. Kaito’s barely making progress on the dead weed in the anthropologists head.

Rantaro helps Korekiyo and Kaito to the kitchen. He joins too. Gonta asks if he’s okay. Dig. Maki gets him a chair from the dining hall. Get rid of Miyadera. Himiko cries out even after what he’s done. She joins. Tenko and Angie help Kirumi get some tea brewing. All three. Shuichi’s serene and Kokichi’s loud voice finally pushes through the white noise. He joins. Tsumugi, Ryoma, and Kaede all ask him how he’s doing at once. Those three. Miu curses in a strangely endearing way. She’s there. Korekiyo could finally breathe. Everything was digging out the weed of Miyadera despite everything. Korekiyo knew what they’d done in the game. Their sanity had been broken. Their memories and ideals were stolen. There they were, nonetheless. There. Helping.

And before he knew it, the weed of Miyadera was gone.

Chapter End Notes

I’m sorry about the short chapter. I don’t really have much I can say to excuse the
length of this, but thanks for reading, lovelies. Take care. This chapter really meant a lot.
But That’s Okay

Chapter Summary

Korekiyo goes throughout his day trying to see how his classmates make each other happy.

Chapter Notes

Sorry this chapter is so late and isn’t even that long either.

Oh frick. Sorry for releasing three updates in the span about two days and then taking nearly a week to write this.

Something I've come to understand in my lifetime is that humans are most human like in groups. Depending on the nature of the relationship, one might act more paranoid or more comfortable when alone with another being. In other cases, there are more people, in which these same rules can be applied. However, the more people you add, the more complicated things grow. One could hate one person and adore the rest. The person's personality can effect their reaction. For example, a more spiteful, or perhaps selfish person could act aggressively due to the single inconvenience, whereas another person would be less caught up in their own grudges and act in favor of the majority with whom they have a positive relationship with:

Of course, none of that exactly matters at the moment, for I'm currently sitting in my classroom and have somehow become what one might call "the fifteenth wheel." My classmates are interesting people. In the good way, obviously. They're amusing and have personalities that make it all the more satisfying to figure out what makes them tick. Another detail I'd like to disclose is that they all have the tendency to... gravitate towards another specific person, for lack of a better word. On second thought, there is a better term to use. Half my classmates are lovedstruck imbeciles who make their emotions so terribly obvious that it's like watching a romantic comedy. I'm not complaining, I'm merely stating the obvious.

<Korekiyo knows pretty much everyone's crushes based off the art of observation.>

"Ultimate Nightmare Fuel," June 17th, 8:46

MediocreLintroller: i'm still pissed as shit at you two for not telling me when you started fucking

ThingGreen: To be fair, we messaged the entire chat

ThingWhite: Also, please do not make sexual jokes regarding Rantaro and I, Iruma-san!

MediocreLintroller: fucking fine! and this is a warning to you, cabbage patch fucker. if you hurt keebs in any way, shape or sex position, i will fucking destroy you

ThingGreen: I'm terrified (wasn't planning on hurting them)
**ThingWhite:** Iruma-san, what did I JUST say about the sex jokes about us?

**MediocreLintroller:** not tto mmakeee thhhem....

**ThingWhite:** Then what did you proceed to do?

**MediocreLintroller:**

**MediocreLintroller:** make a sex joke...

**ThingWhite:** I rest my case.

**MediocreLintroller:** bbbbbbettterr wwaatch thhe fuucck ouut amamaassss.... keeeeeebbs mmihnnnt jjustt bbe a tttop afftereer all........

**ThingWhite:** iRUMA WHY?!

**ThingGreen:** Okay, I will

**ThingWhite:** r     A n  t      a   R       O

**NormieHecc:** Jeez, this is just plain sad. I guess they waited too long before writing couples stuff and this train wreck happened...

**ThingWhite:** What???

**Kork:** Ignoring that, I apologize again for what happened last night. I truly am ecstatic you two finally got yourselves together.

**ThingGreen:** We already told you it's fine

**ThingWhite:** Yep. We're just glad you're doing okay!

**Kork:** Thank you. I'm just making sure.

**NormieHecc:** This is so pure oh my gosh

**MediocreLintroller:** yea, they should totally have a threesome

**ThingWhite is typing**

**ThingGreen:** Oh damn, you're about to get the wrath of Keebo

**MediocreLintroller:** OH SHIT

**MediocreLintroller deleted 2 messages**

**Kork:** It's too late.

**NormieHecc:** BUT I WANT IT THAAAAT WAAAAY!

**Kork:** Tell me why.

**NormieHecc:** AINT NOTHING BUT A HEEEEEART AAAAAACHE
Kork: No seriously. Why?

MediocreLintroller: could virgins not do this when keebs is about to roast my ass???

NormieHecc: Oh, sorry!

Kork: My apologies.

ThingGreen: Keebo, stop pouting and starting over

ThingWhite: Silence! You said you thought my pout was cute!

ThingGreen:

MediocreLintroller: OH GET EXPOOOOOSED BITch

ThingGreen: hEY COULD YOU NOT DO THIS WHEN KEEBS IS ABOUT TO ROAST YOUR ASS???

MediocreLintroller: YOU SLICK MOTHERFUCKER! USING MY OWN LINE AGAINST ME!!!

ThingGreen: DAMN RIGHT I DID

NormieHecc: Should we stop them before they do something plainly stupid?

Kork: No, it's all with no ill intent. This is just what happens after you've known someone for so long.

ThingWhite: Can confirm. Rantaro's laughing right now.

MediocreLintroller: HEY, BECAUSE I MADE YOUR BOYFRIEND LAUGH AND YOU PROBABLY THINK THAT SHIT IS CUTE AS FUCK (bcuz I sure as hell do, not to hit on ur mans) COULD YOU LIKE, NOT FUCKING DESTROY ME?!

NormieHecc: How come you and Momota-kun aren't like this? You guys are on first name terms too

Kork: It's a matter of personality, I suppose.

NormieHecc: Makes sense

ThingWhite: No Iruma-san. Despite everything you said being true, I'm going to roast you more than a soccer mom trying to hold a barbecue for the team for the first time roasts the hamburgers! (Rantaro gave me the metaphor. I don't get it.)

MediocreLintroller: i'm not even mad anymore, you can roast the fuck out of me, that metaphor was so shitty that it's literally gold to me

<Hopefully I didn't slam the Amamiibo into your faces too much there.>

Is it creepy that I keep excessive notes of my classmates? Maybe. Is it something I can easily excuse using my talent? Of course. Either way, it shows passion, even if I come off as a freak. Well, you win some you lose some. The benefits show anyway. I can predict most of the things my
classmates do and say. Actually, that's debatable. They're rather random people with a few quirks that can be applied to specific situations. So, to reiterate, I guess what my classmates do on certain occasions and about ninety percent of the time, I'm not too far off from the mark. So, say that Ouma walks in. The first thing he'll do is either yell something or jump on someone nearby. *Ouma Kokichi, note 2- He yelled "What's up, fuckers" upon entering the room. He likes the attention.*

However, when Ouma does make an appearance, he doesn't shout, nor does he call attention to himself. Well, I did say ninety percent, didn't I? Ouma is one of the less predictable one of my peers. I actually have the least amount of notes on him because the things he does are so questionable and random that it's just confusing. The first thing he does actually is go to where Idabashi and Amami are seated to tease them about something. Chances are he didn't see them at all these past couple of days because they've spent so much time together, but it's shocking that he seems to be focused on them. I supposed even Ouma has his own way of expressing concern, whether or not I approve of it.

This reminds me of my goal today. After the whole ordeal last night, I decided to take a day just to observe my peers. I am aware that that's what I already do on a daily basis anyway, but now that I've begun to recover mentally, I'm hoping that I will be able to see things in a positive light for a change. That isn't to say my observations are going to be false for the sake of positivity, just have them be focused around the good points of a person. I might have to get a never notebook soon though. It's nearly full. It's only been a few months into the school year and yet I'm already almost finished. Then again, I am only just getting to know these people. Things will soon slow down considerably. I count over my note totals so I can discover how I am to go about my observations.

Akamatsu Kaede- 23.
Amami Rantaro- 18.
Chabashira Tenko- 26.
Gokuhara Gonta- 34.
Harukawa Maki- 22.
Hoshi Ryoma- 19.
Idabashi Keebo- 31.
Iruma Miu- 21.
Momota Kaito- 64.
Ouma Kokichi- 8.
Saihara Shuichi- 27.
Shirogane Tsumugi- 32.
Tojo Kirumi- 14.
Yonaga Angie- 22.
Yumeno Himiko- 21.

Okay, so perhaps my notes are the slightest bit unbalanced. To be fair though, I have known Kaito
for over half of my life, so I'd obviously have lots of notes to transfer from my previous notebooks. Plus, my points might overlap due to the large timespan. I write things down because I can't remember everything after all, correct. I don't know why I'm so bent on justifying why I know so much about Kaito. Let's just not focus on that. I flip to the section I have separated for Ouma. It's right after Kaito's. That's not important though. All my notes for Ouma fit into one page, which is slightly disappointing if I'm being entirely honest here. Part of my job is to understand humans.

Ouma Kokichi

1- He keeps making strange faces to himself. He keeps acting up even when there's nobody around. It's almost as if he thinks there's someone watching him at all times.

2- He yelled "What's up, fuckers" upon entering the room. He likes the attention.

3- He freaked out a bit when playing in the tubes at Chuck E Cheese. It could be an act, but he could be claustrophobic (confirmed by Harukawa, but she doesn't know the reason.) Maybe it relates to his KGS death.

4- He flinched the slightest bit when Kaito was trying to play the drums. Loud noises unsettle him. Probably due to his KGS death. He acts like he's head bopping, but yet happened too frequently for it to be intentional.

5- He pulled an all nighter at the sleepover despite looking exhausted. Does he not like falling asleep in front of others?

6- His hands shake far too much to be normal. It isn't cold shivering. It sort of reminds me of myself, but I doubt we went through anything similar...

7- He actually had a calm looking face as he was petting Azumi. Either that cat works miracles, or Ouma is relaxed by cats.

8- He keeps looking around and taking notes in this notebook of his. Does he observe people as well? Why?

Hm. There isn't much to work off of here. All of my current notes give me little to help decipher why Ouma would be checking in on Amami and Keebo. This hasn't pccurred frequently enough to qualify as a new observation, so I guess I shouldn't dwell on it. Saihara's the detective, not me. He's probably the one with the best shot of speaking honestly with Ouma anyway. Of course I have no solid proof of that, but that's alright. Not like I'm resting anything too great on the possibility anyway. I continue to review my notes as my peers break off into their usual nonsense. Tojo walks over to me soon after. I've grown accustomed to this. Harukawa normally hangs around her to prevent her from overworking herself. I've also taken this role.

I sigh and keep reading, occasionally commenting to Tojo to keep her from leaving.

<Hey, I kind of think a body swap chapter would be fun. I dunno. What do you guys think?>

"Ultimate Nightmare Fuel," June 17th 11:11

NotTodaySatan: Look at the time everyone! Make a wish–

Yonaga Angie, note 3- She woke half the class up once at 11:11. She really believes in that stuff.

Smoll: No
NotTodaySatan: Do it now or Atua will have no choice but to burn you with the heat of a thousand suns!!! ;3

Yonaga Angie, note 7- The more optimistic she sounds, the more morbid her words become. It depends on the topic. If she's genuinely happy, this note doesn't mean anything.

Smoll: I fear no god

DEGENERATE: FIGHT! FIGHT! FIGHT!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

Magician: chabashiea take ur meds I can hear ur foot from here

Chabashira Tenko, note 6- You can tell whether or not she's taken her medication based off the rhythm she taps her foot to.

DEGENERATE: Oh! Your so smart Yumeno san!!!!!

Magician: Thx

Smoll: So I'm stuck here with the unholy trinity?

NotTodaySatan: Atua is the most holy being silly Ryoma!

Smoll: Aight, Imma head out

Hoshi Ryoma, note 1- Optimistic people make him uncomfortable with very few exceptions. Gonta is where he draws the line.

<Classic normal dividers. Yay.>

Something rather disappointing that I've come to notice about my classmates is that none of them are particularly happy people on their own. Even the brightest, such as Kaito, have this melancholic feel to them when they aren't around other people. I know that it's not very proper to make assumptions when my field of work revolves around studying facts in order to advance our understanding of human evolution, but I know what I'm doing. I know these people on varying degrees, but I understand how they act when they're happy, so I can use that knowledge to make inferences for when they're not. I don't know why my peers are so upset, so I cannot go further down that road for the time being.

In the case of happiness though, that's not an uncommon thing to witness. In fact, I am far more used to seeing the vast majority of my classmates with a happy expression than an unhappy one. As I stated earlier, the people around you tend to dictate your actions, whether you realize it or not. However, this goes for your mood as well. People you dislike can lead to anger, or even paranoia and sadness. People you like can lead to happiness and feelings of ease. It's all circumstantial, of course, but in the typical human interaction, this tends to be the way things play out. It's in human nature. This should help me with my observations in seeing the good in the world.

I begin by going to the most obvious pairing. Keebo and Amami. Considering that they're romantically involved, they have some sort of change in emotion around each other. I can already see minor differences when I get to work. For starters, note 2 of Amami Rantaro (he normally gets drained when holding conversations, resulting in him forgetting the topic, or responding in general) is not in affect here. The conversation is fluid and he has no trouble issuing responses. I also see no sign of note 4 (he has a tendency to casually put himself down in conversations. He doesn't think very highly of himself.) The same goes for note 5 for Keebo (they keep comparing themself to their
robotic counterpart.) Both parties seem somewhat upset despite how happy they are.

Amami Rantaro, note 19 and Idabashi Keebo, note 32- The closer they are to a person, the more likely they are to hide their insecurities. Either that or they forget them. Look into this further.

Well, I suppose it can't be all good, can it? I'll hold off looking into this for another day because right now it's about happier things. I switch my focus off of those two and on to Chabashira and Yumeno. I haven't spoken much to either of them since Yumeno's breakdown. Chabashira no longer seeks me out just to yell at me and Yumeno no longer sends me dirty looks, so things have certainly improved. Still, when I approach their general direction, Chabashira somehow notices me (note 13- She has extremely good intuition. It's clouded mainly by her distaste towards males, but it shows up from time to time) and shoos me off before I can gather enough information to form a note. I guess I was being slightly creepy, wasn't I?

Moving on, there's something that's always confused me about two of my classmates. There's nothing romantic regarding their relationship, so I won't be concentrating on that aspect. In fact, I doubt I'll be able to observe them at all based on how bent one of them is on staying away from the other. Ouma and Gonta. In the KGS, they had always seemed so close, but nowadays I'd be shocked to see them hold a discussion lasting longer than thirty seconds. Sure, after everything that had happened in the fourth trial, things would naturally be slightly shaky, but things should've come at least to some sort of stop. Ouma and Harukawa are getting along better now and even with their whole history, Gonta's too kind to just brush Ouma off.

I guess that means it's Ouma's doing here. He's purposely avoiding Gonta for whatever reason. It likely has to do with the events of the fourth trial. I'm willing to throw in the possibility that Ouma does harbor some sort of guilt regarding these events. I admit that I didn't really see him as the type, but I've got to consider all possibilities and have an open mind. Then again, if this were the case, why does he act the same around Iruma to how he did before? Perhaps he's afraid of what talking to Gonta would lead to? Is he afraid of being seen as vulnerable? Probably not. He's pretended to cry numerous amounts of times... I just don't know him well enough to tell. I'll leave it up to Saihara.

I'm slightly downtrodden by these dead ends when the lunch period begins. I wind up picking at my food for a while as my peers begin to enter the lunch room. Akamatsu is only here for a moment before leaving with a tray packed with food. She's likely going after Iruma, who hardly shows up to lunch anymore. It fits nicely with Akamatsu Kaede, note 9- She's very insistent on self care and can be pushy about it when she thinks it's necessary. It sort of reminds me of note 27 on Kaito, not that that's important. Actually, if I look around, Kaito isn't at lunch either. Hm. Hopefully he's alright. He means well, but has a tendency to stick his nose into situations he has no place in and gets into trouble. Sometimes it just can't be helped.

There's plenty of time, so I spend some making more observations on happiness. I notice the way that Chabashira seems ecstatic to have Tojo join us for lunch. She's been around more frequently, which we mainly have Harukawa to thank. Good thing for note 8 then (the more demanding, harsh, or bossy she acts, the more she cares. Not in a cruel way, she's just more vocal with her opinions.) I notice Hoshi actually smile at something Gonta says. Something else I'd like to notice is about Yonaga and Shirogane. The two of them are speaking about something, I don't exactly know what and every now and again, very occasionally, Yonaga will use the word "I" when referring to herself. Shirogane smiles a lot at that. Hm. Pure.

I've decided that my food is cooled off enough to begin eating. I'm perfectly capable of wolfing down a meal the moment it's out of the oven, but I prefer it this way. This whole action of eating makes me hyper aware that I'm no longer wearing my mask. I've gotten multiple looks this
morning because of it. I have no bandages either. I figured I didn't need them anymore. Well, technically I didn't need them to begin with. I just did it so I didn't have to disobey because I mustn't disobey and I mustn't reject Miyadera and I mustn't—or wait, wait, wait. No. No. That's unfortunate... even now I'm stuck with this sort of... scar. I try not to think about it and keep eating. Stupid hag. Ruining my mind even after she's long gone.

On the hallway back to class, I continue looking around and making observations. I still find the whole Gonta and Ouma thing odd. Gonta looks like he wants to talk to Ouma as well. It’s not my place to interfere, but I find myself wondering why Gonta doesn’t just walk up to Ouma and try to say something. Unless... note 33 is in effect (When he knows someone, he really understands that person. He’s just easily torn off if you lie to him. I’d know. He’s said something perfectly accurate to me and believed me when I denied it.) I highly doubt it though. Gonta doesn’t know more about Ouma than Saihara, Kaito and I seem to, so he may be too confusing for even Gonta to figure something out.

I don’t concentrate on that. Positive things, remember? I just think I’ll need to take some time before i dive into something like this. Something so complex and terrifying. As I review my note, a thought comes to mind. Most of my notes are based off of negative things. Amami distancing himself when faced with guilt. Yumeno’s catchphrases she uses when she’s upset. Yonaga only frowning when she referred to herself in the first person instead of the third. The thought alone was rather sad, but then I figured something else out. The only reason I’m able to find these positive differences in my peers is because of the older, more negative ones. It takes me back to the night before and allow myself to smile.

The thought quickly diminishes though as I run out of things to think of. I already know that Akamatsu talks less about piano and more about herself around people she trusts. I already know that Ouma actually has a seemingly genuine smile and laugh that he tries to hide. I already know that Chabashira is kind enough to talk to a guy if it looks like he’s having a tough day. It’s amusing how observing humans can make you feel somewhat empty and inhuman yourself. I take a moment to remind myself that I am, in fact human. I remember something Keebo told me. Their thoughts tend to race a lot. My thoughts only seemed to race when I’m panicking about being human... oh dear, I don’t want to consider that.

I can’t help but wonder just how many things I could’ve missed about my classmates simply because I don’t want to think about it. I could have a hundred notes on Ouma if I wrote down everything I thought. They may not be correct, but I’d at least have something to go off of. How many things have I brushed off today for the sake of my own happiness? I remind myself that I’m simply not the type to look too far into that and that that sort of thing was normally handled by people like Saihara, whose talent revolves around searching for answers. I don’t feel as reassured as I’d like, but it’s better than just sitting around and feeling sorry for myself when the final bell rings.

I find myself regretting taking off my mask so soon. At the same time I didn’t think much because I feel as if I’ve already torn myself away from Miyadera just by doing so. The air in June is very warm, as one may suspect, so I barely feel it on my face, but normally things would be feeling stuffy. Strangely enough, this in no way provided me relief. It was almost as if I was suffocating. It’s sort of like when you’ve been sitting in a tub of cold water for a while, then when you more into a tub of warm water, it feels hot. It’s like that, only worse... Okay, I need to study some literature because that metaphor was awful.

I feel like I can hardly breathe by the time I reach my dorm, but I feel a hand on my shoulder before I can enter. Upon turning around, I realize it’s Kaito. He asks me if I’m alright. I’m alright. He tells me he had to help out during lunch period, which is why he wasn’t in the cafeteria. I listen
as if i actually sat at the same table as him. He comments on my breathing and asks me if I’m okay. I admit that I’m not sure. He says that that’s alright. I say that I know that. He reminds me of the things I learned yesterday. About humanity and how things feel better only after things feel bad. I thank him and he leaves. As soon as I enter my dorm, I spot Miyadera’s lipstick on my desk. The very thing that has cursed my life lay in front of me.

Without a second thought, I throw it away. It’s been a symbol of my suffering for years, but it’s also been a symbol of love. I didn’t love Miyadera, obviously. She made every second of everyday, even when I was away, feel like hell. Still, the only time she had seemed close to content or loving towards me was when I was in that lipstick. When I was clone of her. I know now that that was foolish of me. I should be focusing on the love that I give. Not the fake, twisted, broken love given to me by a monster. I already have something that holds my love. A person. With eyes like the galaxy and a personality that shone brighter than the sun when things got rough.

Yes, I am in love with Momota Kaito. No, it is not reciprocated.
Chapter Summary

It’s Kokichi’s birthday! What could possibly go wrong?

A lot, apparently.

"Ultimate Nightmare Fuel," June 20th, 15:56

PianoKeyayday: YOINK

PianoKeyayday kicked ThingPurple

MakironiAndCheese: Finally

PianoKeyayday: Harukawa!

MakironiAndCheese: What? You're the one who kicked him

ThingBlue: He's about to storm me with questions. Gotta go.

ThingBlue is offline

PianoKeyayday: Okay so

MakironiAndCheese: No

PianoKeyayday: I wasn't finished

MakironiAndCheese: Send your texts in one message then

PianoKeyayday:

PianoKeyayday: So what do you think are the chances of Ouma figuring out that I kicked him so we can all plan out his surprise party, which is literally tomorrow, on his birthday?

MakironiAndCheese: Okay so I know this is meant as joke, but Kokichi barely even remembers his own birthday half the time, so I dunno. He might not

PianoKeyayday: Really?

MakironiAndCheese: Yep

PianoKeyayday: That's actually sort of sad...

MakironiAndCheese: It's fine. We did birthday celebrations all the time, he just chose not to, so it
sort of just faded into the background a bit

**PianoKeyayday:** Do you know why?

**MakironiAndCheese:** Nope

**PianoKeyayday:** Well, all the more reason to make this party awesome then! I have some ideas from Shuichi that I can share right now, but I think I should wait until more people are online

**ThingGreen:** I agree

**MakironiAndCheese:** BITCH WHERE THE F U C K ??!!

<Rantaro popping out of nowhere and annoying the hell out of Maki is my favorite running gag. That includes Saihara Shusleepi.>

"*Ultimate Nightmare Fuel,* June 21st, 18:12

**BuzzLightyearIsBae:** My sidekicks need an award look at this

*BuzzLightyearIsBae sent an image*

**Mother:** Oh dear...

**ThingWhite:** I think what they need is a break.

**Kork:** They brought this upon themselves when they volunteered to distract him.

**PianoKeyayday:** Technically Shuichi brought this upon himself

**PianoKeyayday:** Harukawa was just thrown into the mix after Amami had to go get the cake

**MakironiAndCheese is online**

**MakironiAndCheese:** Can I kill Kokichi? Please?

**ThingWhite:** No, that's illegal!

**MakironiAndCheese:**

**MakironiAndCheese:** Can I hurt Kokichi so he shuts up, but keep the damage to the point that it's not quite fatal?

**Kork:** Well when you put it that way...

**ThingWhite:** Absolutely not!

**Mother:** Would you like me to switch duties with you, Harukawa-san?

**MakironiAndCheese:** No it's fine. I probably won't kill him

**PianoKeyayday:** Just a few more hours!

**BuzzLightyearIsBae:** U got this makiroll!
MakironiAndCheese: Thanks. I'm going to leave before Shuichi has a mental breakdown

<Rat gremlins birthday fun birthday bananla palooza!>

Kaede looked absentmindedly around at the scene before her. Everything was in place and the party would begin as soon as Kokichi walked through the dormitory doors with Maki and Shuichi. The pianist hummed in satisfaction at how smoothly things were running. She was almost off put by how smooth things have been, but that's probably just her insecurities talking, so she shoved the morbid feeling of dread down before it could take hold of her thoughts too long. Kaede took a moment to gather up the rest of her classmates. Rantaro had returned from getting the cake pretty soon after it was mentioned in the chat. He probably wouldn't mind going back to help distract Kokichi, but he stayed back nonetheless.

"Okay, so Iruma-san, you'll turn the lights back on as soon as Ouma-kun and them walk in?" Kaede asked, looking at the inventor with a raised brow.

"Of fuckin course!" Miu confirmed, placing her hands on her hips with great confidence despite the small task.

"Alright, great!" Kaede exclaimed, "I just got a text from Shuichi. They'll be here any minute, so get into position. After that, switch off the lights, Iruma-san."

"We've been over this four times already," Rantaro chuckled, "I think we'll be alright. Everything will work out just fine."

"I guess you're right, aren't you?" Kaede admitted sheepishly, "we really have to hurry now though."

With that, the class dispersed throughout the common area to take their hiding spots. Miu turned off the lights a bit sooner than expected, but, somehow, that's what everyone expected so there wasn't much lost there. In the light of the street lamps, the silhouette of Kokichi nearly getting pummeled by Maki as Shuichi stopped her while they walked could be seen. It wasn't long until the trio reached the entrance to the dormitories and Maki and Kokichi's squabble seemed to subside in favor of opening the door. As the door shut behind the three of them, a faint click could be heard, quickly followed by a string of curses from none other than Miu.

"Fuck—I hit the switch for the god damn fan instead of the shitty ass lights!" Miu hissed somewhere in the dark.

"Gasp! Is that an old, greasy, dollar store napkin I hear?!" Kokichi sang, and everyone could tell that he was smirking.

Quite the variety of giggles rang out from various parts of the room as Miu searched the wall for the light switch. In the light that shone through the window from the streetlights, everyone could see that Kokichi hadn't moved yet and instead just stood there, smirking. Finally, a laughing Kaede made her way over to where Miu was and helped her locate the light switch. When light finally bathed the room once more, nearly everyone was too caught up in laughter or trying not to laugh to say anything they were supposed to. Nobody cared though. Finally, everyone regained their composure and was preparing to shout out when the lights flickered out again. Everyone burst out into another fit of confused giggles, not realizing that even the streetlights weren't lit. Nobody noticed the click of the door locking....

"PUHUHUHUHUHUHU~!"
With that, the student's laughter came to a stop.

- 

Hm...

-

-

Cold... it's cold...

-

-

Wait...

-

-

It's cold?

-

-

That's weird. The last thing you expect to feel after being crushed by a hydraulic press is... well, anything, really...

-

-

Feeling something means you're alive...

-

-

I'm not alive though...

There are these people here and they're grabbing at me. I don't know why. Could they not do that though? It's sort of an overwhelming thing to wake up to. Am I awake? Was I wrong and there
really is an afterlife? Wait... is this what Hell looks like? There's a lot of white though. Weird... well whatever kind of afterlife bullshit this is, maybe it won't be boring! Being tortured forever sounds like a blast. As long as I ended that boring as fuck game though. Oh well. I had to die for the plan to work, so I guess I had this coming. Looking around, this actually looks like a... I don't know. There are these weird machine thingies. I think I just came from one. The rest of them are open except for this other one and inside that one is...

Wait just a second...

Shirogane?

Plain Jane?

But she's alive.

I'm not...

Am I alive?

No...

No no no no no no no no no NO.

I HAVE TO DIE.

I HAVE TO END THE GAME.

GET OUT OF MY WAY YOU DUMBASS SCIENCE LADY.

I WANT TO END THIS.

-

For a moment, nobody spoke. What could they say to that? Monokuma's laughter being burst through the speakers as the rest of the power in the school was cut off... That probably wasn't the greatest thing. It took a moment for anyone to move. Shuichi pulled out his phone, switching on the flashlight carefully to brighten up the mood. Even Angie's smile had slipped from her face at the dreadful bout of laughter. It didn't take long for others to follow, taking out their phones to use the flashlight. It wasn't necessary for everyone to do so, so some people just stood there as they soaked in their own fear and dread. When I single beep rang throughout the room, nearly everyone flinched.

"S—sorry!" Shuichi gasped, fumbling with his phone, which the sound originated from, voice shaking as he continued to speak "... O—oh... Okay guys, I—I just got an alert from Hijirihara Sensei... uh... h—he said that the Ultimate hacker, a—a third year... they uh, messed with the system a—and shut off the power... the... laughter was from them as well..."

"What the fuck?!" Miu cried and nobody bothered to argue against her large amounts of profanity.

"Yea..." Shuichi agreed, "the... the power should be back in like.... about thirty minutes, s—so... can we all just stay here for now?"

"Yea... I don't think I can be alone after hearing that," Himiko murmured, earning agreement from her classmates.

"Wait..." Shuichi trailed off, scanning the room. A worried look crossed his face, "guys..."
"Where's Ouma-kun?"

-  

"Hello."

"Goodbye!"

"..."

"Tough crowd, hm? That's a shame! I really thought we could be buddies!"

"You know why you're here, correct?"

"Nope! Please, enlighten me!"

"You're here after having a hysterical breakdown and attempting to commit suicide."

"Oh yea... that was fun! You should join me next time!"

"I'm here so there won't be a next time."

"Next time for what?"

"Okay, moving on, I'd like to ask."

"It all started when I ate an entire tree..."

"Listen kid... why do you think you broke down?"

"Now why would I tell you that?"

"You don't have to. I'm here to listen to and help you."

"That sounds boring!"

"It'll only be boring if you make it boring."

"Aw man, really?"

"Yes, now would you like to begin?"

"No, but you're probably going to stab me if I don't."

"I'm not going to stab you..."

"That's exactly what a person who stabs people would say!"

"Do you believe that people are going to stab you often due to trust issues? Do you have any traumatic events that could lead to those trust issues?"

"Woah there! When did you go all therapist mode on me?!"

"When your doctor told me you chased off over ten other therapists and figured I'd be able to handle you..."

"Okay, way to get all technical on me!"
"Oh my god..."

There was a moment of silence as everyone took in what Shuichi had said before looking around them. It was as if they thought the action would bring the supreme leader back to them in the blink of an eye. Kaede's hands shook with fear, but she wasn't the only one. She knew that the situation was under control, the fear of hearing that stupid laugh again, combined with the worry of her classmate's (friend? Yes, friend) disappearance was just a bit much. Wordlessly, Maki left the room, but returned quickly after, reporting that Kokichi wasn't anywhere on the first floor. Shuichi bit his lip, trying to think of something as people threw around ideas that always led to a dead end.

"H—hold on," Shuichi cut in, voice clear enough to gain everyone's attention, "I know that Ouma-kun was still here when the power went off and...—" Shuichi pulled on the door, which didn't budge, "—the door's locked... h—he's still in the dormitory."

With that, Shuichi began to walk the way Maki had before, although it was less graceful and he still seemed extremely shaken up by the whole ordeal. Not that anyone could blame him. Other than perhaps Rantaro and Maki, Shuichi got along with Kokichi the most and probably knew him better than everyone else. The detective made his way to the stairs with a hesitant look on his face. Kokichi was probably in his room anyway, so the search would be unnecessary. However, before Shuichi could reach the stairway, a hand rested onto his shoulder. Shuichi jolted at the sudden contact before turning around to see the calm green eyes of Rantaro.

"Don't you think we should figure out why he left during the blackout first?" The adventurer suggested, "I'm not a detective like you, but we should probably sort that out so we can come up with a solid plan."

"B—but if he left he's probably upset about something!" Shuichi panicked, "Ouma-kun doesn't do this sort of thing without a reason."

"That's exactly why we need to relax," Rantaro said sternly, "that way we can figure out what to tell him or who should tell him."

"Yea, and besides," Maki added coolly, "that idiot never talks about his feelings. I've known him for over ten years and we've barely ever crossed that line."

Shuichi deflated, knowing his two classmates were right, "okay... um, Shinguuji-kun, do you... have any notes on Ouma-kun that could help us?"

"Yes, yes I do," Korekiyo confirmed, whipping out his notebook, "just give me a second to find the page... okay, here."

Korekiyo read out his notes to the class. Maki confirmed the first note, agreeing wholeheartedly that Kokichi is always acting like there's an audience. Everyone chimed in with their own ways of agreement as well. However, doubting that that will help with this investigation, the group moved on. Korekiyo mentioned the KGS in such a relaxed manner that everyone was slightly unnerved by it, but when it came down to it, that just meant he was moving on. Kokichi disliking loud noises sparked up a conversation before Korekiyo mentioned that other people (he didn't give any names) had an even larger distaste for loud noises, but didn't run. Shuichi pressed his hand to his chin, deep in thought.

"Wait..." Shuichi breathed, "guys, I think I know what's happening..."
"You do?" Tsumugi asked, "that was quick..."

"Y—yea, but..." Shuichi sighed, pulling down his cap, "I feel sort of bad actually. Telling everyone would sort of expose him and I don't think he'd like that very much..."

"So fucking what?!" Miu cried, "the twink's well-being is going to shit, so I don't think this respect bullshit is going to get us anywhere!"

"No," Shuichi muttered, voice steady, "If I'm right, Ouma-kun is... very messed up, for lack of a better word..."

"Stop being vague. It's dumb," Maki grumbled, but she was clearly more worried about Kokichi than she was angry at Shuichi.

"Ah, sorr—" Shuichi cut himself off, "no, I'm not... guys, I know we're all concerned for Ouma-kun right now, but I really don't think it's a good idea for everyone to come see him at once."

"Huh? Why?" Angie inquired, eyes wide with curiosity, "Kokichi would surely be better if more people were there, right, right?!"

"I'm afraid not right now," Shuichi mumbled, "uh, I think seven people in total should be a good enough amount."

It took a few minutes, but eventually, everyone had formed a group. Shuichi was going, obviously because he was the only one who had any clue what's going on. Maki and Rantaro were also quick choices due to being closer to Kokichi than the rest of the class. Tsumugi was an odd choice, but Shuichi insisted that it would be best that Kokichi could see her and nobody was in a position to argue. Finally, Keebo, Kaede and Kaito were brought along for the sake of having some sort of firm, yet positive reinforcement. Shuichi seemed hesitant to let Kaito join, but eventually caved after having the astronaut promise that he wouldn't be too pushy. The seven of them made their way to the third floor as Shuichi explained his theory.

"Okay, so... here's what I was thinking," The detective began, "Ouma-kun, to me at least, has been acting paranoid ever since we got out of the... the KGS."

Maki looked like she wanted to leave already, but she opted to just tune out the boy's words. She was still concerned about Kokichi when it came down to it. Tsumugi bit her lip, but didn't make much of a show of it. She listened intently nonetheless despite how uncomfortable the topic made her.

"I figured that he was just a naturally anxious person and was beginning to let his guard down now that there's no reason to hide," Shuichi continued, "but then, when Shinguuji-kun and Maki-san mentioned how he's always acting like someone's watching... I—I realized something. Idabashi, you mentioned that when Ouma-kun was trying to help you, he had checked around for security cameras, right?"

"Yes," Keebo confirmed, "he had a rag in his hand, too. He might've wanted to cover any security cameras."

"Exactly," Shuichi smiled slightly, "uh, you don't have to answer this, Amami-kun, but the other night, when you... told Idabashi about what happened... did Ouma-kun show up at all?"

Rantaro was quiet for a moment, "yes," he admitted, "he helped out a lot, actually."

Shuichi nodded his head respectfully and added, "I figured as much... the next morning, I found a
I've really stepped in it now, haven't I? Y'know, the whole point of my whole mastermind schtick was to not get attached to these people and for these people to not get attached to me. So what gives?! Like, sure I'm not an absolute monster (at least not right now) so it's only natural that I feel bad seeing Keebs purse their lips every time someone uses the wrong pronoun. I just wasn't expecting them to trust me enough to text me in the midst of a nasty bout of dysphoria. I could just ignore it. It would make Keebs resent me more than they probably already do. Yea. I'll just sit here. Why am I moving? Damn it. Well, if I'm already here, I guess there's no point in just turning a blind eye now, is there?

Hey, security people! I'm going to cover you now. Being an absolute doll is something reeeeeeal embarrassing to me, and I'm a little bit shy. Stupid cameras. I have a leftover rag in case Keebs has a camera in their room. That would mean they did something awful, which is, well, unlikely, but hey, I'm a real prepared guy. I pick the lock and hope for the best as I walk in... by that I mean I hope Keebs kicks me out so I don't have to do anything! Not my problem that you're sad, amiright?! I hope they're not too sad... that's a lie though! I hope that they're absolutely miserable in every way possib— oh...

There's no security camera here, but that doesn't matter. I just want them to stop crying...

As expected, when the group reaches Kokichi's door, it's locked, but that's to be expected. Maki has to stop Kaito before he tried to knock over the door by ramming into it. Shuichi gnawed in the inside of his cheek, tapping his foot anxiously as he searched for a way out. Before anything could come to mind though, Rantaro claimed he had an idea before vanishing into his own room, which lay right next to Kokichi's. Shuichi sighed in relief at the reminder he wasn't alone in this. He wasn't the only one who was trying to help Kokichi. A few seconds later, the door to Kokichi's room opened, revealing Rantaro, who chuckled at everyone's dumbfounded expression.

"How the hell did you do that?" Kaito gaped as he walked into Kokichi's dorm.
"Jumped from my veranda to his," Rantaro grinned, "just a little something I learned."

In his adventure in opening the door, Rantaro had missed the sight of Kokichi, which took the smile off his face almost instantly. The smaller boy didn't even look up at the flurry of people as they invaded his room. He was hastily scribbling something down onto a piece of paper. His brow was furrowed and he looked like some terrifying mixture of terrified, focused, and angry. The expression was so foreign to the small boy's face that there was a strange second of silence as everyone, even Maki, soaked up the shock of what they were witnessing. Shuichi, who was definitely the most frantic and panic-y of all, was the one who spoke up first, when his concern won out.

"Ouma-kun..." Shuichi mumbled.

"I'm not done yet!" Kokichi hissed, sounding so uncharacteristically serious that Shuichi recoiled, "if you let me finish this, I'll bet you anything that your game will be a whole or more interesting!"

"Ouma, what the fuck is up with you?!" Kaito shouted, warning a warning look from Shuichi, "what makes you think that the game is coming back?"

"Of course you wouldn't know, space idiot," Kokichi spat, still not looking up from the paper, "you're obviously not the mastermind. I figured it out after the karaoke incident."

"Why are you..." Tsumugi trailed off, not able to form the words.

"Being so honest? Well, let me tell ya, Plain Jane," Kokichi sighed dejectedly, "we're all about to go back to the killing game anyway, so is there really a point? I get that I'm liar til the end or whatever, but I have something I have to do and I don't plan on wasting time on lies..."

Shuichi peered over his shoulder to read the paper, "Holy shit," he cursed before he could stop himself, "O—ouma, stop!"

Shuichi took the paper from Kokichi, but his grip on the pencil was too tight. The supreme leader grappled for the item furiously, "give me that!"

"No!" Shuichi narrowed his eyes, "I was trying to approach this calmly, but I'm drawing the line. I can't just sit there as you write your own will!"

"Why not? You should be doing the same!" Kokichi grinned, but it was forced and everyone in the room knew it, "you don't know what's going to happen in there, so you might as well get a head start! I'm writing down stuff that will help everyone in there, so give me it back!"

"Ouma, the bear isn't coming back," Rantaro spoke up calmly and Shuichi was thankful for that because he didn't think he could hold himself together any longer.

"You don't know that!" Kokichi retorted, "did you not hear the laughter on the speaker? Huh?! Or are you going deaf?"

"Don't be an idiot," Maki glared, "that game is over. The laughter was a prank played by an upperclassman."

"Oh my god, are you guys seriously that stupid?!" Kokichi laughed hysterically as if Maki had just said the most ridiculous thing in the world, "do you really believe that we're actually safe now?!"

"We are!" Kaede insisted, "what's going on with you?"
"Me?! There's nothing wrong with me!" Kokichi cried.

"Then why are you so determined to go back?!!" Keebo rebutted.

"Because I am so fucking sick of being the villain!" Kokichi screamed.

"Oh..." Shuichi whispered, "Ouma... no."

"Y'know, it's funny actually!" Kokichi laughed, wiping his eyes, but no tears were falling, "that was all a lie! You know how much I love to torment people! I can't wait for the killing game to come back!"

"Ouma, please," Shuichi pleaded, about to lose his patience again.

"Please what? Stop the killing game?" Kokichi spoke softly this time, staring down Shuichi, "sorry! No can do! We're all doomed! It's a shame, really! In the simulation, I wanted to end the killing game because I hated murder, but now there's also the fact that I actually like the people who aren't going to die... that's a lie though."

"I hate you all, so I'm not surprised that you hate me too!"

It's stupid how literally only two people have turned the entire class into a bunch of sad sacks. Not that I care or anything. My only goal is to stop the killing game, not to make friends. Not like that's an option anyway, considering they all hate me. Everyone checking up on Amami and Keebs is real sweet and all, but it's gross. Everyone's coming together to combat despair. They do know it's useless, right? Eventually, we're all going to be right back where we started. Strangers made to kill each other. I can't wait! I think about it all day as I somehow get lost in the halls again and end up at the researcher lab again. All completely coincidental, I swear! What is it today? Saihara with Keebs? Okay, so Shirogane's probably with Amami...

I haven't been keeping track because I'm worried anything like that! This whole thing has sharpened my skills a whole bunch! Honestly, I could probably sniff out the mastermind in seconds now! I don't though. That would be boring. Well, off to my lab to annoy Ishi ag—Keebs is crying again. Saihara is too. Why are they sad? Okay, stupid question. Saihara gives Keebs a hug and everything seems to be alright again. They're smiling at least, which isn't good... not! I don't care that they're happy... I hate how that's a lie. I hate that I hate seeing these people sad... or not! Maybe I'm lying about lying... or lying about lying about lying? Ha! I don't even know anymore! I hate that!

I hate that I actually care for these people now.

"Why can't you just accept that we're going to be okay?" Kaito's face was oddly sympathetic.

"Depends, Momota," Kokichi shed the childish honorific, "when you get your memories erased, you won't remember the pain that came right before. From a spectators point of view, we definitely aren't okay, but we would be none the wiser!"

It occurred to Shuichi that this was the closest he's ever gotten to the real Kokichi. This Kokichi was logical, but his mind was too distorted by fear and paranoia to show it. He still had some sort of snark to him with slightly passive aggressive remarks. Was this the Kokichi that Kaito had seen in the hangar? Or was he less like the real Kokichi? Or more? Then Shuichi realized something.
This wasn't the real Kokichi at all. The real Kokichi was the one who smiled and lied all the time. This Kokichi was the truthful version, full of fear and anger. He hadn't smiled once and he spoke too seriously. Shuichi's heart ached at what paranoia had done to the supreme leader. He missed the smiling Kokichi. The real Kokichi he'd known from the start.

"Ouma-kun," Shuichi tried to steady his voice as much as he could despite his shortening patience, "we're not going anywhere."

"You don't know that," Kokichi scoffed, making another attempt to grab his will.

"You're right. I don't," Shuichi agreed, "for all I know, you could be right."

"Uh, Saihara-kun," Keebo piped up, "probably not the best thing to say right now..."

"I think he's going somewhere with this, Keebs," Rantaro replied softly.

"But Ouma-kun," Shuichi added, "you don't know the killing game isn't returning."

"Yes, I do," Kokichi deadpanned.

"No, you don't," Shuichi argued.

"Yea, I kinda do," Kokichi sang, but he sounded drained.

"No, you don't!" Shuichi snapped, "I get that it's hard to just accept that things are finally going to be alright all of a sudden, but I'm fed up with you wasting time because you're too scared of facing the truth!"

"I don't get scared, Saihara-chan," Kokichi cooed, an edge crawling into his voice, "I'm not a crybaby detective like you who goes running to his emotional support friends the second things go wrong."

"Ouma, don't try to push me away," Shuichi murmured.

"Oh! Dropping the honorific?! I'm terrified," Kokichi mocked, leaning back in his chair, "I bet you wanna punch me, don't you Saihara-chan?!"

"No! Can you just... not do this?!" Shuichi signed, "I get that everything was very sudden, but that doesn't mean things are just going to go away!"

"Yep, he's totally gonna punch me!" Kokichi cheered.

In a split second, Shuichi was moving. He stalked over to where Kokichi sat, angry tears welling up in the detective's eyes. Everyone else in the room, even Kaito, was silent. Shuichi's hat had fallen off during one of Kokichi's attempts to grab his will, but he paid no mind to it. Kokichi stares blankly at Shuichi and it was only then that he noticed the those dull, purple eyes were swimming with tears. Kokichi claims that he didn't think Shuichi would actually punch him and he tried to hide how much his hands were shaking by curling them into fists by his sides. He closed his eyes lightly, claiming to be waiting for the punch, but Shuichi knew he was trying to hide the tears in his eyes.

Shuichi didn't punch him though. He never intended to. Instead, he wrapped the boy into a hug.

"You've never been hugged?" a fourteen year old Maki raised her brow in confusion, "that's weird.
Even I've been hugged before."

"Well, of course I've been hugged!" Kokichi cried, "everyone's just so bad at it that I can't remember the last time it happened..." he left out the part that he was lying and that he couldn't remember because he was only three the last time it happened.

"Oh," was all Maki said for a while, "... do you want me to hug you?"

"Nah," Kokichi declined, "now you're the weird one!"

"I am not!" Maki retorted, "aren't you the one who turned down a hug?"

"Hey, most people probably don't wanna hug you because you could like, absolutely destroy me if you did. It'd probably be more painful than getting crushed by a hydraulic press or something," Kokichi joked.

"I'm not that buff," Maki deadpanned, looking at her arms, which were covered by her sleeves in order to hide the scars from her missions from Kokichi.

"Sure," Kokichi laughed. It was a genuine laugh, "besides, I want my 'first hug' to mean something."

"My hug wouldn't mean anything? Rude," Maki crossed her arms.

"Well duh!" Kokichi grinned, "like I said, it'd be like you're trying to kill me!"

Kokichi tried to pull away almost instantly, but Shuichi's grip was strong and Kokichi felt secure. He didn't know why, but he indulged in the feeling for a moment. For the first time in what felt like forever, Kokichi felt safe. He still refused to cry though. He refused to believe that this feeling would stay. A beat passed until Kokichi felt another pair of arms wrap around him from the left... Based off the delicacy the had to them, Kokichi knew it was Kaede. He felt Maki join from the right, giving him the hug she'd offered him nearly two years back. Rantaro joined, shortly followed by Keebo. Tsumugi dragged Kaito in as well and it took a moment for Kokichi to process everything.

"I know it's hard," Shuichi muttered softly into Kokichi's ear, "but sometimes you just have to believe that things will turn out alright."

"Yea!" Kaito agreed, almost instantly getting shushed, "my bad... Just... let yourself breathe, okay little dude? You deserve to be happy with the rest of us!" Nobody shushed him that time around.

"Besides," Kokichi could feel Kaede's smile on his head. He worried she might see the scar—er, birthmark on his scalp, but that worry was extinguished by her soothing voice, "you're our friend. I hope you know that."

"Mhm," Tsumugi hummed, "and when you feel like... you don't believe in the future, we'll believe in it for you and help you when you need it."

"You don't have to go through this alone," Rantaro murmured, "I get that you're the type to push these things off to the side, but don't be afraid to share the burden with us. We don't mind it at all."

"Agreed," Keebo chimed, "I know that sometimes things feel hopeless, but life will come around eventually and we're all there to support you until you can think the same with confidence."
"Besides," Maki hesitated, "we're willing to hug you when everyone is so bad at it that it makes you forget what it feels like..."

"Aw, come on Maki, we're already hugging him," Kaito chided, "you can do better than that!"

"Nope, hers was the best," Kokichi choked, still not crying, "other than maybe Saihara-chan's..."

"So you're alright now?" Shuichi pulled away from the hug enough so he could face Kokichi.

"I think so," Kokichi yawned, not caring that it'll make it even harder not to cry.

"Is that a lie?" Maki asks.

"Who knows?" Kokichi admits, "for once I don't think it is though."

Shuichi smiles, taking a look at Kokichi's tear filled eyes. He mouths 'want us to leave?' Kokichi pauses before nodding, not thinking he could manage another word or another lie without breaking down crying.

"Guys, we should probably go tell the others how Ouma-kun's doing," Shuichi suggests.

Lazy responses of agreement ring throughout the room and one by one they trickle out, all sparing one final look at Kokichi. Kaito looked proud. Not of himself, but of Kokichi. Tsumugi looked distressed, but was trying to hide it. It was probably from her own mind than from Kokichi himself. Rantaro and Keebo both looked fulfilled. They felt like they'd paid back even a fraction of how much Kokichi had brought them forward. Kaede looked sympathetic. It wasn't that she pitied Kokichi, it was that she finally understood him a little more. Maki looked thoughtful. Something she hated so much was the very thing that finally pushed her friend to the truth. Then Shuichi...

The door was about to close when something caught Kokichi's eye.

"Saihara-chan."

Kokichi already had tears falling down his face like a rainstorm finally moving over a parched garden. He didn’t care though, opting to just hide his face behind his scarf as Shuichi approached him. Without making a sound, Kokichi reached for something on his desk, which was proven difficult while hidden behind his scarf. He found the small piece of paper and held it out to Shuichi. Then Kokichi let go of his scarf, revealing his tear stained face to Shuichi. He was smiling though as he held out his will to the detective. Despite the sobs that threatened to escape his body, Kokichi’s were steady as Shuichi carefully took the paper, giving him a confused look.

"Throw this out for me, please."
The class celebrates Kokichi’s birthday for real this time.

TW: Suicidal ideation, implications of past self harm and self deprecation. It's brief though. This is a relatively wholesome chapter, just with angsty undertones. Sorry, that's just my writing style, honestly.

I think I always knew the truth. Yea, I totally did. Jeez, I hate this. The truth never keeps me from being uncomfortable, does it? I feel gross with all this. That's a lie. The right word is terrified. Wow. Did... did the truthful part of me just lie?! I'm really that hopeless, huh? Whatever. I don't wanna think right now... I've been doing way too much of that for my tastes. I've been telling too much truth as well. That always puts me off a bit. The truth is what makes you vulnerable and with everything that's happened, I'd rather just... go to sleep than deal with one more stressful situation. I've already gone down that road through and literal sleeping is out the window too. I've already gotten a full hour. I'm still too paranoid to get more than that.

That's a lie though. I'm doing great!

I feel stupid after the whole thing last night. I just sort of lost it. I know why I was so bent on going back to that hell. It was stupid and selfish, but hey. This is Ouma Kokichi you're talking about, so of course it's going to be something stupid and selfish. Other than lying, that's sort of my thing, y'know. Forget it. I'm just beating around the bush is all. Even having truthful thoughts is taking a toll on me and that truly is disgusting... Come to think of it, I let my reason slip last night... Did anyone remember me saying that? Shit. I'll deal with it later. I should stop being a useless flip flop and actually get my point across without dancing around it. Not like I've never done that before, but this is just getting ridiculous.

Yea... I wanted the killing game begin so I would stop feeling like the villain. It's literally the dumbest and most cheesiest thing in the history of every, but that's my reason. I only wanted this so I could play hero like Momota and save everyone. I thought that if that happened, maybe I'd have a chance to redeem myself. Of course, I also could've apologized, but... let's just say this way is a lot less boring. Yea, I'll tell myself that for now! Too many truthbombs today... So yea, I did all of this for the sake of redemption. I know there isn't really hope in redeeming a liar like me, who makes everyone around him miserable, but I dunno. The feeling of having something waiting there for you just makes the burden a teensy bit lighter.

Now I know there's no chance of redemption.

Before I know it, I'm making my way to the bathroom. I'd like to say I know why, but I really don't. For second I figured I was going back to old habits, but when I played that thought, I knew it was a lie. That means my lies have been beaten down by all this truth. Ew. That's sorta weird though. The only lies I can't seem to see through most of the time are my own. I don't know what this ache in my heart and in my head is because I don't know which one of the pathetic lies and excuses is the actual truth. I reach the bathroom and now I know that there's a marker in my hand. How did I not notice that? I write something on my mirror without really writing it, if that makes
any sense and... oh.

*Worthless.*

Hm. Ouch? Well, I guess I was the one who wrote that. The way it hurts though is... well, it's different from physical pain, that's for sure. It still makes me feel... real? I don't know. It's stupid, but it just does. It's probably because it's something I can't argue with. It's something I've already accepted. I test the waters (why do we call it that?) by writing it a few more times. *Worthless.* *Worthless.* *Worthless.* Oh? It doesn't feel like a lie anymore! Maybe I should just figure out how to accept the, dare I say it, truth by training my mind to with this... That was a half lie. I'm being selfish again and want something to believe. Without this, I have nothing. Whatever. There's no mastermind watching, so no one will ever see.

*Disgraceful.*

*Cowardly.*

*Inconvenience.*

*Broken.*

*Terrible.*

*Failure.*

*Monster.*

...

*Monster.*


MONSTERMONSTERMONSTERMONSTERMONSTERMONSTERMONSTERMONSTERMONSTERMONSTERMONSTERMONSTERMONSTERMONSTERMONSTERMONSTERMONSTERMONSTERMONSTERMONSTERMONSTERMONSTERMONSTERMONSTERMONSTERMONSTERMONSTERMONSTERMONSTERMONSTERMONSTERMONSTERMONSTERMONSTERMONSTERMONSTERMONSTERMONSTERMONSTERMONSTERMONSTERMONSTER.

I'm *bored* now. I'll clean the mirror eventually.

<Yea, he's still really unstable... oh, and just to clarify; any time I'm writing in Kokichi's perspective, anything italicized will be a truth or a lie. It changes, but it shouldn't be too difficult to tell.>

"Ultimate Nightmare Fuel," June 23rd, 2:47

**ThingPurple:** Guess who's back? Back again! Insomniac gang???

**ThingWhite:** Ouma-kun you've been missing all day... also, weren't you kicked?

**PianoKeyaday:** I added him back

**ThingPurple:** Hey, neither of you are normal insomniacs!

**PianoKeyaday:** I'm so sorry about what happened

**ThingPurple:** Oh come on, Bakamatsu-chan! It wasn't your fault, okay? Just some asshole who just was feeling particularly bitter that day.
PianoKeyayday: That's oddly sweet of you

ThingPurple: Just not in a lying mood. Don't really have to worry as much about that anymore, do I? Don't expect it to last long though! >;3

ThingWhite: That's not the most believable thing I've heard today.

ThingPurple: Shush

PianoKeyayday: Are you sure you're alright though?

PianoKeyayday: You've been responding a bit slower than usual

ThingPurple: Who are you, Saihara-chan?! I'm doing spectacular!

ThingWhite: Then why have you been in your room all day? I'm not saying you can't be in your room, I just don't think that lines up with you being okay.

ThingPurple: Well I didn't say I was okay! I said I was spectacular!

PianoKeyayday: I don't wanna be too pushy, but you shouldn't be afraid to talk to us

ThingPurple: Oh deary me! I'm touched, but I'm fine and dandy!

ThingWhite: You didn't leave your room at all though!

ThingPurple: Is that it? The fact that I didn't leave my room today? Fine then. Let's go somewhere tomorrow/today!

ThingPurple: The park at noon. We're having a picnic. Be sure to alert everyone, deputy class rep~!

PianoKeyayday: Okay?

ThingPurple: Yay!

ThingWhite: Why did it take you five minutes to type that?

ThingPurple: Why can I see you chilling on Amami-chan's spare futon from the veranda?

ThingWhite: We are doing face masks and painting each other's nails.

PianoKeyayday: G A S P

PianoKeyayday: WITHOUT ME?!?!?!!!

ThingWhite: It was more of couples thing. Sorry!

ThingGreen: We also weren't expecting you to be awake at nearly three in the morning

ThingPurple: There's the lurker!

ThingGreen: First of all, my nails were drying. Second of all, I was technically ghost writing some of Keebo's texts
PianoKeyayday: RANTARO HOW COULD YOU BETRAY ME LIKE THAT?!

ThingGreen: Perish, mortal (I'll paint your nails tomorrow Kaede)

PianoKeyayday: YAY!!!!

ThingPurple: Since when have those two been using each other’s given names???

ThingWhite: Iruma-san called Taro an avocado earlier today and Akamatsu-san kicked her in the shin.

ThingPurple: BWAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHA

ThingWhite: Yes, it’s quite the story... (I'm being sarcastic.)

ThingPurple: NO ITS NOT THE STORY

ThingWhite: ???

ThingPurple: T A R O

PianoKeyayday: Awwww, that’s an adorable pet name!

ThingWhite: OUMA-KUN!

ThingGreen: WHY?!

ThingPurple: BECAUSE

ThingPurple: That's some of the purest shit I've heard in a while and I'm honestly glad you two finally stopped being pining messes because you genuinely make each other happy.

ThingGreen:

PianoKeyayday:

ThingWhite:

ThingPurple: THATS JUST A LIE THO

ThingGreen: Glad to see you're getting more comfortable

ThingPurple: I have no idea what you're talking about

Private Messages, "Oh Buddy-o-pal," June 23rd, 3:02

Buddy: Hey Ouma-kun.

Pal: WOOAH!!! SAIHARA-CHAN WAS ONLINE THIS WHOLE TIME AND HE DIDN'T TELL ME??!!?!??!!!

Buddy: Ouma-kun.

Pal: Okay, listen. I know everyone's all worried about me or whatever after what happened, but
could you please not bring that up?

**Buddy:** I wasn't going to.

**Pal:**

**Pal:** You weren't? (not that I care.)

**Buddy:** I think I know you well enough to know that you don't like talking about this sort of stuff. I'm curious, I'll admit, but I think your well-being is more important than my instincts as a detective.

**Pal:** Oh

**Pal:** Okay

**Pal:** Here's a wacky question then: why are you texting me at three in the morning Saihara-chan?

**Buddy:** I wanted to see if you wanted to finish that book we were reading the other day. I know you probably aren't going to sleep anytime soon.

**Pal:** The only not boring book in existence???

**Buddy:** No, but at the same time, yes.

**Pal:** How come you never finished it? Last time I check, you are a total bookworm!

**Buddy:** I wanted to read it with you. You're not bad company you know?

**Pal:** Of course I am! Did you know I have over fifty years of experience in the entertainment business?!

**Buddy:** So is that a yes?

**Pal:** Yea, whatever. I have nothing better to do.

**Buddy:** Okay, I'll be at your dorm in about three minutes.

**Pal:** My dorm?! What happened to the common room?! Are you making a pass on me Saihara-chan?! I love you too!!!

**Buddy:** No! I just didn't want to force you to leave your room yet because you haven't left since yesterday!

**Buddy:** Sorry! I didn't mean to bring that up!

**Pal:** Stop apologizing. You didn't even know you did it until after, so saying you're sorry is sorta dumb

**Buddy:** Do you think my apologies make everyone annoyed with me?

**Buddy:** Wait

**Buddy:** Never mind
Buddy: That was a dumb question

Pal: I'm like, 99% sure that everyone's more worried than they are annoyed, Saihara-chan. Don't think you're being an inconvenience though because that's a stupid lie

Buddy: Oh, thank you.

Pal: Hey! You shouldn't thank a supreme leader of evil you know?!

Buddy: Ah, my mistake. Thank you anyway for being honest. I'll be there soon. I just left my room.

Pal: Okidoky!

Buddy:

Pal:

Pal: Hey Saihara-chan?

Buddy: Yea?

Pal: svdhehanThanksforexistingIguessbswhshdhnx

Buddy: You're welcome.

Pal: WIAH????!! Where'd you get that from, Saihara-chan?!????

<Kokichi has the occasional honest moment now, which is pretty cool.>

Hope's Peak Academy didn't have classes on that Monday. The hacker responsible was a lot more experienced in the field than the staff thought, so they had to convince the student themself to fix the lights. Obviously, they had chosen to be difficult and so there was some time that the students could use to recover from the traumatic memories that might've resurfaced from the terrifying event. Keebo had heard from Kaede and Shuichi that the other two first year classes were pretty shaken up as well, though that was to be expected. Keebo even picked up on a conversation about Enoshima Junko, who was the mastermind of both of the other games. She had a hysterical breakdown worse than Kokichi's from the sound of things.

Keebo shook the thought from his head and chose to fiddle with his bracelet. Just earlier that day, he had swapped the black and white knotted one in exchange for the blue one. He was currently seated on the train next to Rantaro, who was on the phone with his mother. Rantaro had gone to visit her shortly after his breakdown the previous week. Keebo was the one who had convinced him, so he wound up coming along to make sure he didn't ditch the idea at the last second. He didn't though. Keebo didn't know exactly what the two Amamis spoke about given that he'd left the room. All he knew is that the aftermath was a teary eyed, yet smiling Rantaro and an "if you hurt my son" speech from Aina.

Humming a tune he didn't really know the lyrics to, Keebo gazed lazily throughout the train compartment. He figured Maki and Kaito would be standing, holding hands with one another, but they weren't. Maki was speaking with Kirumi about something Keebo couldn't catch due to the layers of chatter and their naturally quiet voices. Kaito was sitting with Korekiyo just a few seats down and talking about space. He knew that because Kaito was just a loud person. The melody in Keebo's head died out as his memories of the beat only went so far. The roboticist leaned back a bit
as he racked his brain for any other songs he knew. When he couldn't get more than a few measures into one though, Keebo sighed and slumped down further.

"Hey, you look tired," Rantaro commented, slipping down in his own seat so he was somewhat level with Keebo; it wasn't easy considering he had his legs up on the seat, crossed, but he eventually settled for sitting somewhat normally. "We're almost there I think. I'm not great with the time."

"Yes, we'll be there in two stops," Keebo assured.

Rantaro grinned softly in response, ruffling Keebo's hair. It was such a Rantaro thing to do that Keebo for once didn't chose to swat the hand away, opting to lean into the touch. The two of them had only been together for a week and barely showed much affection in public. Roughly half of the population of Japan was openly supportive towards couples like Keebo and Rantaro. Rantaro was never really the type to care about the opinions of strangers, but Keebo wasn't particularly subtle with his discomfort when people looked at him critically, so that was always a setback of sorts. Keebo didn't seem to care much though, reaching out his hand to intertwine his fingers with Rantaro's.

Due to their first kiss being while both of them were breaking down, neither of them were really as receptive to what was happening. However, now that they were much more aware of their actions, their naturally awkward tendencies from when they were just friends was still there. Rantaro pressed his lips together in a goofy smile in order to keep an ever brighter smile from crossing his face and Keebo's face was heavily dusted in red over the simple gesture. Despite the couple's fears, nobody shot them dirty looks. A beat passed until the pair finally relaxed when suddenly, Keebo heard something. Rantaro was humming a song they both knew. Keebo smiled nervously before joining, hoping they weren't disturbing any other passengers.

<Amamiibo is so cute and awkward I love them.>

The park was a beautiful place. It was a Monday afternoon, meaning it was mainly empty other than a few people out on a walk. Tsumugi watched silently as her classmates laid out blankets and set down baskets of food. Her eyes lingered on Kokichi for a moment as she thought back to the other night. Tsumugi pursed her lips. As she did with every game related problem, Tsumugi felt responsible for the whole situation. She knew it was unreasonable to do so, but her mind always went back to the idea in a bitter dance. After Tenko had a fight over her trying to stop Gonta, Tsumugi stopped drowning out the guilt. Bathing in it didn't feel great on her mind, but she forced herself to nonetheless.

"Hey, Shirogane..." a lazy voice rang out from next to Tsumugi, "you alright? You look all tired."

Tsumugi turned and was shocked to see Himiko. Sure, the voice made it relatively obvious, but Tsumugi just wasn't expecting the magician to seek her out in particular. Things between them were tense after the sixth trial. Tsumugi only got along with Shuichi out of the three survivors and she could tell that the other two, as well as a decent chunk of her class, still seemed to be having trouble talking to the cosplayer. She didn't blame them, but Tsumugi still felt somewhat bitter over it. Everyone is beginning to make amends. Maki and Kokichi are getting close again. Ryoma recently started greeting Kirumi again. Even Kaede and Rantaro were on given name terms. As much as she hated to admit it, she didn't want to feel like an outcast for the role she had chosen to play.

"Hm? Oh, I'm alright," Tsumugi lied, not wanting to worry Himiko, "no need to worry about plain old me."
"Mkay," Himiko mumbled, averting her eyes a bit as if she wanted to say something else, "Angie's going to show Tenko and me how to make a flower crown, so... you wanna join?"

Tsumugi was surprised, but didn't make a show of it, "uh... yea. Okay!"

With that, Himiko walked away, which prompted Tsumugi to follow her. Her and Tenko has recovered from their fight pretty quick. There were too many overarching issues that neither of them were willing to get into, so it all sort of faded away into an ugly memory. The two came to an eventual stop at one of the blankets. Almost instantly, Himiko collapsed sleepily overtop both Tenko and Angie's laps, mumbling something about being sleepy. Tsumugi sat down politely across from the two, giving a chaste greeting and flashing a simple smile their way. Angie then gave the other girl a scrutinizing gaze, though her smile never faded. Finally, as if she decided something she already knew the answer to, Angie spoke.

"Tsumugi! Atua says that you should join us!" Angie exclaimed, waving the blue haired girl over to the trio.

"I'm already here though," Tsumugi chuckled.

"No no! Not just the activity!" Angie cried, "join us!"

With that, Angie reached out from over Himiko's middle to grab Tsumugi's wrist. Finally getting the message, Tsumugi awkwardly changed her position so she was sitting beside Angie. Smiling brightly, the artist grabbed Himiko's ankles, slinging them over so they rested on Tsumugi's lap. Tenko laughed, which earned a frustrated (though Tsumugi sensed some sort of amusement) huff from Himiko. Tsumugi found herself smiling fondly at the three of them. She felt warm inside on what she thought would be a grim day for her mental health. It was good to be surrounded by people who make you feel at home, she presumed, watching serenely as Tenko braided Himiko's hair absentmindedly.

No, it's good to be around people who are your home.

<Angie, Tenko, Himiko, and Tsumugi have such a wholesome friendship. It's refreshing, honestly.>

"Maki-chan, I'm not blind, ya know?" Kokichi said over his shoulder, "I can see you following me!"

"I know. We've made eye contact multiple time," Maki remarked.

The two of them were standing quite a ways away from the rest of the group. Kokichi had just been looking to catch a break from everyone giving him worried looks, but apparently that was foiled by Maki tailing him ever since she first saw him that morning. They were standing by a pond and at this point, it was about time for dinner, so Kokichi hoped that he and Maki would be called back before Maki could get him into any sort of uncomfortable conversation. He knew Maki well enough to know that the chances of that happening were low though. Maki's never been the type for emotional conversations and neither was he. With this in mind, Kokichi spoke up.

"Care to explain why?" Kokichi raised his brow suspiciously.

Maki shifted a bit before mumbling something that Kokichi didn't quite catch.

"Speak up, Maki-chan!" Kokichi sighed, stopping his strides forward, "even an animal with like, super duper hearing wouldn't be able to hear you."
Maki paused, "... was... ried... something... id."

"Jeez, Maki! I don't even wanna know anymore!" Kokichi teased, shedding the honorific without realizing it. He was comfortable.

"I was worried you'd do something stupid," Maki admitted, finally speaking clearly enough for Kokichi to pick up on it, "back then, you hid a lotta stuff from me and... I don't know? I'm just paranoid that you're going to do that again... or something. Whatever."

Kokichi was dumbfounded for a moment, "oh... silly Maki!" He eventually smirked, "I don't have any plans of going anywhere."

Maki gave him a look that said she knew he was lying.

"At least not right now," Kokichi sighed, "you don't have to go following me around though. It's not like I can do anything right now with everyone pretty much babysitting me."

"I know," Maki huffed, "I can't help it..."

"How sweet!" Kokichi cooed before trailing off a bit into a softer tone, "... that makes me feel like I actually matter, so... thanks."

"You're not lying," Maki pointed out.

"Really?" Kokichi deadpanned, sarcasm lacing his words.

"Well... I'm glad to see you're at least starting to open up," Maki muttered, "I think it's time for you to finally be a bit more like yourself."

Kokichi laughed, "me too, Maki."

"Me too."

<Now that Kokichi no longer feels like he has to push everyone away, he's finally going to be a bit more openly kind. So yay! He's still going to lie enough because that's just who Kokichi is.>

Miu poured as she stared at the setting sun. Everyone else was helping pack up, but the inventor couldn't be bothered to help. Instead she just took in the sight of the colors. Her typically harsh facial expressions had softened into some sort of serene concentration. She tried not to focus on the fact that she knew she'd end up working herself half to death as soon as the power returned. Instead she gazed quietly at the orange and pink that had painted the sky in a thousand shades. She barely noticed the body that took a seat next to her. She probably wouldn't have if it weren't for the black t-shirt with an obnoxiously bright yellow cluster of stars and planets that the other person wore.

"Sup, Luminass?" Miu greeted, lacking her usually venomous tone.

"Nothin much," Kaito replied, ignoring the crude nickname, "how bout you? You're sorta just sulking over here."

"So fucking what?" Miu retorted, falling back onto the bed of grass behind her.

"Listen, I know you’re probably going through some stressful shit with midterms in a few weeks,” Kaito began, “but you’ve gotta let yourself take a break.”

“Whatever,” Miu grumbled. She’s glad Kaito only thought she was overworking herself due to midterms.
“Something tells me you’re going to ignore all of that,” Kaito chuckled, but the lightheartedness left his voice for a second as he stared down at Miu with a serious gaze, “don’t. S’ only gonna make shit worse if you go overworking yourself.”

“Tell that to Tojoke,” Miu snorted, still trying to dodge agreeing to Kaito’s words.

“Maki’s already on it,” Kaito assured, flashing Miu his signature grin, “don’t sweat it though, okay? It’s alright to take a break from everything.”

“If I agree will you piss off?” Miu quirked her brow, “If so, I’m all for that bullshit you just spewed out.”

“Glad to hear it!” Kaito cheered, standing up.

“Wait,” Miu stopped Kaito before he could get too far, “you too.”

“What about me?” Kaito puzzled.

“You don’t have to be the tough guy all the time, okay?” Miu looked away from her spot on the ground, “oh fuck, I don’t even know what I’m talking about...”

Kaito gave Miu and uneasy smile, but from her angle and with her intuition, she couldn’t tell that it was fake, “alright, I’ll take not of that!” He confirmed, walking away without another word.

<Kaito and Miu are chaotic friends. This won’t be the last time they interact. These two have a pretty serious moment in chapter forty as well, so I wanted to get some practice in.>

Shuichi and Maki sat quietly on a bench outside of the dormitory. The street lamps were out still, leaving room for only the stars and the moon to softly illuminate the area. The pair was waiting for Kaito in order to start training. Typically, when one of the three didn’t show up, the others just trained anyway, but since Kaito not only had a tendency to show up late, but also lead the other two, Maki and Shuichi decided to keep waiting. The detective rapped his fingered against his lap without a sound as he cast a glance at Maki. She looked like she had something on her mind, but Shuichi just couldn’t figure out what for the life of him what it was.

“Is everythi—”

“Have you noticed anything off about Kaito?” Maki spoke up, shooting Shuichi a borderline panicked expression, “like... he’s not as positive anymore and I think that he might be faking being happy for some reason and so don’t know what. I don’t even know. It could be nothing. He’s just been getting lost in thought a lot and I don’t know why he won’t talk to us—”

“Maki-san, calm down,” Shuichi instructed, resulting in the bodyguard catching herself, “I agree... I think—“

“Hey! Sorry I’m late,” Kaito chose that moment to burst through the dormitory doors and stride confidently over to the pair, “took me a while to convince him to come.”

Only then did Maki and Shuichi notice Kokichi, who stood behind Kaito, pouting. This wasn’t the first time Kaito had brought someone to training. He brought Gonta shortly after his breakdown a while back. He’d also brought Himiko, who ended up falling asleep halfway through, after she’d finally woken up. Keebo had shown up once or twice in the two weeks he had spent alone. Korekiyo and Rantaro were both brought out on the same night just the previous week as well. Kaito has the same reason for inviting them that he did for Shuichi and Maki. He thought they needed a friend. It was admirable and in hindsight, they probably should’ve seen this one coming.
“Hey, I was planning on getting my beauty rest!” Kokichi retorted. Shuichi and Maki both knew that was a lie and that Kokichi got a worryingly low amount of sleep.

“That’s not the time to go to bed after!” Kaito reminded the supreme leader. It was obvious that this wasn’t the first time he had to say that.

Kokichi made a dramatic show of yawning. Shuichi was worried for a moment that Kaito forcing Kokichi out was probably not a great idea. The detective decided not to worry about it though and trust Kaito, hoping that Kokichi would give some sort of signal if he got uncomfortable. Choosing not to say anything, Shuichi stood up, Maki doing the same, and making his way over to the two purple haired boys. He didn’t miss the way that Maki seemed to relax a bit when Kokichi rolled up his sleeve. Why is she relieved about that? Then the supreme leader stretched his arms over his head and Shuichi saw two faint scars on both wrists, both of which had been covered previously by some bracelets. Oh.

Shuichi once again didn’t comment on the situation as he prepared to do some push ups as soon as Kaito began. His mind kept wandering to his own wrists though. Could Maki tell? Probably not, right? Shuichi kept the thought fresh in his mind for a while until he spared a glance towards Kokichi. The shorter boy almost instantly collapsed upon attempting to do a single push up, which was slightly concerning to Shuichi considering he genuinely looked like he was crying. He was laughing though. It was Kokichi’s real laugh that made Shuichi feel a sense of accomplishment. Kokichi looked up and made eye contact with Shuichi before giving him a genuine smile that made the blue haired boy feel warm.

Reciprocating the smile, Shuichi got back to work.
Happy Cat Pun Day

Chapter Summary

Ryoma's birthday arrives and so the class goes to a cat cafe to celebrate. Clawful puns are made and interesting misunderstanding sends everyone into fits of laughter.

"Ultimate Nightmare Fuel," July 1st, 7:46

PianoKeyayday: GUYS
NormieHecc: WHAT?
Smoll: AKAMATSU I SWEAR TO GOD
PianoKeyayday: GUESS WHAT TODAY IS (Suffer, mortal)
NormieHecc: I'm???
PianoKeyayday: IT'S HOSHIS BIRTHDAY
NormieHecc: OH YEA!
Smoll: DAMN IT WOMAN
NormieHecc: GASPU

NormieHecc changed Smoll to RonSwansonButShort

NormieHecc: OKAY, SO WHAT ARE WE DOING??!!
RonSwansonButShort: I DID NOT AGREE TO THIS WHOLE BIRTHDAY SHENANIGAN SITUATION
PianoKeyayday: I WAS THINKING THE CAT CAFE DOWNTOWN
RonSwansonButShort:
RonSwansonButShort: I WHOLEHEARTEDLY AGREE TO THIS BIRTHDAY SHENANIGAN SITUATION
PianoKeyayday: YES!!!!!
NormieHecc: THIS IS JUST PLAIN PURRECT
RonSwansonButShort:
PianoKeyayday:
As planned, the group headed out at around noon. Hope's Peak lay in the busier parts of town due to the high education rate. Business are often eager to recruit ultimate students in a part time job and there were even a few graduates who had set up their careers in the shape of their own companies. As result, there was no need to take the train seeing as the walk to downtown was probably not worth the rush or the hassle. There were a few objections such as Himiko and Kokichi, but Himiko quickly settled for getting a piggyback ride from Tenko and Kokichi stopped complaining as soon as Gonta offered to do the same. The supreme leader rejected the offer, choosing to stay quiet for the time being instead.

Just like when they had gone to the park, the roads were nearly empty. It was beyond anyone how Kaede had convinced the staff to let the class go downtown during class hours. It was a Tuesday afternoon and depending on what Ryoma decided, they could be out until curfew. The boy in question was currently conversing with Maki about one thing or another. They might've commented once or twice on how loud their peers were, which wasn't exactly an exaggeration. Although Kokichi was still keeping to himself, the rest of the class had efficiently devolved into it's typical state of disaster. There were a few exceptions, namely Kirumi, Rantaro, Himiko (she was asleep, so it doesn't exactly count,) and Korekiyo.

"I swear to fuck if the employees don't have amreowsing outfits on, I'm gonna fucking sue them for all their shit," Miu chortled, swelling with pride at her own pun.

"Oh my god, you crusty corn flake!" Kokichi cried, "don't make sexual cat puns! It ruins it for all the other people who are depressing enough to mew it!"

"We're not even there yet and I'm already this close to punching you both," Maki deadpanned, glaring at the two of them.

"Hey!" Kokichi yelped, "you can't do that! It'd be purrassment if you di—"

Maki elbowed Kokichi in the gut.

"Oh my god, Maki-san, you knocked him out!" Shuichi panicked.

"Oh fuck," Maki cursed before wordlessly picking up the smaller boy as if he weigh nothing, then turning to talk to Shuichi, "just to be clear, I'm well aware he's not asleep. He's endured a lot worse. I just know that he'd throw a fit if we left him."

"He what?" Shuichi raised his eyebrows in alarm.

"He'd throw a fi—"
"No, no, no, b—before that," Shuichi clarified, but before he could get a proper answer, Kokichi opened his eyes from in Maki's arms and shot him a look. He's uncomfortable, the detective deduced, "n—never mind...

Maki huffed something unintelligible before returning to her conversation with Ryoma. Shuichi hastily mouthed an apology to Kokichi, shamefully tugging on the bill of his cap. Kokichi frowned for a moment before shaking his head, hesitating, then sending the other boy one of his rare genuine smiles. Shuichi paused for a second before ultimately returning the gesture with a closed mouth smile of his own. Nothing else was needed to be said.

"Aren't you at all worried that you're going to have cat hair in your food?" Maki asked Ryoma, "I'm not the type to think too much about this, but this place has gotta be hella dirty. Cats step in litter boxes and shit before stepping on the counters so..."

"Nah, the place is constantly sanitized," Ryoma replied, "and the cats I'm pretty sure are trained well, so I doubt they get up on the counters very often."

"Okay, yea," Maki sighed, "you know an awful lot about this place for someone who claims they've never been."

"I looked it up earlier," Ryoma grumbled, earning a look from Maki, "hey, it was either that or one of those damn cat puns."

"I'll accept that," Maki approved, a ghost of a smile tracing her lips.

Not too long after, the class reached the cafe. It looked just like any other building on the outside. Brick walls aged to look like downtown streets you see in beautiful pictures. From beyond the windows though, one could find light pine wood floors and softly colored walls painted in bright shades of pink, yellow, and blue. Upon entry, the ultimates noticed just how empty the place was. It was around the time workers typically got their lunch breaks, but it's sort of a given that people would prefer to eat at their offices rather than a cat cafe. Kaede walked up to the hostess, a short woman with curly pink hair, and struck up a bright conversation with her. Soon enough, everyone was seated around a few joint tables.

"Holy fuck," Miu breathed, "that was like watching two fucking suns have a fucking conversation...

"It what?" Tsumugi chimed in from the inventor's right, raising a brow mischievously.

"N—nothing!" Miu yelped, "mind yo fuckin' business, Shittygane!"

"Iruma, we're in public," Kaede sighed, "could you please turn it down a bit with the language?"

"F—fu—frickin' fine," Miu grumbled, slamming her face on the table to hide the blush that adorned it.

The waiter came by a few minutes later. He seemed more than delighted to be serving the class, not even batting an eye as Kokichi lied on his order multiple times. He gave Shuichi a polite smile when he corrected Kokichi’s lies for him before walking away. However, Maki, who sat between Kaito and Kirumi, couldn't help but notice something off about the maid. Her eyes looked heavy with anxiety as she watched the waiter walk away. Her hands, which Maki had figured she had just placed formally on her lap, were clenched into fists as her left leg bounced up and down. Maki bit the inside of her cheek as she assessed the situation. Kirumi was so used to serving. Not being
"Relax," Maki said calmly, resting her head in the palm of her hand, giving Kirumi a look of disinterest with her own, subtle, traces of worry, "this is restaurant, they're doing their job. Or something."

"Ah," Kirumi stopped bouncing her leg and turned to face Maki, "apologies. I suppose that I am just—"

"Not used to being pampered?" Maki concluded, "yea, I get that... S' sorta stupid that you have to be so anxious over this and—wait, shit. That came out wrong. It's just... unfair that you're so... unused to being treated, and uh... I'm really not good at this, am I?"

"You are much better than you think you are," Kirumi assured, pulling her lips into a soft smile. Now that Maki got a good look at the other girl's face, she saw just how unwell she looked. Of course, Kirumi was really attractive in general, but it was beyond just her normal features. Even under what must be multiple layers of concealer, the bodyguard could still make out the faintest hint of eye bags. Her face was also noticeably paler, not that she showed enough skin anywhere else to make the comparison. It took Maki a moment to make a connection to Miu. It was no secret that Miu was becoming unhealthy with her eating habits, but Maki doubted that Kirumi would purposely choose to neglect her own needs. Just how hard was she working herself? Maki knew it wasn't the time and place though, so she proceeded with casual conversation.

"Hey, hey Keebs," Rantaro crouched on the floor in front of a ginger cat, "look at this one."

Despite being a self proclaimed dog person, Rantaro seemed awfully content with just being sucked into a void of cats for all eternity. Ever since the drinks had arrived, the adventurer, along with a few others such as Ryoma and Kaede, had gone to see the multitude of cats that had spread all throughout the dining area. Considering the entire place was empty other than the sixteen high schoolers and even more cats, there was no worry over bothering other guests. Keebo, who had chosen to come with shortly after catching the sight of Rantaro petting a cat with a warm expression, joined his partner on the floor. The action resulted in Kokichi yelling "whipped!" at the roboticist, but the term was lost on him.

"Oh, this one's cute!" Keebo exclaimed, eyes brightening, "well, they're all cute, but—uh—you get what I mean, right?"

Rantaro chuckled before reaching out and ruffling Keebo's hair, "yea, I do," he assured as Keebo playfully swatted the hand away.

The two of them sat beside each other for a while, not so much as uttering a word. They took turns petting the fluffy orange cat in front of them, who clearly enjoyed the affection. It reminded the pair a lot of Azumi, although that cat was cream colored and less puffy looking. The feline purred at the constants, pushing it's tiny head to brush beneath the palm of the couple. Keebo's expression softened a bit upon catching a glimpse of Rantaro's face. He looked content, eyes staring gently as the ginger cat as he held his own head in his spare hand. It was so different and comforting compared to the broken complexion Keebo had seen barely two weeks ago.

"Hey, Rantaro?" Keebo kept his eyes focused on the ginger cat in order to fight the blush and goofy grin that was trying to creep onto his face.
"Hm?" Rantaro hummed, tearing his eyes away from the cat in order to face Keebo, whose face was already pink.

"I love you," Keebo mumbled, stuffing his head into his knees, turning it to the side to give Rantaro an awkward smile.

"I... love you, too." Rantaro replied, sending a bright, although equally awkward, smile of his own in return.

The two had said those words on occasion ever since Rantaro's breakdown, but it never ceased to make both of their faces go bright pink and their hearts flutter. The adventurer carefully leaned to the side, pressing a kiss to Keebo's cheek. When Rantaro returned to his original position, the pair linked their pinkies without a second thought, using their spare hands to continue petting the orange cat, which had begun meowing as soon as they'd gone without contact for over ten seconds. The pleasant moment was soothing to both of their racing minds.

"Oh, I know!" Keebo chirped, face lighting up, "we should get our own cat after we graduate!"

Rantaro raised his eyebrows at the implication, "you think we're still going to be together by graduation?"

"Well, yea," Keebo responded, suddenly looking extremely worried, "do you not?! Oh no—I spoke too soon, didn't I? Uh—j—just forget I—um... forget I said anything! It was a little—well, a little p—premature—I mean, w—we've on been together for, what—two weeks? Yea—uh—"

"No, that's not what I meant," Rantaro assured, "I've... I've also thought about the future myself."

"You have?!" Keebo cried, "oh good..."

Rantaro was silent for a moment, "okay, I know how you're probably going to answer this, but..." he hesitated, "never mind."

"You sure?" Keebo worried, memories of the two weeks he had spent in the library the last time Rantaro had bottled things up for too long flashing through his head.

"Yea," Rantaro confirmed, but his face said otherwise.

Keebo pursed their lips, but wasn't intuitive enough to decide he needed to dive deeper, "okay..." he pet the cat a little more, other hand still linked with Rantaro's, "say, what color cat do you—"

"Are you sure you want me of all people by your side?" Rantaro blurted.

Both people, including Rantaro, froze at the words. The boy wasn't the type to just say those things. He preferred to keep them to himself until everything shuts down completely. The cat stared with annoyance due to the sudden neglect before walking away, leaving the couple to their own devices. Keebo cursed himself for not picking up on this sooner. Rantaro was obviously still recovering from his sister's death. He was obviously still blaming himself as well.

"Of course I do!" Keebo exclaimed.

Rantaro looked like he wanted to say more, but settled on "thanks," instead, scooting a bit closer to Keebo.

"Son idiotas," Kaito muttered, although he didn't seem to mean it in a mean way. (They're idiots.)
"Sí, pero son idiotas enamorados," Korekiyo reminded, trying to keep the grimace from his face as he thought about his own situation. (Yes, but they're idiots in love.)

"Puedo comprender vosotros, ¿sabéis?" Rantaro deadpanned, although he was smirking the slightest bit, resulting in Kaito to begin sputtering as Korekiyo broke out laughing. (I can understand you guys, you know that, right?)

<Kheadcanon: Rantaro, Kirumi, Angie, Korekiyo, Kokichi, Kaito, and Maki are all fluent in at least one language other than Japanese. Tsumugi learned a bit of English so she could watch the dubbed version of Ghost Stories, Shuichi knows bits and pieces of various languages from cases. I can give you the specific languages if you'd like for any character. The Spanish here was based off my own memory, so I apologize for any mistakes. I am in no way fluent.>

Kaede hummed in content at the people around her. Bitter memories of Kokichi's first party had taken the pianist down a peg or two, so seeing everyone getting along was refreshing. It got her mind off her insecurities as a leader for a moment. Sure, she was only the deputy class rep, but everyone, including Shuichi, knew that she enjoyed the leadership position a lot more than the detective did. Although the boy did help out considerably with planning and often gave Kaede ideas that she herself hadn't thought of. Kaede knew Shuichi was significantly closer with a few of her classmates than she did, so it was always nice to have someone to turn to for questions.

"You seem happy," Shuichi sat down next to Kaede quietly, shooting her a warm smile, "I'm glad."

Kaede laughed, "I dunno, it's just that seeing everyone getting along... that's all I really wanted back then, you know?"

Shuichi nodded, "right."

"You know Shuichi... I'm proud of you," Kaede looked at the detective, "you've grown a lot."

"What do you mean?" Shuichi quizzed, "I'm not too far from where I started."

"Well, during the screening, I saw you," Kaede replied, "you got rid of the hat and everything."

"It's back now, though," Shuichi reminded casually, tugging on the brim of said hat.

"I know, but that's okay," Kaede said softly, "you're strong even with the hat. I know that now."

Shuichi smiled, "thank you, Kaede."

<Ttheir friendship makes me warm, what is this?>

Kokichi leaned back in his seat, staring blankly at his classmates. Most of them had gone to the cats at this point, but the supreme leader couldn't bring himself to move. He masked his blank face as one of disinterest, pretending that he didn't wish to interact with his peers. He did though. He really did. No longer held back by the shackles of paranoia, Kokichi couldn't find a valid excuse in his mind for not doing anything. Instead he was held in place by fear. Fear that revolves around his childhood that had built up anxiety and even more paranoia. Fear that revolves around the words that had been scrawled into his desk years ago. Fear that came from the scars on his body. Fear that came from the words he still hasn't erased from his mirror.

"You're acting weird," Himiko decided, staring lazily at the boy, "weirder than normal, I mean..."

Kokichi wasn't sure when the magician had returned to the table. Last he'd seen of her was her
petting a lazy cat near the corner of the room. Her face seemed genuinely interested, a stark contrast to her typical, half asleep expression. It made Kokichi think about just how obvious his face was about his emotions. Of all his classmates, the magician was definitely one of the easiest to trick. She had a tendency to assume every word that left his mouth was a lie, which was ideal in the KGS, but slightly disheartening now that he was trying to recover. Regardless, Kokichi quickly put on a mask of excitement and turning to Himiko.

"Ah, Yumeno-chan, what a pleasant surprise!" Kokichi cheered, faux happiness seeping into his words, "that's a lie though. You're gross and I have like, forty security cameras here and they're all linked to my brain."

"Sure," Himiko deadpanned, making it painfully clear to Kokichi that she didn't buy his happy charade, "you gonna eat that cake?"

Kokichi slid his plate over to the magician. He didn't know why he ordered it. He disliked nearly everything strawberry flavored aside from the actual fruit. Himiko tied her hair back before beginning to eat the sweet. She wasn't wearing her hat today, Kokichi noticed. Himiko seemed tired, which relieved Kokichi for a moment. That meant she wouldn't pry at him for more information. When she was about halfway through eating the cake, Himiko took a second to join Kokichi in looking around at the rest of the class. She looked at the liar last and saw the slightest bit of apprehension and longing in his eyes. Pursing her lips, the redhead set down her fork, slumping forward towards the table the slightest bit.

"Why aren't you hanging out with the others?" Himiko asked innocently.

The look in Kokichi's eyes was gone as soon as it appeared, "they're all mega boring, so I figured I'd just have a totally pawsome time on my own!"

"Oh my Atua..." Himiko groaned at the pun, "I know you're lying, by the way."

"Oh? And since when have you been the ultimate detective?" Kokichi snarked, anxiety rising a bit at the accusation.

"I'm not, I'm a mage!" Himiko insisted, "I've just been so used to bottling things up that I can tell when someone else is doing it too. You're not the only one though, don't worry."

"I wasn't worried," Kokichi lied, crossing his arms absentmindedly, "why are you only saying this now? I did that bottley-thingie in the simulator, too."

"Yea, but..." Himiko trailed off, flashing back to the night Kokichi had yelled at her after she criticized Shuichi's emotions, "I think I know you enough now to know the difference."

Kokichi was quiet for moment, "I see."

"That's not a bad thing," Himiko mumbled, "I hate to admit it, but... it's really nice to be able to say those things out loud... or something..."

Kokichi didn't reply and Himiko took that as a queue to end the conversation and she continued to eat the cake. Kokichi on the other hand, gave her a thoughtful look, lost in thought. After a while, the supreme leader let out a huff, settling on the smallest of smiles. Yumeno Himiko wasn't that boring, he decided. The girl in question shot him a suspicious look, which left at the sight of the tiny grin. Himiko then left out a huff of her own. Ouma Kokichi wasn't that annoying, she decided. A few minutes later, when the cake was gone, Himiko slowly stood up. She was about to walk away when she turned around to Kokichi, who gave her a confused look.
"You wanna..." Himiko hesitated, "you wanna go pet some cats with Tenko and me? She'll let you if I tell her to."

Kokichi's face went blank, "uh... yea, okay," he agreed, "not like I have anything else to do. Besides, I'm feline up to it!"

Himiko elbowed him in the ribs, but it didn't stop Kokichi from cackling like a maniac. The magician wouldn't admit it, but she was hiding laughter of her own.

"I have an announcement: Roses are red, violets are blue. Oumeno is valid and so are you. These two having a soft friendship is my oxygen."

Tenko found herself walking alone as her classmates wandered around downtown. They’d left the cafe a few minutes ago and had resolved to keep walking around to see what catches their eyes. A few paces ahead the aikido master could see Himiko chatting quietly with Shuichi and she felt bad over the idea of interrupting. And so she kept to herself, focusing on the rhythm of her steps as her feet tapped against the sidewalk. She hated to admit it, but Tenko trusted Shuichi to hang around Himiko. After the screening and seeing how he had helped Himiko during her trial was nice and she even had the tiniest hint of respect for Kokichi for the same reasons. Above all though, she was glad that Himiko was beginning to reach out more.

"Ya-ha! Hello Tenko!" Angie's energetic voice rang out to Tenko's left, "did you enjoy your meal??? Angie's dish was delightful! Truly blessed by Atua himself~ In fact, you could even say it was... purrfect!"

"Ah, Yonaga-san, not you too!" Tenko cried, "I thought you said puns were cursed in the eyes of Atua!"

"Ah, Angie did say that!" Angie remembered, resting her hand on her chin thoughtfully, "fortunately, that was a claw-ful mishearing on Angie's part!"

Tenko groaned in frustration, but it held no hate towards the girl in front of her. In the simulation, Tenko would've been able to admit her distaste towards Angie without missing a beat. She hated the way she had manipulated her classmates, especially Himiko, into following her lead. Even if her intentions were to turn the school into a land of safety, Tenko was disgusted. She'd only begun to hang around the artist for the sake of being around Himiko. However, after a while, Tenko found herself relaxing a bit more around Angie. She wasn't sure how or why. It just happened. Maybe it was because she's seen the more human side of Angie. Her frantic praying in Malmart as she looked for a god to guide her.

"C'mon, Tenko! Make a pun!" Angie encouraged, "c'mon, c'mon, c'mon!"

"No!" Tenko exclaimed, making a face, "I refuse to stoop to such low levels!"

"Pretty pretty please?" Angie skipped next to Tenko, staring her right in the eyes despite being a decent amount shorter, "please, please, please? For Angie? Please, please—"

"This is a cat-astrophie," Tenko sighed, giving in.

Angie's face lit up as she began to laugh, "ah, that one was... hiss-terical! Get it? Oh, I have another one!"

The artist didn't notice her use of the first person pronoun, but Tenko did. Her eyes widened a bit, but Angie was too busy spewing puns to pick up on it. Tenko hadn't heard her use that word without correcting herself unless Tsumugi was around. Everyone knew that Angie's reasons for
speaking in the third person were different from Gonta's, who did it simply because that's how he was taught to speak, or even the reason the aikido master used to. Tenko felt pride in the accomplishment, but chose not to dwell on it, instead opting to keep speaking with Angie. The two of them made obnoxious puns that earned them eye rolls from a multitude of their classmates, but the results were worth it.

<Tenkangie? Valid.>

The class returned to the dormitory at around half past seven. They'd gotten dinner downtown at Ryoma's suggestion. He didn't mention that he only did it in order to keep Kirumi from stressing over cooking. He didn't have to. The two of them had been on somewhat steady terms for a while now, but it wasn't to the point that Ryoma would instinctively call her a friend. It was, however, to the point that he was worried over her health. Then again, even strangers could take one look at the girl's face and immediately have an urge to call an ambulance in case she collapses on the spot. It was only a matter of time before that really happened and everyone wanted to help do anything to prevent that.

The summer solstice had been right around Kokichi's birthday, so it was only now that the sun had begun to set. The sky blanketed everything in a glowing orange that made the world seem warm and secure. Ryoma found himself staring at the sky as his peers conversed around him. He was embarrassed by the fact that he was captured by the sheer beauty of the moment to the extent he was tearing up a bit. Nobody seemed to want to go inside, wishing to bask in the loveliness of the day with one another for just a moment longer. Ryoma eventually found himself in a conversation with Gonta, whose dark green features were complimented beautifully by the orange light of the sun.

"Did Ryoma enjoy his birthday?" Gonta asked, more as a way to be polite because the answer was extremely obvious. The two have been on first name terms for a while now.

"I did. Probably my best one yet," Ryoma resisted the urge to mention the birthday he had spent the year before, alone and sad.

"Gonta's happy to hear that!" Gonta exclaimed brightly.

What happened next was extremely sudden to the point that even someone as level headed as Ryoma was shocked by it. Without another word, Gonta leaned down, lightly pressing his lips to Ryoma's cheek. The tennis player froze as Gonta stood back up as if nothing happened. The rest of the class stared in varying levels of shock as well. Tsumugi seemed to be on the verge of a fainting spell as she gaped at the two while Korekiyo and Maki had barely any reaction at all. Gonta was oblivious to the sudden attention though, instead focusing on the stunned Ryoma in front of him.

"I... what was that?" Ryoma sputtered.

"Huh? What was what?" Gonta raised his eyebrows as he joined in on the confusion.

"Uh, the... did you not just—“ Ryoma gestured to his cheek.

"Oh!" Gonta realized, turning to the rest of the class, “do they not know that Ryoma and Gonta are dating?"

"I...” Ryoma stared dumbfoundedly, “we’re dating???

Somewhere in the crowd, Kokichi began to laugh.

“Y—yea!” Gonta exclaimed, “we’ve been dating for a month, remember?”
“No!” Ryoma panicked, a confused, yet amused smile on his face.

“Gonta took Ryoma to meet his parents yesterday?!” Gonta cried, resulting in Kokichi to beginning cackling somewhere in the background.

“That’s what that was?!” Ryoma gaped.

“Yea!” Gonta replied.

The rest of the class receded into the dorms, giving the two a moment to themselves. Ryoma was beyond confused and Gonta felt the same.

“Are we dating?” Ryoma asked, more to himself than Gonta.

“Gonta thought we were!” Gonta explained, face red in embarrassment, “does Ryoma want to?”

“Um... yea. Yea I do,” Ryoma admitted, pink dusting his face.

“You do?!” Gonta repeated, face lifting.

“Y—yea...” Ryoma mumbled sheepishly.

“That makes Gonta really happy!” Gonta chirped, “is—oh my goodness! Ryoma, why are you crying?!”

“I’m crying?” Ryoma put a hand to his face, “oh would you look at that? I am.”

“Is Ryoma okay?!” Gonta asked frantically.

“Yea, I’m good,” Ryoma let himself smile up at Gonta, “I’m just really happy.”

“Oh, so they’re happy tears?” Gonta inquired, “that’s good.”

With that, the two walked through the dormitory hand and hand. It wasn’t much of a surprise to everyone else when they announced that they were now officially dating. There were lots of hugs and lots of congratulations to the two. Ryoma caught Kaito’s eyes as he gave him a thumbs up, which led Ryoma to think about the stars. Where his family was. Ryoma really thought he’d lost them when they were murdered the previous year, then he found them again. He wasn’t only talking about the stars though. He was talking about Kaito and Korekiyo and Kirumi and everyone else. He wasn’t worried about them going away this time. He would savor the time he had with them.

Hoshi Ryoma found his family at Hope’s Peak. He knew he wasn’t the only one.
Burn Out

Chapter Summary

The class chooses to make some cookies. It goes about as well as you’d expect...

"Ultimate Nightmare Fuel," July 5th, 3:31

Mother: Would anyone like to make some cookies?

ThingPurple: Hey mom... ?

ThingBlue: It's three in the morning, Tojo-san.

Mother: Did I stutter?

ThingGreen: Woah

MediocreLintroller: did you just get your ass handed to you by mom???

NormieHecc: I was expecting Idabashi to show up there...

ThingGreen: No, he's asleep

MediocreLintroller: how do you know keebs is asleep (°_°)

ThingGreen: Hey

ThingGreen: Hey Iruma

MediocreLintroller: what?

ThingGreen: (°_°) GDPR γ

MediocreLintroller: well fuck you too

NormieHecc: Okay, just consider

NormieHecc changed MediocreLintroller to ThingPink

ThingPurple: NO

ThingPurple changed ThingPink to BurntStringBean

BurntStringBean: hhhHHHHHEEEYYYGSY

Mother: So is that a yes or a no to the cookies?

ThingBlue: How about we save the cookies until later when everyone else is awake? With
midterms coming up, we could save ourselves from the stress. That work?

**Mother:** Yes, I suppose that would be a more reasonable approach.

<Headcanon: Kirumi stress bakes. Also, Amamiibo text each other goodnight and that's how Rantaro knew.>

Kirumi paced around the kitchen restlessly, nonexistent imperfections glaring at her from the counters and the walls and the sink and the stove and the—Kirumi shook her head, taking a deep breath to regain her composure. That's not the way she's meant to act. Tojo Kirumi is calm and collected, she reminded herself. Tojo Kirumi must serve others. The maid continued to pace for a visitor that wasn't coming and seeing problems that didn't exist. She had only just exited the chat and she was already wishing for time to pass her by in hopes of occupying her cluttered mind with the satisfaction for others. If others were happy, she did her job right. If she did her job right, she could make up for her mistakes.

After what felt like an eternity for Kirumi, four in the morning rolled around. Over the past week or so, she's grown accustomed to finding Kokichi and Shuichi make an appearance around this hour. She's found one or both of them asleep on the couch once or twice already. Despite Kokichi, the two of them aren't typically that loud, save for the occasional fit of laughter, which comes from a comment from the supreme leader more often than not. Kirumi had half a mind to scold the two for being up so early with such dark bags under their eyes, but she knew that would only dig her further into the hole of hypocrisy. So, she left them be to talk and read about whatever nonsense they always did.

The oddly pleasant chatter carried Kirumi's mind through the next few hours until the early morning crowd came trickling in. Kaede, as usual, arrived first, giving a friendly greeting and smile to the rest of the class before dissolving into ramblings over pianos as she helped Kirumi prepare breakfast. Maki came shortly after, followed by Keebo, and soon by Tenko. All three quickly joined in assisting with breakfast. Kirumi only allowed four people, not counting her, to help with meals at a time. Everyone had done it at least once, but a select few were banned and could no longer partake in such activities. Not naming anyone, but a certain entomologist, inventor, and supreme leader have all been guilty of somehow burning pasta two times each.

Speaking of which, Miu was the last one to arrive downstairs that morning. Unfortunately, rather than coming from the floors above, she had stumbled through the front door looking half dead. It didn't take a genius to know that she had pulled an all-nighter in her lab, tinkering at some object that probably wouldn't be finished until the girl got a good night's sleep. Of course, Miu was nothing if not determined, so the only way that would happen would be if she were forced to. Luckily, Kaede caught sight of the inventor and almost instantly rushed her off, successfully earning a large array of curses, though none of them seemed to phase the pianist. Kirumi hummed in amusement, ignoring the fact that she was just as tired.

By noon, Kaede finally let Miu leave her bed (though she still looked as if she hadn't slept a wink. Then again, she probably spent the whole time protesting.) Everyone gathered around Kirumi as she clearly explained the rules for what you can and cannot do in the kitchen. The band on Kokichi, Miu, and Gonta were all lifted for the sake of including everyone as long as everyone, more so Kokichi and Miu than Gonta, promised to behave. There were double ovens, both with two racks, which meant four batches could be made at a time. After deciding on making eight batches in total and sorted through possible recipes, everyone split off into their own groups to bake.

<I just realized how potentially rude or insensitive it could be to include Miu in this. I'm not
entirely experienced with what does and doesn't count as offensive, but in order to play it safe, there won't be any Miu segments this chapter. I'm sorry about that. I just think there's a line between writing a topic respectfully and being insensitive. I didn't intend to come off as offensive if anyone was offended by Miu being forced into this activity. I hadn't thought this part entirely through, so I feel far too unprepared to write anything about something possibly sensitive without taking my typical precautions. I don't have any personal experiences with eating disorders, so I'm not entirely sure whether or not this was rude. Please alert me of any changes I should make in the future. Sorry again just in case.>

Tsumugi stared at the sugar cookie recipe in front of her, reading it carefully as she did each step at a slower pace than the others. She wound up working alone, which she'd admit, was partially her fault. The cosplayer had insisted to Angie multiple times that it's alright if she worked with Himiko and Tenko instead, so the artist reluctantly followed her words as if they were an order. Sighing, Tsumugi set down the bowl. She was overly worried about missing something despite being the one in charge of the dry ingredients, which could be fixed until you mixed them. The class was working on multiple doughs, although there were only two mixers. Everyone had their own specific job, although there were no specific assignments.

"Shirogane-san, I think you're being careful enough," a soft voice rang out from Tsumugi's left, resulting in her nearly dropping the flour, "ah—uh—s—sorry."

"No need to worry, Saihara-kun. At least I didn't actually drop it," Tsumugi reassured, "and I guess I'm being just plain crazy with my measurements. Baking is really a piece of cake if you think about it."

"Shirogane-san, no..." Shuichi groaned at the bad pun, "no offense, but that was awful—" the detective held back a smirk at his next words, "—of all the bad puns in the world, yours really takes the cake."

Tsumugi laughed, "you hypocrite!"

Shuichi spared the girl a smiled before listening to her as she caught him up on what steps she'd already accomplish. Shuichi had never actually volunteered to help, but didn't miss a beat as soon as Tsumugi finished talking. Out of all her classmates, Angie included, Shuichi was the one Tsumugi felt most comfortable with. Being the only one who knew the whole truth about her role as the mastermind, the boy understood Tsumugi's situation better than anyone else. Admittedly, the pair hadn't had many conversations since the night of Angie's birthday party, when Shuichi had come clean about his original placement. However, any interactions they had had were respectful and kind.

"Oh, by the way," Tsumugi chimed as she studied the recipe book, "I've been meaning to watch Violet Evergarden for a while now. Ever heard of it?"

"Violet Evergarden... oh! Isn't that the one with the soldier girl who writes letters," Shuichi gasps, "I saw the trailer. The animation looked beautiful."

"We should watch it together!" Tsumugi suggested, stars in her eyes, "if you want to, that is."

"I'd like that," Shuichi affirmed, turning to look at the cosplayer with a kind look in his eyes.

Something notable about Saihara Shuichi is that once you get to know him, he has an air of reliability to him. You don't feel like he's lying when he's talking to you and he always seems genuinely interested in learning more. Tsumugi loved that about her friend. There were times where every act of kindness fished out to her was out of pity or just a lie, but with Shuichi,
everything felt solid. It reminded her of the nights when Angie would drag her out to her balcony in the dead of night so she could listen to a lovely tune. Tsumugi would've said more had Shuichi's attention not been elsewhere. The cosplayer followed his gaze until it landed on Kokichi, who was teasing Angie about something, which seemed to be backfiring.

"Watcha looking at there?" Tsumugi said jokingly.

"Eh—?! O—oh, nothing..." Shuichi panicked, focusing on mixing for moment before his expression softened, "I'm just happy that Ouma-kun's getting better now."

Tsumugi stared at the boy with a thoughtfully look as he focused on mixing the ingredients, muttering to himself. Something about him brought her back to the sixth trial. "The pain in my heart when I lose the people I love is real!" he had screamed across the trial room at the cosplayer. He truly did care for everyone after all that. Even Kokichi with the disgusting means to meet his goal. Even Korekiyo with his disgusting motive. Shuichi loved them. It pained Tsumugi to know that Shuichi had no idea what a great thing that was. Still, she decided, maybe the simulation wasn't all that bad with its outcomes. It was a pleasant thought for someone with the belief that everything that happened in there was on her shoulders.

"Mhm." Tsumugi hummed, "and... I hope one day you will too."

Shuichi stopped in his tracks, about to form a lie, but the words died on his tongue, "I... thank you, Shirogane-san. I wish you the best as well."

Tsumugi smiled, "thanks."

<Tsumugi and Shuichi being friends who love and support each other?? Yes please!>

"Kokichi, you moron," Maki hissed, "you put one egg in. The recipe said three."

"Whaaaaaat?! Who said I was the one who put in the eggs?" Kokichi quizzed, "for all you know, I could've brainwashed you into doing it and you just don't remember! Didn't think about that, did ya, Maki-chan?"

"No need to panic," Rantaro spoke up over the bickering, "we can just add the other two. No biggie."

"Yea, come on, Maki-chan. Couldn't have thought of that earlier, could ya?!" Kokichi scolded, smirking at the frustration looming over the bodyguard's features.

"You little..." Maki growled, playfully shoving the smaller boy to the side. Underestimating both her own strength and how tiny Kokichi is, the supreme leader nearly fell over.

"Hey! Amami-chan, Maki's trying to kill me!" Kokichi cried, "knock her dead with your creepy cryptic powers!"

"Ah yes," Rantaro reached out and ruffled Kokichi's hair before looking at Maki with a slightly demented expression, "fear me, foolish mortal."

Maki pinched him in the arm.

"Jesus!" Rantaro screeched, "I dunno what to tell you, Kich, she's a madwoman..."

"Pfft—Kich?!" Kokichi cackled, "what kind of nickname is that?!"
"Wha—oh shit, sorry," Rantaro chuckled, realizing his mistake, "I guess I sorta slipped up there, didn't I? My bad, Ouma."

Kokichi's face was blank for a moment, "whatevs, as long as I can call you Ran-chan!" the boy chimed, "oh, and call Maki Ki-chan!"

"I thought we agreed to let that name burn," Maki seethed, but she didn't seem all that upset.

"No, you promised that, Ki-chan," Kokichi teased, "I made no such promises because I knew it would be a lie. I'll have you know that I've never lied in my life!"

"I don't know, he seems legit to me," Rantaro smirked, much to Maki's irritation.

"Whatever," Maki sighed before softening her gaze, "and... Maki's fine."

Rantaro's eyes widened a fraction before flashing one of his signature smiles, "Alright, then feel free to call me Rantaro."

"Yea, sure," Maki muttered, "damn it, Kich, the eggs!"

"Hey! Only Ran-chan can call me that, Ki-chan!" Kokichi cried, "... alright, no need to harass me! I'll get them! Jeez..."

Rantaro didn't know when, but he'd begun to smile.

<Korekiyo peered anxiously over Kirumi's shoulder as she mixed ingredients together. She looked so concentrated... almost too concentrated. She had that glossy eyed look you got when you blank out on the world for what feels like an eternity. Kirumi, Korekiyo realized, had been like this for about five minutes. Going against his better judgement, the anthropologist reached out and shook the maid's arm, searching for any sign that she had a functioning brain on her shoulders. Consequently, Korekiyo had to duck as Kirumi pivoted, aggressively turning to face him. The spatula, which she had been using to mix the ingredients seconds prior, remained in hand, ending up exactly where Korekiyo's throat was originally.

"Sweet Jesus, Tojo-san," Korekiyo deadpanned as he stood upright once more, "It would have been very unfortunate had I not chosen to move."

"My apologies," Kirumi responded a split second sooner than she would normally, but the difference wasn't lost on Korekiyo, "I'm glad you... well, moved..."

"Her speech is slipping," Korekiyo noted. Everything about the girl in front of him seemed off in the most subtle, yet obvious of ways. Her white blouse wasn't tucked into her long black skirt the way it normally was. The dark headband was a fraction of a centimeter further back on her head. She swayed the slightest bit as she wandered to get a different spatula (she had accidentally dropped the one she had before on the floor.) The small changes stood out like a sore thumb to Korekiyo. She was arguably his best friend after Kaito. Kirumi was a woman of order. She presented herself in a way that wasn't what Korekiyo couldn't see any trace of right now. Something was wrong.

"Of course, Korekiyo already knew that. He had known that for a while. Something about today was worse though. Kirumi had been so beaten down that it was no longer her problems controlling her every move. It was exhaustion. Her perfectionist nature would've forced her steps into their
same steady rhythm as always. It would've tucked in the blouse and fixed the headband and corrected her speech. It didn't though. Because she had lost. Kirumi had long since been dragged down by her problems, drowned in them. Now she was stuck at the will of the consequences that led from her actions. Korekiyo realized that part too late though. He knew that because of the sight before him.

Kirumi stumbled, righting herself before anyone could question her. Then she stumbled again. Then she fell. Suddenly, this was no longer a stress relieving afternoon. Of baking and fun. Suddenly, Maki and Kokichi were no longer arguing over eggs. Suddenly, Rantaro wasn't smiling and laughing at them. Suddenly, Tsumugi wasn't throwing flour at Shuichi. Suddenly, the world was focused on Tojo Kirumi. As she stumbled. As she fell. For a second, there was a plea that Kirumi had just tripped. That she'd stand up. Apologize for causing a fuss even though nobody really minded. The idea was gone as soon as it came through. Everyone knew this was coming. They just didn't know when.

Maki's by her side in an instant, Korekiyo following quickly after. Kirumi isn't done though. She tries to stand up, fighting off Maki's hands, insisting she was alright. Apologizing for causing a fuss. Just like everyone had initially hoped. Only it wasn't what everyone had hoped. This was a lie. A lie the fooled no one. A lie that died as soon as Kirumi collapsed again as soon as she so much as tried to stand. Maki caught her, worry shamelessly tracing her face as she checked Kirumi's pulse. The maid's eyes were half lidded now. Closed. Opened. Closed... Closed. She was now asleep in Maki's arms as her worried classmates crowded her. A search boat had found her drowned in the ocean of her own problems.

<Burn out: The act of overworking yourself to the extent that you are forced to stop due to illness or exhaustion..... you thought the title was referring to the cookies, weren’t you? Also, I will be including more Kork and Kirumi friendship, don’t worry>

The school's nurses office was, unsurprisingly, a lot more stocked than your typical school nurse's office. There were shelves of medicine, cabinets of medical supplies. It paid off to have an ultimate nurse in her year, Maki supposed, as she carefully carried Kirumi. Nobody stood nearby. The bodyguard had insisted on taking her alone due to the chance of the maid waking up and getting freaked out from the rush of loud, worried classmates (Maki’s words, not hers.) Upon entry, Maki was immediately greeted with a crashing sound. Kirumi stirred in her arms, but luckily didn't seem to be waking up. Annoyed, Maki took a quick scan of the room to find the source of the ruckus, doing so quite quickly.

A girl clumsily stumbled to her feet, doing her best to dust herself off as she mumbled incoherent nonsense to herself. She was around Maki’s height, maybe a little taller. Her plum purple hair was cut to around her shoulders and tied into a ponytail behind her, a few strangely cut strands sticking out here and there. Similarly colored eyes, which were pulled into an expression that Maki could only describe as constant worry, quickly found the two girls standing in the doorway. Squeaking out even more nonsense, the girl ran forward, only to nearly fall over in front of Maki.

This is the nurse? she thought pitifully as she watched the girl mumbled what Maki now realized were apologies.

“O—oh gosh...” The girl panicked, eyes trained on Kirumi, “wh—what h—hap—happened to T—Tojo-san?!?”

“Overworking herself. She’s exhausted and she’s hardly been eating enough,” Maki explained, starting to get a little tired from walking around with a girl in her arms, “you got anything that’ll help?”
Admittedly, Maki was getting pretty anxious. She gently placed Kirumi on one of the beds against the wall as the nurse hastily nodded. The only assuring part of the situation was the fact that the nurse’s steps seemed a lot more steady than before now that she’s been given a duty. That vanished as soon as she slipped again and looked to be on the verge of a mental breakdown. Reminding herself to breathe, Maki recited her extent of medical knowledge that she had acquired over the years she had as an assassin. If worst came to worst, she could figure something out on her own. All Kirumi really needed was to get some rest and to have some sense knocked into her, which would come later.

“H—h—here,” the nurse carefully walked over, making sure not to drop the items she now held in her hands, “b—burn outs c—can normally b—be c—cured w—with rest, b—b—but if it’s o —okay, I—I’m going to h—have t—t—to run s—some—“

“Just do what you have to do, okay?!” Maki snapped, resulting in the nurse flinching, “damn it, sorry... I’m just worried... or something...”

The nurse whimpered a bit, but nodded, “d—d—don’t w—worry.... I—I’ll make sure sh—she gets b—b—better.”

Maki sighed, “thanks... uh...”

“T—Tsumiki Mikan,” The nurse finished.

“Right,” Maki replied, “Harukawa Maki.”

Kirumi didn’t take long to wake up. Granted, she had grown used to getting little to no sleep, so she had adapted to waking up at a certain amount of time. Maki, who sat on a chair nearby, noticed the maid stirring. The bodyguard stood up almost instantly and walked to the bed. Confused, Kirumi gazed around at her surroundings. She had been in the nurse’s office a few times, but mainly only when she was too sleep deprived to properly register every detail. She understood that it was a medical room, which meant that everything would have to be sanitary even without her help. Of course, that type of knowledge fled Kirumi’s mind fairly quick as she grew progressively worse and worse with her own sleeping habits.

“What time is it?” Kirumi croaked, voice weak and groggy sounding under layers of sleep.

Maki glanced at the clock, “about half past six,” she said, noticing the panic spreading across the maid’s face, “relax, everyone’s getting dinner together. They’ll be fine.”

The room was silent for a while before Maki spoke again, “I really do think you should’ve told someone....”

“Told someone what,” Kirumi asked.

“Why you did... this,” Maki gestured towards Kirumi dejectedly.

“I figured it was obvious,” Kirumi deadpanned, sitting up, “I am merely attempting to atone for my crimes through the simulation.”

Maki cringed at the mention of the simulator, but tried not to show her discomfort as Kirumi continued to speak, “if I do not clean enough than I am not trying hard enough. If I am not trying hard enough, what is my purpose?”
“I get what you’re coming from, but you didn’t have to destroy yourself,” Maki reasoned.

“I did not have to, I know. I chose to,” Kirumi stated, “it is my duty as a maid to—“

“Oh for fucks sake Tojo, could you stop with all that maid bullshit for a second?” Maki groaned, “first of all, you’re a human before you’re a maid and second of all, you and I both know that’s not the reason you worked yourself half to death.”

“Well, if you’re so knowledgeable on my intentions, would you care to tell me?” Kirumi retorted, speech slipping once more as her anger rose.

Maki hesitated, “damn it... I can’t believe I’m actually going to talk about this, but... it it makes you stop being an idiot, I’ll do it,” Maki grumbled.

“You’re insecure, Tojo.”

“You are so stupidly, insanely insecure about yourself,” Maki repeated, “in the... in the... oh, fuck it. In the game, you were a Prime Minister. You were entrusted with that because you were apparently that good of maid. Now, for some dumbass reason, you want to be like the Tojo in the simulation. You want to be good enough to be considered good enough for the Prime Minister or whatever because lets face it, that is one hell of an honor.”

Kirumi’s lip wobbled, “that would give me no reason to avoid telling anyone th—“

“No, don’t try to get out of this,” Maki snapped, “because you’re so fucking absorbed into this maid charade or whatever you wanna call it, you don’t even know how to be yourself anymore. Everything is about being worthy as a maid, so you forgot all about the actual Tojo! Seriously, you were so fucking close minded about your goals that you could stop for one damn second to do something as basic as sleeping! So, naturally, telling someone about your problems sounded like a normal Tojo thing rather than a super maid thing, so you just went and neglected that too.”

Kirumi looked away, hating how accurate those words were, “are you finished.”

“No, well, kind of,” Maki deflated, “I’m done with chewing you out... Now... I’m going to tell you that I prefer normal Tojo to super maid... or something like that.”

Kirumi raised her brow a bit at the claim, “what do you mean...?”

“Well, I remember this one time,” Maki began, “it was like, two months ago or something and I came back to the dorms absolutely exhausted. You were there and made us some tea... then we talked. I like that Tojo so much more than the one that passed out in the middle of the kitchen... And that one time you let me teach you how to throw a knife... it was sorta weird or whatever, but it was nice to see you genuinely interested in something.”

Kirumi looked down at her hands, tears blurring her vision.

“You say making people happy is the foundation of being a maid, right? Well, sometimes being yourself is what makes people the happiest.”

Kirumi shakily reached out and pulled Maki into a hug. The bodyguard flinched at the sudden contact, but didn’t mind the touch. For a moment Kirumi felt silly. Sitting in the nurses office, crying as she clung to Maki, who was very awkwardly beginning to reciprocate the gesture. It was alright though. Because that’s what the real Kirumi wanted to do. Not the super maid, who would have accepted the words automatically before getting back to work. No, the real Kirumi let her eyes drool shut once more. It was about time she finally got some sleep, wasn’t it? Yes, she
decided as her eyes slipped shut. The welcoming feeling of unconsciousness wrapped around her, no longer worried of what’s to come.

Maki knew Kirumi was asleep. The other girl was slumped against her shoulder and her grip had slackened considerably. Carefully, the bodyguard lowered the sleeping girl’s form back onto the bed. Despite the eye bags that contrasted her features, Kirumi looked truly at peace. Maki couldn’t remember the last time she had seen the maid like this. She had spent months with her eyebrows knitted together with a forcefully made look of calamity plastered over her expression of stress. Without thinking, Maki leaned down, pressing her lips to Kirumi’s forehead gently. She didn’t quite register what she was doing until Kirumi stirred a bit in her sleep. Maki jumped away instantly, taking a moment to comprehend what just happened before bolting down the hall.

“Shit...” she muttered.
I Have Questions

Chapter Summary

The class splits into pairs to study! They also just so happen to be my ships... well, for this book.

I'm sorry this is so late—

Private Messages, "Coolest of the cool!" July 6th, 7:08

BestBud!: Hey Gonta?

BestBug!: Yea?! Is something rong?!

BestBud!: No

BestBug!: Oh thank goodness!

BestBud!: I just have a question

BestBug!: Okay! Ask Gonta anything!!!

BestBud!:

BestBud!: How did you know?

BestBug!: What? How did Gonta no what???

BestBud!: I dunno???

BestBug!: Gonta doesn't know how to answer that sorry...

BestBud!: Like about yourself?

BestBug!: Gonta very sorry!!!! He doesn't know what you're talking about!

BestBud!:

BestBud!: How did you know you were different?

BestBug!: Different how??!!!!

BestBud!:

BestBud!: Never mind...

BestBug!: You sure??
BestBud!: Yea

BestBug!: Gonta's really sorry he couldn't help

BestBud!: Don't sweat it dude my bad for being vague. It's just sort of a weird question....

<Hm... wonder who that was and what they were on about???>

"Ultimate Nightmare Fuel," July 6th, 10:22

ThingGreen: Guys, Kellogg and I had an idea

ThingWhite: Kellogg?!

ThingGreen: WAit

ThingGreen: Keebs*

NormieHecc: The damage has been done, good luck you normie

NormieHecc changed ThingWhite to Kellogg

Kellogg: Oh

ThingPurple: Misspelling your theyfriend's name... for shame, Ran-chan :/

Kellogg: I agree!

ThingPurple: Keebs, how does it feel to be replaced by a corn flake???

ThingGreen: I can't believe I had an affair with a cornflake...

Kellogg: Neither can I (you are joking, right?)

ThingPurple: Nope!

ThingGreen: Yea, I wouldn't replace you with a corn flake

Kellogg: Thank you...

ThingPurple: Hey wait. Why is this suddenly wholesome???, They're talking about corn flakes!

NormieHecc: Wait! Your names don't match anymore!

NormieHecc invited ThingBlue

ThingBlue is online

ThingBlue: Did you need me for something?

NormieHecc: Not really. I just wanted to see your reaction to this

NormieHecc changed 3 names

Bromami: Fitting?
UltimateMadLad: Fitting!

SaiharaDesert:

SaiharaDesert: No...

Bromami: Can Keebs (not Kellogg) and I talk about what we were going to before all this?

NormieHecc: Okay

Kellogg: Okay, so midterms are coming up very soon and it's very important to study for our written exams. Our practicals shouldn't be as difficult, but it may be beneficial to study mathematics and stuff like that!

Bromami: So we figured we should have study partners and just take a day to study

NormieHecc: As much as I'd like to offend your normie ass, that's not a bad idea...

Bromami: WOW

SaiharaDesert: I like it as well.

UltimateMadLad: I hate it more than I hate grape Panta!

Bromami: Glad we all agree. I'll go tell the others

UltimateMadLad: You're just going to ignore me and my strong protest against your nonsensical idea?!

Bromami: Yea

UltimateMadLad: YOU BURNT GREEN BEAN, HOW DARE YOU!??????

SaiharaDesert: I'll get him. He's screaming in a British accent again, so it's for the best that someone stops him before he starts speaking French...

Kellogg: Oh no. Good luck.

NormieHecc: Yea, we don't want another houseplant to be murdered. I don't think Momota-kun would be able to handle it...

SaiharaDesert: Okay, we're good.

NormieHecc: What?!

Kellogg: What?!

Bromami: Clearly we underestimated the power of the all knowing "Saihara-chan"

<So I learned that Kokichi knows French and I wanted to include that knowledge because I didn't mention it previously.>

Maki peered across the table at Kirumi under the guise of working on a math equation. The other girl appeared to be lost in thought, gazing intensely at her paper as if doing so would will the pencil
in her hand to write an answer for her. Maki knew that wasn't the case though. Kirumi wasn't the type to wish for things to be done for her. In fact, the recent incident that still lay fresh in both girls' minds had proven just how much the maid wished for the opposite. Even from where she was in the room, Maki could feel her restlessness. The faintest sound of a tapping foot came from under the table and when the pencil in Kirumi's hand wasn't touching the paper, it was swaying back and forth between her fingers. The rhythm she had was oddly mesmerizing to Maki and she found her eyes lingering a moment longer than necessary before catching herself.

Sighing quietly, Maki buried her face into her notebook. As she turned her head to the side a bit, she noticed Kirumi had dropped her gaze onto her with a look of confusion. The tame look was comparably relaxed as opposed to the overly concentrated one that Maki had grown so used to seeing over—well, nearly as long as she had known the green haired girl. An odd feeling in the bodyguard's stomach piped up at the sight. Not that Maki let herself indulge in it though. She shoved the feeling down before her mind could wander and lifted her head, getting back to work on the equation before Kirumi could potentially call her out on being distracted. Not that she would actually do that. While people slacking obviously irritated her, Kirumi was never the type to call those things to someone's attention.

"Is something the matter?" Kirumi spoke up, "you seem distracted."

Oh, was the first thing to cross Maki's mind, maybe she is the type to do that. Of course, this going over the brunette's head wasn't necessarily her fault. She had grown so used to the maid persona the girl in front of her had put up that she had only caught a few glimpses of the real Kirumi. It was then and there that Maki realized that she really didn't know much about the other. Sure, she was polite, that was a given, but what are her hobbies? Cleaning and cooking, obviously, but what about things other than that. Does she like to read? To write? Then Maki realized she'd spaced out on Kirumi's (really pretty?) face and the maid was now looking increasingly more confused. Seriously, when did she start displaying that kind of thing outwardly? And why'd she have to look so stupidly cute while doing it.

"Are you sick maybe?" Kirumi guessed, picking up on Maki's spaced out looked, "we don't have to continue if you don't want to."

There it was again! Maki had never been the observant type unless absolutely necessary, but she was still perfectly capable of picking up on Kirumi's changing speaking mannerisms. Well, that just means she's talking like a normal human being, just considerably more polite as opposed to her steely, almost robotic exterior. The warm feeling came back after Maki deduced that this was how Kirumi probably really talked when she isn't on high alert. This meant that her words were probably truthful and that she was genuinely willing to abandon her studies for Maki's wellbeing. The real Kirumi was just as caring. That was to be expected though. Every version of Kirumi, Maki knew, would be just as generous and just as caring because that's just how she was. Even to someone like her, Kirumi was kind.

Maki slammed her face back into her notebook. Maybe she was sick.

<Maki is such a disaster, but I love her.>

Gonta didn't do well in academics. That wasn't exactly a secret; the entomologist himself seemed well aware of this as well, though he never seemed to be particularly bothered by it. Everyone had assured him countless amounts of times that he had plenty of other traits to make up for his lack in book smarts. While these words were typically spoken from an area of sympathy, they did hold some kind of truth to them. Gonta was smart. Just in his own, Gonta, kind of ways. However, as the tall boy stared down a collection of symbols he barely understood the meaning to, his lack of
overall knowledge seemed to be getting shoved in his face. Ryoma, who sat a couple feet to Gonta's left, raised his brow in concern as the other boy's expression dipped in disappointment.

"What's up," Ryoma asked, casting aside his own notebook carefully before turning his attention over to the gentle giant.

"Ah, Gonta's just a little bit confused," Gonta admitted, "Gonta isn't very good at math."

A normal person would've responded a bit differently. They would've assured Gonta that he was doing great and then drown the boy in words of encouragement to an extent that they sounded nothing more than normal noise. Of course, Ryoma wasn't most people. He didn't have that sort of instinct. The kind that allowed one to produce white lies at the drop of a hat. Telling the truth was a lot more of his style. Brute honesty was a lot more up his, as well as a few of his other classmates', alley. So, clearing his throat, Ryoma grabbed Gonta's math book, set it aside with his, and then merely rolled his eyes. Of course, Ryoma wasn't just going to tell their lover that they were stupid. No, that wasn't his style. He would just use that brutal honesty of his to become at least somewhat encouraging.

"Okay, so you still got a ways to go with math," Ryoma agreed, "but you're good at entomology and that's pretty much the only thing that matters here, so why don't you focus on that?"

Ryoma couldn't help but notice how Gonta didn't so much as flinch at his critical words at the beginning. It was as if he knew that there would be a following statement to prove that he was, in fact, not attempting to hurt his feelings. Instead, the large boy complied, digging through his bag before extracting a binder absolutely stuffed with note paper. Ryoma huffed in amusement at the absurd looking management of space. He never had and never will be a neat freak, but even the tennis pro would admit that that thing was absolutely unruly. It looked like if you had taken every paper you've ever used in school and stuffed it into one thing. Of course, that was just a testament to how hard Gonta works on his talent. Having so may papers obviously meant he was being thorough with his studies.

"You've got a lotta stuff there," Ryoma thought aloud, "don't think I've ever seen someone with so much research."

"You haven't?" Gonta seemed slightly surprised, "huh, well Gonta guesses that Ryoma-kun just hasn't seen everyone else's binders."

"You're telling me that there are people with more papers than you?" Ryoma gaped.

"Mhm! Gonta thinks Ouma-kun hides his though," Gonta claimed, "he doesn't really like people knowing he's smart..."

"He doesn't?" Ryoma hummed, not really believing the idea, "he always struck me as the type who'd show off that kind of thing."

"No," Gonta objected. "Ouma-kun is probably afraid of people knowing he's smart because he always lies about it. Normally Ouma-kun changes things to make things interesting, but he keeps lying about this because he wants it to be the truth."

Ryoma's eyes widened a fraction at the idea as it all clicked into place. The tennis pro didn't know Kokichi a lot, but he did know of a few instances he'd done something like this; lying constantly about something in attempt to make it the truth. Sure, it was silly stuff like lying about how he had already claimed the final cookie, only to actually claim it after everyone gave up. Then Ryoma tried to think about it in a larger, more psychological sense. He couldn't, but that was his fault for
not hanging around Kokichi often enough, not Gonta being incorrect. Letting a small smile grace his lips, Ryoma quietly leaned against the taller boy's side, taking a moment to think about his next words.

"Yo, Gonta," he spoke very carefully, still not entirely sure of what to do.

"Yes."

"You're hella smart. Don't let anyone tell you otherwise."

"I will go down with the concept of smart Gonta. I love it so much you guys. So much> "Oh, how about Takamiya Naho?" Angie mused, "she was sweet, right? Right?!"

"Ah, I remember her!" Tsumugi exclaimed, "she was just plain adorable!"

It was beyond both Tsumugi and Angie how they had gone from going over English grammar to excitedly enthusing over anime girls, yet there they were. Deep down, they both knew it was probably for the best that they got back to work. Both girls were about average on all of their subjects aside from Japanese and English. However, the second one choses to think about which anime girl is best, one must take the rest of their valuable time, which they could be spending doing something much more productive, and figure out the answer to their questions. Although, one does not tend to think about those other duties that they do or don't have and as a result, they wind up going on a tangent about girls from a work of animated fiction. It's sad, kind of, but maybe not to the same extent as writing those characters into another fictional work based off their work of fiction.

"Miyanoshita Satsuki," Angie's typical bright smile seemed to shift into a smirk as she uttered that name.

"Dammit, Angie, you just had to go and put the Ghost Stories girl into this perfect stew of waifus..." Tsumugi sighed.

"Yes, Atua said so!" Angie chirped.

"Fine," Tsumugi huffed, "Nakamura Rio."

"Wowie, now that's a fine waifu, Tsumugi~" Angie cooed.

With that, the two girls burst into fits of laughter. They both knew how ridiculous they probably sounded and yet they didn't seem to have a care in the world over it. They were perfectly content with acting idiotic around one another. Angie continued to giggle as Tsumugi mentioned more waifus, but was now writing something down in her notebook as the cosplayer spoke. Eventually though, after five minutes had passed, Angie held up the page. It was a doodle rather than words. The doodle was of Gonta dressed in a dramatically anime-looking outfit that you only see in magical girl shows. Instantly, Tsumugi was doubled over with laughter at the ridiculous drawing.

"Best girl," Tsumugi wheezed.

"Best girl," Angie agreed.

The two of them had to take a minute to calm down from the hysterical laughter that had arisen. Afterwards, Angie took a picture of her ungodly creation with an oddly proud look etched into her features. Tsumugi took a deep breath, trying to relax herself to no avail. A few seconds of silence passed before Tsumugi suddenly burst into laughter again, Angie following shortly after. After
calming down from *that* laughing fit, Tsumugi began to cackle *again*, confusing the artist who sat in front of her. Despite this, Angie joined in once more, not really caring about why Tsumugi was laughing her ass off.

"D—don't you have to..." Tsumugi snorted, "don't you have to turn that into the teacher later—" she broke out laughing again.

"Oh shit, yea!" Angie cursed, something that mainly only happened in comedic times such as this, "well, it's alright! I've turned in worse!"

Tsumugi beamed at the pronoun usage, but it was barely noticeable seeing as her face had been screwed up with laughter for the better part of ten minutes. Angie, on the other hand, didn't seem to care as she's flipped back through the pages of her notebook in attempt to find even more of her ridiculous doodles. Of course, once she did find any of said doodles, Angie stopped in her tracks at Tsumugi's joyous face. The pause didn't last long though until the artist presented her strange drawings, resulting in even more laughter from both of them, Angie practically glowing with delight in seeing the other girl's happy expression over something she had done.

"I might send the Gonta one to the chat," Angie suggested, silently hoping that she would lengthen the time she had with that smile by doing so.

"Oh my gosh, yes!" Tsumugi exclaimed, "wait, aren't we supposed to be studying?"

"Maybe, maybe not!" Angie laughed.

Tsumugi laughed alongside her with her joy filled face once more. Angie smiled before internally fist pumping. Mission accomplished.

*<I wrote that segment with a migraine, so uhh... sorry about the poor quality. Kudos to you if you know the waifus.>>*

Keebo stared blankly at the paper, fidgeting with the pencil in his right hand while the other was clasped with Rantaro's. The two have been silently peeping for midterms in silence for the most part. If you were to ask either of them, they'd claim they were just tired, but they both had their reasons. Rantaro was going through another wave of guilt over his sisters while Keebo was being faced with a sudden bout of typical existential dread. Neither of them said a word, feeling like anything aside from their problems gracing the air would be a lie to their lover. Despite all the secrets over their insecurities, neither of them seemed to be able to bear the possibility of lying to the other.

Rantaro glanced around his dorm, bitter memories stretching over every square inch. Memories of his travels. The ones he had gone on with little girls who would never live to see their sixteenth birthday. He grimaced before returning to his notes, which looked like a bunch of scribbles more than anything. Keebo seemed to notice the look because he tightened his grip on the others hand and leaned into Rantaro's side lazily, staring at his notes. One look at the paper though and the roboticist perked up, nullifying what was one of the bolder things he's initiated in their relationship (other than, you know, their first kiss.) Keebo cast Rantaro an alarmed look and the adventurer couldn't really do much more aside from raise a brow.

"Your notes are a mess!" Keebo exclaimed.

"Well yea," Rantaro replied calmly, "I'm writing with my left hand."

"Why are you writing with your left hand?!" Keebo cried.
"Because I'm holding your hand with my right one," Rantaro chuckled.

"Why you—uh—just...! You—!" Keebo sputtered, unclasping their hands.

"What about me?" Rantaro teased, "aren't I smooth as butter?"

"No!" Keebo shrieked, "the human body has a density of 1.01 grams per cubic centimeter! Butter has a density of 0.94 grams per cubic centimeter!"

Rantaro gave Keebo a look. It wasn't necessarily disappointment, more so confusion. Finally, after realizing Keebo genuinely thought the adventurer was implying that he was as smooth as butter, Rantaro's heart swelled a bit. Sighing, the taller boy leaned into Keebo's side, gently resting his head on the roboticist's shoulder. He got back to his notes with his now free right hand, leaving a flustered Keebo to have an internal crisis over the boy leaning on his shoulder. Eventually though, he calmed down and rested his own head on the other's, continuing their notes in the comfortable silence.

<Rantaro got absolutely destroyed. All my boy wanted to do was flirt :/ Also, I'm not sure if the density thing is accurate, I just Googled it.>

Tenko and Himiko sat side by side on the magician's bed, leaning casually on the wall behind them. They were working on math equations, something both of them could certainly benefit from. Himiko was never the type to study and fell asleep in class half the time whereas Tenko just struggled with numbers in general. Everything was absolutely fine; they asked each other questions (Tenko did it much more frequently than Himiko) and help one another out on specific problems. However, the focused and pleasant atmosphere was quickly destroyed as soon as random thought that Tenko somehow guessed would be an appropriate topic of conversation.

"Is it just me, or is Stephanie from Lazy Town really pretty?"

Himiko looked up at the aikido master with the most deadpan expression she could muster. One look at Tenko's face confirmed that she was, in fact, serious. Which isn't to say she doubted Tenko's honestly. The girl was awful at lying and even then she never didn't such a thing unless it's for someone else's benefit. Still, the entire conception of just chilling with you fam squad and all of a sudden they say a character from a foreign television show that produced a meme was pretty. Yea. The mere idea of that was absurd and there was no way that this was how Himiko had intended to spend her Sunday. She wanted to lay down in a pile of blankets and fall asleep while watching Magical girl anime and eating cookies from yesterday.

"Tenko, what the hell?" Himiko sighed, "listen... you're pretty, so I'm not going to argue with you, but... what's with that look?"

Tenko stared at Himiko in awe, "y—you think I'm pretty?"

Himiko's eyes widened a fraction, "no, I—"

"Awww, Himiko! That's so sweet of you," Tenko exclaimed happily, leaning over and hugging Himiko.

Himiko's face went bright red at the gesture, "I meant to say she," Himiko claimed, hoping that that the aikido master would(n't! Wouldn't) pick up on the lie, "she, Stephanie, is pretty."

"Aha, I see!" Tenko exclaimed, "I'm glad we agree!"

Despite being shot down, Tenko didn't seem all that phased. She got right back to work on her
equations and, when Himiko chose to spectate (not because the way her hair framed her face just right was cute or anything,) she found that everything looked somewhat correct for once. Did me agreeing with her help that much? The magician wondered. She was somewhat disappointed that the other girl was no longer piping up to ask questions as often anymore, but she brushed off the feeling relatively quick. Instead, she opted to listen to the occasional mumbling that Tenko did when she gets concentrated. That was satisfying enough to will Himiko to get back to her own equations.

<Okay, so I have an Amino chat for this book now! My username on the Danganronpa Amino is the same and the chat is titled "Absolute Madlads." Everyone is free to join! That's the place where I got the idea for the ridiculous "Stephanie is pretty" situation>

In hindsight, going onto the rooftop to study probably wasn't the best idea, but when you're Momota freaking Kaito, sometimes even the stupidest ideas are the ones you choose. The summer air was welcoming as he and Korekiyo opened the door late that afternoon and the occasional breeze was refreshing. However, those breezes are what turned out to be the reason why one of Korekiyo's index cards went flying dramatically away, into the distance, then dropping down to the sidewalk below. The fact that this only happened once could be considered lucky given that it had been a few hours, but that's not the way Kaito saw the situation.

"Damn it!" Kaito shouted, "sorry bout your card."

"No worries, I can always make another," Korekiyo assured before taking a look around, "it seems to be getting late. I think we've studied enough for our written exams."

Something inside Kaito deflated. He found himself wishing that Korekiyo would stay rather than notice the time. He brushed it off as the fact that he was just learning a lot. Korekiyo was extremely skilled in history, which Kaito wasn't exactly great at. Yea, he only wanted Korekiyo to stay because he's getting stronger! Totally! Before the astronaut could say anything though, he caught sight of the boy in front of him. The sun, glowing everything in a perfect shade of orange, reflected on Korekiyo's eyes like pristine mirrors, gold and orange twisting harmoniously as they turned in Kaito's direction. The few strands of deep turquoise hair that framed his face, the rest pulled back, swung gracefully in the wind, catching the sun at all the right places.

"You study astrology a lot, correct?" Korekiyo mused, "well, we could stay up here and look at the stars... or something like that."

Kaito ignored the way the suggestion made his heart skip a beat. It was only because he thought Korekiyo was leaving, obviously. Not because he had reasons that made the boy want to stay. Why would you think that? What the hell?! Momota fricking Kaito isn't gay or anything! He's going to have a wife and he's going to have two or three kids. That's how it's done. Kaito looked up to reject Korekiyo's offer, to come up with some lie that was so stupid that it would probably be believable. Before he could do any of that though, he got another look at that freaking face. He found himself saying yes before he could say no and that's how Kaito found himself staring anxiously (of course, he wasn't actually afraid, he was a man) at the stars.

In his head, Kaito tried to make sense of things. Korekiyo was obviously just a friend to him. So why is he forgetting about training (with his best friend and his girlfriend, might he add. The one who held the place of his wife and the one that held the place of his best friend!) in order to spend time with Korekiyo (who would definitely be a groomsman, but not the best man?) Maybe he just felt bad because he didn't but want to leave Korekiyo alone. Yea, that's it! A man is always willing to help those in need! Kaito's glad he figured everything out and began to point out constellations with Korekiyo. He pushed down the all knowing feeling in his stomach that told him the truth.
Sometimes, you just have to ignore those things.

<Kaito, you flupping moron.>

"You know what's a good ass movie, Bakamatsu?" Miu questioned, "the Bee movie."

"Ah, yes. A timeless classic," Kaede chuckled, going along with whatever the hell Miu was saying. It was innocent enough in comparison to most things the inventor said.

Little did Kaede know, Miu was not joking and that's how the pianist found herself watching the Bee Movie with the other girl. Kaede was tempted to comment on how ridiculous this was and how they should probably get back to work, but she knew better than that. Miu has done essentially nothing but study for the longest time now and if somehow this ridiculous movie was going to get her to sit down and take a break, Kaede had no place to complain. Thus, as Barry B. Benson picked out his sweater for the day (mixing it up a little with yellow and black,) Kaede accepted her fate and slumped onto the inventor's bed. At least Miu seemed to be enjoying herself. She genuinely enjoys this.

"Honestly, the Bee Movie is a fucking genius idea," Miu exclaimed, eyes still trained on the screen, "like it takes the real shit going on in our world with the bee population and whatnot and actually shows what the fuck could happen if the bees pissed off. On top of that, it's fucking hilarious! It really makes ya think about how you wanna go about things. Like, if we layered everything into fifty shades of comedy, would life's issues get a hell of a lot more attention? With my inventions, it's a little something like this: if the idea is crazy enough, people are gonna take notice of that shit and that'll be how I change the world."

When Kaede chose to study with Miu, the last thing she was expecting was to hear the inventor go into a philosophical conversation about the Bee Movie and yet here she was. Miu did have a point though. Lots of things in the world tend to go overlooked unless someone pushes the idea in a way that makes it stand out. Strangely enough, the observation led Kaede to understand Miu a little more. Her motivations to work were to be different in order to call attention to the world's issues. Thinking about it now, Miu mentioned once that she had gotten into a car crash and was in a coma for a while. Was that why she makes so many sleep related inventions? Come to think of it, Miu did say something about that when Kaede first met her in the simulation.

"Hey," Kaede hummed, "I think you're right."

Miu's face flushed, "o—of fuckin c—course I am!"

<I was looking at Miu's FTE a while back in order to get better at writing her and I found that connection in her and Shuichi's events>

Shuichi sat on the floor of his room, staring blankly at his wall as he tapped his fingers against the table. Kokichi sat not too far away, working on some Japanese worksheet. He wore a concentrated look, something unusual for the supreme leader seeing as he spent so much time laughing or making demonic faces at other people. Normally, Shuichi would try to understand the expression and what might've brought it on, but the detective seemed too lost in thought. Eventually, it ended up being Kokichi who took in the other's expression and was also the one who brought it up. Of course, he had to make a show out of it, so the small boy sauntered over and slammed a hand on Shuichi's desk, resulting in the blue haired boy nearly jumping out of his skin.

"Saihara-chan's been acting wierd," Kokichi commented, trying to settle with a look of disinterest, "if someone's bothering him I can send my organization after whoever it is."
"What?! No—no, that won't be necessary," Shuichi insisted, "sorry for worrying you."

Kokichi sighed, "ignoring that obvious lie, you should totally work on your Japanese with me. Did you know I teach at a college level?"

Normally, Kokichi would pry a little more, not enjoying the prospect of being lied to, but instead he settled for just changing the subject. As much as he hated to admit it, Kokichi felt the slightest bit of gratitude towards Shuichi for being one of the only people who allowed him to keep lying without nagging him. He couldn't exactly help this habit of his. He'd spent the early years of his life feeling like it's the only option for him, so now it's one of the only things that bring him comfort. That's a lie though of course! Ouma Kokichi, evil supreme leader, is comfortable anywhere in any situation. He just chose to lie in order to add to the evil schtick, duh!

"Wow, that sounds exciting," Shuichi replied, playing along with the lie, "got any teacher stories?"

"You bet!" Kokichi exclaimed, "there was this one time where a kid came in with like, fifty apples and he just kept throwing them at the other students and shouting 'how you like them apples?' I was so proud because they were my apples and—"

Shuichi snickered at the ridiculous story. It was nice though, getting out of his head. It didn't last long though. Suddenly, Shuichi felt his phone began to ring. It cut Kokichi off and for a second, all that existed was the seemingly never ending ring. Slowly, Shuichi checked the caller ID and instantly, the boy's face paled. Kokichi, obviously curious, tried to check the ID for himself, but Shuichi was already on his feet. He looked terrified, but was trying to hide it in favor of reassuring to Kokichi that he was alright. The smaller boy didn't buy it in the slightest, but let the other go nonetheless. Before exiting onto his veranda though, Shuichi spare him a glance.

"I'm so sorry," he hastily mumbled despite there being nothing to apologize for. His face was one of pure terror.

For the first half of the call, Shuichi's expression was blank, doing a lot of nodding despite the person on the other end having no way of knowing. The detective still looked terrified and after what looked like an involuntary twitch, he turned away from Kokichi in attempt to hide his face. Even from where he was though, Kokichi could feel the stress radiating off the boy. Five minutes passed before Shuichi hung up, dejectedly placing his phone back in his pocket and hanging his head. The sight of the blue haired boy's shoulders shaking was enough to send the supreme leader into action (only because he was curious! He didn't care or anything stupid like that...)

The summer air was cold on Kokichi’s skin as he stepped on the veranda. Moving over to the detective confirmed his suspicions as Shuichi wiped his eyes before Kokichi could see his face. He was still obviously fighting back tears and Kokichi was beyond confused as to who and what that phone call was about. He went against asking though, only because—! You know what? It was because Kokichi knew there was a time and place and that the first thing he’d have to do was get the boy in front of him to stop crying. He deserved that much because he was decent, even to Kokichi. Pausing after the wave of truth, Kokichi caught Shuichi’s gaze. The detective gave him a weak smile, to which Kokichi responded with the most genuine one of his own that he could muster.

“You didn’t let me finish my muffin story!” Kokichi chided, though his voice was soft.

“I thought it was apples.” Shuichi chuckled weakly.

Kokichi leaned on the railing so he was level with Shuichi then beamed, “yea, you caught me!”
<Shuichi arc anyone?? Prepare yourselves>

"Ultimate Nightmare Fuel," June 6th, 22:33

NotTodaySatan sent an image

NormieHecc: OHO MYY GODD TOU AHTUALLY SEBT IT

BuzzLightyearIsBae: WHAT THE FUCK YONAGA????!!!!!!
Exam After Test

Chapter Summary

The research facility has another test for the class.

_TW: Mentions of death_.

"Ultimate Nightmare Fuel," July 12th, 23:56

BurntStringBean: GUYS EXAMS RESULTS WERE POSTED GUYS GUYS HOLY SHIT

Bromami: We know. You broke into my dorm

BurntStringBean: SHUT UP YOU CAN CUDDLE KEEBO LATER THIS IS IMPORTANT

Kellogg: For the record it was a cuddle pile because we were all stressed.

BurntStringBean: KEEBS I LOVE YOU BEUT I SERIOUSLY DONT GIVE A SHIT RN

PianoKeyayday: :0 DON'T DISS THE CUDDLE PILE

BurntStringBean: OFUCKIMSORRRYYYYY

UltimateMadLad: WHIPPED

BurntStringBean: STFU TWINK

Kellogg: Now that the four of us (plus Harukawa-san and Saihara-kun) are up, would you mind texting the scores?

MakironiAndCheese: Tf Keebo why'd you have to go and expose me?:

UltimateMadLad: Pretty Saihara-chan's either still asleep or the poison is finally kicking in...

Bromami: Well I don't think he's slept in four years, so maybe???

BurntStringBean: SHUT THE HELL YOUR MOUTH I HAVE TO GET THROUGH THIS

Bromami: Calm do w n

BurntStringBean: Okay, so Japanese

Saihara Shuichi-99 (A+)

Ouma Kokichi-97 (A+ Somehow???)

Iruma Miu-96 (A)
Shinguuji Korekiyo-94 (A)
Shirogane Tsumugi-93 (A)
Tojo Kirumi-93 (A)
Idabashi Keebo-92 (A-)
Yonaga Angie-91 (A-)
Amami Rantaro-90 (A-)
Momota Kaito-89 (B+)
Harukawa Maki-88 (B+)
Akamatsu Kaede-85 (B)
Hoshi Ryoma-82 (B-)
Yumeno Himiko-81 (B-)
Chabashira Tenko-78 (C+)
Gokuhara Gonta-73 (C)

**PianoKeyayday:** Oh my god Shuichi how?!

**UltimateMadLad:** What do you mean "Somehow" you discount dish rag?!!!!!?

**MakironiAndCheese:** I can't believe I scored lower than Kaito

**Kellogg:** It's alright! He has to write reports for his ultimate!!!

**BurntStringBean:** History

Shinguuji Korekiyo-100 (A+ Wtf is this dude on?)
Amami Rantaro-96 (A)
Yonaga Angie-94 (A)
Iruma Miu-94 (A)
Tojo Kirumi-92 (A-)
Saihara Shuichi-91 (A-)
Ouma Kokichi-90 (A-)
Idabashi Keebo-89 (B+)
Harukawa Maki-86 (B)
Momota Kaito-85 (B)
Akamatsu Kaede-85 (B)
Shirogane Tsumugi-83 (B)
Hoshi Ryoma-80 (B)
Yumeno Himiko-77 (C+)
Gokuhara Gonta-71 (C-)
Chabashira Tenko-66 (D How???)

**PianoKeyayday:** Chabashira told me once that she "didn't care about what happened to some degenerate a hundred years ago" and I'm strangely impressed that she took it this far

**MakironiAndCheese:** Yea but doesn't she have to retake the class now?

**Bromami:** Okay but Shinguuji?

**Kellogg:** You did good as well!

**PianoKeyayday:** Keebo we can see you crying

**PianoKeyayday:** AN 89 IS GOOD YOU BEAN

**Kellogg:** IKNOWBUTSTILL

**BurntStringBean:** Mathematics is literally half and half

Idabashi Keebo- 100 (A+ I knew you were a human calculator)
Iruma Miu-98 (A+)
Ouma Kokichi-97 (A+)
Saihara Shuichi-97 (A+)
Tojo Kirumi-96 (A)
Shinguuji Korekiyo-95 (A)
Amami Rantaro-94 (A)
Momota Kaito-93 (A? Wtf???)
Shirogane Tsumugi-90 (A-)
Harukawa Maki-89 (B+)
Akamatsu Kaede-84 (B)
Hoshi Ryoma-81 (B-)
Yonaga Angie-78 (C+)
Chabashira Tenko-73 (C)
Yumeno Himiko-72 (C-)
Gokuhara Gonta-70 (C- HE DID IT!!! GIVE HIM A HUG WHEN YOU SEE HIM OR ELSE)

**Kellogg:** HWTA

**Bromami:** See Keebs? I told you you'd do well

**UltimateMadLad:** Stop being cute on the main chat you two ://

**PianoKeyayday:** Why'd you say half and half if we all passed?

**Kellogg:** I think she was just referring to her own standards.

**BurntStringBean:** English was bullshit because like a quarter of us were already fluent in it and the grading was way less harsh than the Japanese one cuz they don't expect us to know so much.

Tojo Kirumi-100 (A+)

Amami Rantaro-100 (A+)

Shinguuji Korekiyo-100 (A+)

Yonaga Angie-98 (A+)

Momota Kaito-97 (A+ WTF????????!!!!!!)

Harukawa Maki-97 (A+)

Iruma Miu-97 (A+ I can't believe I got the same score as Nonuta)

Shirogane Tsumugi-96 (A)

Ouma Kokichi-96 (A)

Saihara Shuichi-96 (A)

Akamatsu Kaede-94 (A)

Idabashi Keebo-94 (A)

Hoshi Ryoma-91 (A-)

Chabashira Tenko-86 (B)

Yumeno Himiko-81 (B-)

Gokuhara Gonta-72 (C-)

*SaiharaDesert is online*

**SaiharaDesert:** Kaito has to know a lot of stuff for his talent. He just lacks common sense, which is why we call him an idiot.

**PianoKeyayday:** When did you wake up?

**SaiharaDesert:** There were people texting me (don't worry, it wasn't you guys.)
UltimateMadLad: DOES SAIHARA-CHAN HAVE FRIENDS OTHER THAN US??!!

Bromami: I'm offended:/

SaiharaDesert: No, it was just people.

UltimateMadLad: Oh! Was it those people from that one case you had?!

SaiharaDesert: Yea.

Bromami: Ah

SaiharaDesert: Yea. I was doing a follow up with them.

BurntStringBean: Science

Iruma Miu-100 (A+)
Idabashi Keebo-99 (A+)
Momota Kaito-96 (A)
Saihara Shuichi-95 (A)
Ouma Kokichi-95 (A)
Yumeno Himiko-94 (A)
Amami Rantaro-93 (A)
Tojo Kirumi-92 (A-)
Shinguuji Korekiyo-89 (B+)
Harukawa Maki-87 (B+)
Shirogane Tsumugi-86 (B)
Akamatsu Kaede-84 (B)
Gokuhara Gonta-82 (B-)
Hoshi Ryoma-82 (B-)
Chabashira Tenko-78 (C+)
Yonaga Angie-68 (D+)

SaiharaDesert: She took a while to send that one.

PianoKeyayday: I think she's proud of that 100 (you should be!!!)
BurntStringBean: SBEBDHSHTUP

UltimateMadLad: How did Yumeno "it's magic, bitch" Himiko get a 94 on a science midterm? I call cheats!

Kellogg: And you and Saihara-kun having the exact same score on over half the exams isn't suspicious?

SaiharaDesert: Yumeno-san's talent probably requires her to understand a lot of physics. Also, Ouma-kun and I sit in the same row, so it'd be pretty difficult to cheat without making it obvious.

Bromami: Guys I think Maki's asleep again

PianoKeyayday: Awwww!!! We should sleep as well

PianoKeyayday: Iruma wanna join?

BurntStringBean:

BurntStringBean: no thanks

<Kaito: Does well on his exams, but is still called an idiot by his class>

Morning came in the blink of an eye and Miu still hadn't slept a wink. She looked over her notes over and over, committing them to her memory five times over. She was exhausted, but was so hopped up on adrenaline that it didn't even register properly in her mind. She didn't even get that feeling of disappointment when she heard the birds begin to chirp outside. She was laser focused on the task at hand and it wasn't until her door opened did she stop. There stood Kaede, followed by Shuichi. Miu looked up, giving them a glare. She didn't really care about the looks she got. She knew she probably looked like crap. Hair a mess and heavy bags under her eyes. There was an awkward bout of silence throughout the room. Fortunately, Kaede eventually made the decision to break it.

"Iruma-san!" The pianist chimed in a voice far to happy for someone at—Miu checked her clock—two in the afternoon... okay fair enough, "we have a class meeting downstairs and uh... yea, you were the only one not there."

God dammit.

"O—okay everyone," Shuichi began, cringing at the fact that he started by stuttering, "so the uh... th—the reason we had to um... gather you a—all he—" the detective lowered his voice and turned to Kaede, "— Kaede, please. I think I'm dying..."

"No," Kaede refused, giving the boy a mischievous smile, "you, my friend, need to get better at public speaking."

"It's a lost cause," Shuichi groaned, "I only do behind the scenes stuff."

"Come on!" Kaede encouraged, "you just have to get through this one part and I've got the rest. Besides, they're your friends."

"Fine," Shuichi muttered before turning back to the class, "the research facility has another progress report the want us to do. Kaede will explain."
"See?" Kaede teased as she swapped places with Shuichi, "that wasn't so hard, was it?"

"That's what she said!" Miu whooped tiredly.

"Iruma!" Kaede scolded.

"Whaaaat??!" Miu whined.

Kaede cleared her throat and retrieved a paper from Shuichi, "This is my first time reading this too. How fun... oh no..., uhh... For the next test, you will be handcuffed to another student for twenty-four hours... At the end of the test, you must write an evaluation of the other person. Pairs are selected among yourselves at random."

This announcement instantly ignited some sort of spark within the group. Nobody was particularly happy with it, save for Kokichi and Angie, but they always seemed hyper about everything. Throughout the chaos, Shuichi returned, nobody realizing he had left to begin with, with a box. At Kaede's word, everyone lined up as Shuichi wrote down everyone's names. The boy gazed around for a moment, looking for something, only to deflate a little and reluctantly remove his own hat. He looked noticeably more tense as he added the names, obviously uncomfortable with the zero people looking at the top of his head.

"Okay, so I'm going to draw pairs," Shuichi spoke calmly, "The uh... the pairs are probably not going to be what everyone wants, but we're going to have to deal with it."

Shuichi reached into the hat and grabbed two names, "Hoshi-kun and Kaito."

"Yonaga-san and Shinguuji-kun."

"Ouma-kun and Chabashira-san."

"Kaede and Yumeno-san."

"Idabashi and Gonta."

"Maki and Amami-kun."

"Tojo-san and Iruma-san, which leaves me and Shirogane-san."

As time went on, there were less people protesting and more people all for the idea. Namely Kaito and Kaede were excited to hang out with people they weren't used to hanging around. Ryoma and Himiko, on the other hand, did not seem that ecstatic. On the complete other side of the spectrum, Tenko was loudly objecting to being stuck with Kokichi, "the most degenerate of all degenerates." The supreme leader didn't seem to care all that much though. Shuichi reread the pairs, writing them down on the evaluation sheets. The detective couldn't help but have his own concerns about a good portion of these pairs. It's not that he doubted them, he just didn't think some of these would work out.

Kaito and Ryoma should be fine for the most part, Shuichi deduced, depending on how Ryoma reacts. He normally doesn't react well under positive influence and Kaito... well Kaito was pretty much the sun. Korekiyo and Angie is one Shuichi was initially really worried about with Korekiyo killing the artist. However, the two of them have been on good terms, so that worry lowered considerably at the sight of Angie already planning out fun stuff to do. Shuichi felt a little bad for both Kokichi and Tenko. The boy would probably be fine, but he'd have to watch what he said. Kaede and Himiko are similar to Ryoma and Kaito, but Kaede knows how to take a hint. Keebo and Gonta are both nice enough that there shouldn't be many problems. Maki and Rantaro have
been on good terms lately. Kirumi should be able to put up with Miu's antics and—

"Saihara-kun, you're muttering to yourself," Tsumugi interrupted Shuichi's intense worrying. "I'm sure they'll be fine."

"Yea..." Shuichi agreed, "yea, I guess you're right."

<Keebo and Gonta stared quietly at the cuffs that connected their hands. They'd spent a good fifteen minutes trying to figure out how to get them onto the entomologist, eventually giving up and attaching the cuff to a bracelet instead. After assuring Keebo multiple times that there was still blood flowing into his hand, Gonta suggested that they came up with something fun to do. After all, it wasn't everyday that you get forcefully get handcuffed to a classmate for the sake of science. Which brings us to now, where there sat one roboticist, one entemologist, and absolutely no clue how to function. Ten minutes had already passed since they'd been attached and only then did one of them speak up.

"We could go on a walk to the gardens or something," Keebo suggested, "it's very nice out today!"

"Gonta agree!" Gonta exclaimed, "let's go!"

With that, Gonta stood up and began to walk. However, the action was so abrupt that Keebo got jerked forward, stumbling before finally catching their footing. Taking a moment to profusely apologize, Gonta spent the first half of their walk making sure not to make the same mistake. Keebo didn't seem to notice and therefore didn't comment. Instead, they fiddled around with the cuff linked to their left hand. Luckily for them, Keebo and Gonta were both right and left handed respectively, meaning they wouldn't have to constantly switch between actions. Unfortunately, the cuff covered up Keebo's identification bracelet, which they had changed to black and white that morning. They weren't about to ask Gonta to stop and help them though, so they instead just struck up some small talk.

"So—uh. Nice weather, don't you think?" Keebo asked, "wait—no. Already said that..."

"But the weather is nice!" Gonta echoed, "there's nothing wrong with that!"

Keebo frowned, "Forgive me if I'm wrong, but... is there something on your mind?"

Gonta's smile faltered, "...yes, but there's nothing that can help."

"You can tell me," Keebo assured, "you never know until you try, correct."

Gonta sighed before muttering, "Ouma-kun as been avoiding Gonta ever since the KGS finished."

"Oh," Keebo murmured, "have you tried talking to him yourself. Maybe see what's wrong?"

"Yea, Gonta's tried," Gonta said worriedly, "and Gonta already knows why Ouma-kun's avoiding him, which is why Gonta can't do anything about it."

Despite being given no signal, Gonta came to a sudden stop, resulting in Keebo being lurched back. After another round of frantic apologies, the duo approached their initial destination; the gardens were as beautiful as always, now shining with the brightness of the summer sun and the plants were striped with the occasional streak of yellow. The relaxed atmosphere that came with the serene sight was gone quickly though. The pair of them sat on a bench near a bush of vibrant
flowers, which was when Gonta continued.

"Gonta know's that Ouma-kun needs space," Gonta explained, "he doesn't like people forcing him
to do stuff because Ouma-kun likes being in control of things."

Keebo hummed in acknowledgment, absorbing the information with care as Gonta continued,
"Gonta just wishes Ouma-kun will get better soon. We both get sad when we're alone."

"I see," Keebo replied, not exactly sure how else to respond, "well then, how about we think
about something happy? Like... how are things with you and Hoshi-kun?"

"Oh, it's great!" Gonta's solemn tone did a one-eighty in the blink of an eye, "Gonta treats Ryoma
like a gentleman and Ryoma does the same for Gonta! How about you and Amami-kun?"

"We're good," Keebo affirmed, "he's very good at holding hands. It feels sort of weird because he
has a lot of callouses, but it feels nice at the same time... but yea, he's very sweet."

Gonta laughed happily, "Gonta's happy to hear that!"

<15:30>

Himiko sulked on the couch, blankly staring at the TV without really watching it. She was
absolutely, undeniably, bored. The magician would settle for a nap if she could, but she was well
aware that someone would come walking into the common room and Kaede would excitedly jump
up to have a conversation. It wasn't that Himiko disliked the pianist, quite the opposite actually, it's
just that being stuck to her isn't exactly what she'd describe as the ideal. And so, she found herself
slumped on the couch, waiting for her peace to be inevitably disturbed once again by loud
conversations.

"Sorry I've sort of been dragging you around," Kaede spoke up, "that's not really fair to you, is it?"

Himiko sighed and mumbled something unintelligible, but if Kaede has to guess, it was probably
her accepting the apology.

"I'll tell you what. We can do what you want until it's time for dinner," Kaede declaraction.

That caught Himiko's attention, "really?"

Kaede nodded brightly, "of course!"

With that, Himiko wordlessly stood up, beginning to move to the stairs. Kaede followed closely
behind so she wouldn't hinder the other girl's movements. Next thing she knew, the two girls were
in Himiko's room, Kaede watching as Himiko scoured a shelf for something. A moment passed
before the magician extracted a large book. Kaede didn't have time to read the cover before
Himiko began flipping through the pages. Given that flipping a book's pages was a two hand thing,
Kaede's left hand was awkwardly extended, not completely limp for the sake of continuing blood
flow to her hand. Just like Keebo and Gonta, Kaede and Himiko we're lucky given that the short of
the two was ambidextrous.

"Okay, so what did you want to..." Kaede trailed off as she got a good look at the page, "... learn
piano?"

"Yea," Himiko muttered, "I know I'm a mage, but song spells use less MP."

"Okay," Kaede went along with the nonsensical reasoning, "to my lab then."
The two girls' walk to the school was relatively quiet, but both of them were excited. Kaede had only taught a handful of people, those being Keebo when they had the falling out with Rantaro, Shuichi, and even Kaito, who had approached her. She surely wasn't expecting Himiko of all people to be the next one to ask.

The first year musician's lab was empty, probably because the other two were off chained to some of their own classmates. Himiko noticed how Kaede seemed to relax the slightest bit at the atmosphere. Not that she blamed her; the room was elegant and light pleasantly flowed through the open windows in a way that showered Himiko in warmth as she walked. The piano was in the corner of the room, light reflecting nicely off of the smooth, dark surface. Kaede guided Himiko over, both of them sitting down on a black leather bench.

"Okay, so it's best to learn with your left hand, which is good because your left hand is free," Kaede explained, "so you're going to want to put your pinky right here—" Kaede pointed at a key, "—alright, so that note is C, which is our 1 in scale degree C—which I'll talk more about later..."

It took a while for Kaede to explain the notes, but she got through it eventually. Himiko was learning surprisingly fast in comparison to what Kaede thought. Maybe this is just what happened when the redhead was interested in something. Speaking of which, Kaede still had a question for the self proclaimed mage. She held her tongue until after explaining scale degrees, but then she just couldn't help it.

"So, Yumeno-san," Kaede began, "what made you want to learn piano?"

"For song spells," Himiko repeated her answer from earlier.

Now aware that she'd have to play along with this, Kaede continue, "uh... What kind of spells?"

Himiko went quiet before murmuring something.

"What was that?" Kaede raised a brow.

"I said..." Himiko's face was bright red, "love spells."

"Awwww!" Kaede cooed, "is it for Chabashira-san? Oh, what about Yonaga-san?! Ouma-kun would be a strange choice, but I think that would just be setting yourself up for rejection seeing as he's probably gay—"

"Sh—shush!" Himiko sputtered, "I'm not telling you anything!"

"Oh, okay," Kaede sighed, smirking "alright, so chords!"

Korekiyo and Angie had a strange relationship. Neither of them were particularly close with the other, but at the same time, they were the first person they'd call if they needed to hide a body. Korekiyo was the only one of Angie's classmates that genuinely held some sort of interest towards Atua aside from Angie herself as well. This made it rather simple for the two to hold a proper (well, not exactly proper, but fluid) conversation for the better part of three hours. It wasn't until Korekiyo said something odd that things seemed to hit a bump in the road. Overall, it was a harmless question, but given the subject and the target to which the words are spoken, someone as intelligent as Korekiyo should've seen this coming.

"So what's going on with you?" The anthropologist mused nonchalantly, staring wistfully off into the distance.
"Hm? Nothing! Nothing is going on with Angie!" Angie exclaimed, "like she said, Angie is only a vessel for Atua! All of what you think are here actions are actually his!"

"Right..." Korekiyo murmured, wishing he had not only his notebook, but a free right hand to jot down the artists beliefs.

Then something stopped those thoughts. It was a little voice inside Korekiyo's head that made him want to do something different. He wanted to help her. Empathy. Korekiyo admittedly did not have a lot of experience with those sorts of feelings. He had grown used to merely observing, the possibility of actually stepping into the fray barely ever crossing his mind. And yet in that moment, Korekiyo's head swelled with the idea. He couldn't help but be glad. Empathy was something Miyadera was severely lacking in. This made him feel largely different from her. That was always a victory. Pushing that aside though, Korekiyo wracked his brain for any memories of notes that might help...

"Well, have you produced any new works lately?" Korekiyo casually asked despite the fact that he had a not so casual goal in mind.

"Aha! Atua has expressed many images through Angie as of late~" Angie beamed, "would Korekiyo like to see? A lot of them are based off of Angie's classmates!"

"I'd be delighted," Korekiyo complied, "in fact, why don't you send it to the chat? I would gladly allow you to properly use your left hand."

"Ultimate Nightmare Fuel," July 12th, 16:34

NotTodaySatan sent 3 images
Corn Flakes
Angie wore a content look on her face. Her classmates, while she used to only used to consider them as pawns to her plans of a utopia, have grown to become a source of comfort. This meant that her—Atua! This meant that Atua would often look to them for inspiration. He was only a happy god, so it was only natural, right? Yes. Atua was only happy, which meant Angie was only happy. Korekiyo knew better though, which made the content look mean a lot more in his eyes. He knew that Angie's art was, in fact, Angie's in some way. He knew her own lies contradicted one another. They were hers though. Sometimes, knowing that you, in that moment, are real is enough to keep you moving.

Yonaga Angie, note 17- She claims that Atua is only in a state of happiness and is the complete controller of her art, but lately her pieces have been rather melancholic (albeit beautiful.) Her art is the only current theory I have on her emotional self expression.

"I detest this," Ryoma deadpanned, "according to 99% of Karens, this is animal abuse."

Ryoma didn't want to get into it, but he was currently standing in the common room, cucumber in one hand and the other forcefully raised upwards. Due to the considerable height difference the two had, Ryoma had to constantly have the limb up in the air, leaving him in no position to fight back as Kaito approached Azumi.

"It'll be fine!" Kaito exclaimed, "I just wanna see it in action."

"Whatever," Ryoma groaned, "if you hurt her though, I swear to fuck that I will cut off all circulation to your left hand."

"Alright, alright!" Kaito panicked, "it won't hurt her, okay?!"

Ryoma didn't comment. Instead he watched Kaito creep up on Azumi. The plan was probably going to fail anyway; since it required Ryoma handing Kaito the cucumber, the chain on the handcuffs would likely rattle, resulting in Azumi becoming aware of their presence. Of course, Ryoma forgot one key detail about this. The cat is normally eating. So, when Kaito poured food into the small bowl on the floor, it became apparent to Ryoma that this was, in fact, an actual thing he's going to have to deal with. The cream colored kitten pattered over to the bowl, beginning to eat
without a second though. The chain didn't make nearly as much noise as Ryoma thought it would. He was tempted to intentionally shake it more, but gave in to curiosity.

And so, Kaito placed the cucumber next to poor, sweet, innocent Azumi. Ryoma watched in terror as time ticked on and on as the kitten nibbled at the cat food before her. Such a small creature, sentenced to such a terrible fate. The time drew nearer and nearer to the moment of truth. The world seemed to slow down, the light warping in such a way that it focused like a spotlight on Azumi as the sun shed its rays of light through the nearby window. Kaito held a devious face that made Ryoma tempted to call him out on it. How dare he be so cruel in such an intense moment? How dare he completely disregard all the emotions of this tiny angel of a cat that looked so content despite the fact that in a few moments—

Azumi turned around. She couldn't care less about the cucumber.

"Aw, man!" Kaito whined, "that was anticlimactic... well, what about you? What do you wanna do now?"

"Well, I would like to go and let my cat," Ryoma sighed, "she was just in mortal peril, so I'd like to see if she's okay."

"Besides that, dude!" Kaito chided, "c'mon, ask me anything!"

"What was with those ominous texts you sent Gonta at the beginning of last chapter?"

"... So where do you think Azumi went?"

<18:30>

Maki wandered outside the dormitory. Dinner had just finished and she had made a habit of taking a walk or two throughout the day. Of course, this required Rantaro to be with her. The green haired boy wasn't exactly bad company. He didn't talk too much and was painfully respectful at times. Although he was slightly cryptic, but Maki let that slide. He was a nice guy. It's not like she had too much on her mind to properly form a negative thought towards him. It's not like she forgot she had a guy stuck following her for the next day because she's too caught up in her own thoughts. Nope. Not that. No—

"What's on your mind?" Rantaro hummed, shattering practically all of Maki's previous past judgements on him. Suddenly, he seemed obnoxiously nosy and rude and—"You don't have to say anything if you don't want. Sometimes it's just better to talk about it, but other times it's just too difficult."

"Nothing's wrong," Maki denied, hating how Rantaro was still being stupidly considerate even while interrogating her (of course he wasn't actually interrogating her, she just thought that because, well... something was wrong.)

"I said it's alright to not talk about it. Don't lie to yourself," Rantaro muttered, a dark look crossing his eyes for a moment, "it only makes things worse if you do."

"Fine," Maki grunted, "I don't wanna talk about it. Happy?"

"Yes, thank you," Rantaro chuckled, his laid back attitude returning quickly to his expression as he looked off to the side carelessly, "like I said, it's fine not to talk—"

"Shut up."
Rantaro quirked a brow, but complied nonetheless. Maki had stopped walking, taking a moment to stare up at the sky with a scrutinizing face. Rantaro gave the girl some time. He knew that she probably had to take a moment to get where she needed to be. He could relate. Sharing anything like this probably wasn't the ideal situation for anyone. He didn't stop her though. He'd made it clear that she didn't have to say anything, so this was of her own free will. Maki was choosing to tell her. Rantaro took that time to look at the sky as well.

"My parents died thirteen years ago today," Maki blurted, "I didn't want to say anything because a: that's just not how I function, and b: I was worried it'd trigger something with your sisters or something."

"Aw, you were worried? How sweet," Rantaro teased, earning a glare from the other, "sorry, not the time... is there anything I can do to help? I'm not good at much, but I could—"

"No. You don't have to do anything," Maki sighed before pulling her face into a small smirk, "Ran-chan."

Rantaro's eye twitched, "you've been spending too much time with Kokichi," he declared, "I refuse to let that name stick."

"Got it, Ranty."

"Alright, now this is just—" Rantaro caught himself off.

Maki was crying.

"Uh, I..." Rantaro cursed himself for not being able to think of anything sooner.

"What? Oh—shit," Maki hissed, wiping at her eyes, "just... ignore this—uh—this is just..."

"Oh my god," Rantaro breathed, "I think I have an idea."

"An idea?" Maki glared at him, getting herself together, "for wh—Jesus Christ Rantaro! Warn me before you start walking, you moron."

Rantaro chuckled in response, which occasionally meant he was not really paying attention to anything and was just lost in his own ideas. Maki rolled her eyes, wordlessly following the boy as they reentered the dorms (they really hadn't gone that far,) made their way up the stairs and arrived at Rantaro's door. The adventurer entered before digging around a few boxes, eventually extracting a roll of string lights. The two of them exited the room, going right across the hall to Maki's room. The bodyguard spared her friend a confused glance before opening the door with her key.

"Should I ask what's going on here?" Maki deadpanned.

"Do you have any pictures of your parents?" Rantaro asked, "I'm just... repaying a favor you did me a while back."

"What does that... you know what? Never mind," Maki grumbled, "I... there should be a box under my desk, just let me..."

Maki motioned for Rantaro to follow her as she crouched down. Sure enough, there was the box, underneath the desk. Maki carefully reached out and grabbed the box, which Rantaro noticed had a thick layer of dust on it. He couldn't help but wonder how long it's been since it's actually been opened. That answer made its way to him sooner than expected as the brunette gently pulled the box into her lap.
"This... was the box of stuff I got from my parents before they died..." Maki explained, "I've... never opened it."

"Never?" Rantaro gaped, "that... you know you don't have to do this if you don't—"

"Could you just shut up?" Maki snapped, "sorry... it's just... it's been thirteen years. I think it's time."

"Don't worry about it," Rantaro assured, "and I'm guessing you don't want to be stuck to me for this sentimental moment, so..."

Rantaro pulled out a key and undid the cuffs.

"Where the hell did you get that?" Maki seemed more impressed than confused, "I didn't think you had it in you to cheat the exams, cabbage boy."

"Hey, rude," Rantaro scoffed jokingly, "I'm just not a large fan of the idea of being stuck."

"Yea, I get that," Maki agreed before returning her focus to the box, "well... let's do this."

Maki carefully removed the lid to the box. Inside was... papers. Lots of papers. As suspected, there were also pictures. Maki's mother was stunningly beautiful, dark hair and bright eyes. Her father was tough looking with strong features, including deep red eyes that scarcely matched that of her daughter, for moment, Maki stared blankly, resulting in Rantaro debating whether or not this was a good idea. Tears welled up in the girl's eyes, a different side of her Rantaro's never seen coming out of nowhere.

"I..." Maki whispered before handing Rantaro some of the photo's, "here... I just... I just need a moment."

Rantaro nodded, though he doubted Maki could see him. Then he got to work. He hung up the string lights all throughout the girl's room, taping the occasional photo by the corners in order to prevent damage. He was recreating the sky full of stars Maki and Kokichi has created for him only months before. The one that had given him hope on a bleak day. However, before making his last move, Rantaro turned back to Maki.

"You alright?"

"... They wrote me letters," Maki spoke softly, "one for every birthday until I'm..."

Maki dug through the box, checking the letters. Before she found an exact number though, Maki came across something else. A necklace. A simple red pendent hung delicately from a golden chain. Rantaro approached the girl, who had yet to say anything else. He carefully took the necklace—he guessed it was her mother's—and wrapped it around Maki's neck. He clasped it together, then gave her a small smile.

"Red's a good color on you," Rantaro observed, "I would've said something sooner if you actually wore color more."

"Oh fuck you," Maki snorted, though it sounded a bit like a sob.

Rantaro chuckled before opening his arms. Maki gave him a look of hesitation before accepting the hug. The lights and the picture and the letters lay unlit and unseen and unread. That didn't matter anymore. Sometimes it isn't about the stars. Not about the people who are gone. Sometimes it's about the people who are still here. That's what matters.
<That segment was a lot longer than expected... I'm a sucker for them being friends though.>

<19:30>

"How do you think the others are doing," Shuichi mumbled.

"Like I said, they'll be fine," Tsumugi reminded.

Shuichi sighed, "alrig—oh my god, Violet, don't cry!"

"Violet, sweetie, don't cry!" Tsumugi gasped, "oh my god, the animation..."

<20:30>

Miu and Kirumi lay passed out in the maid's room. The sun was still setting on the lovely summer evening and yet, neither of them seemed to be able to do anything more than sleep. Not that it was surprising. Kirumi, while she had been officially diagnosed and takes medication for her OCD, she does still have issues with overworking herself. Miu wasn't too much of a different story. She had pulled an all-nighter the day before, brooding over her tiny mistakes that she didn't even know on her exams. Striving for perfection was exhausting. So it took very little convincing from Kirumi to get the inventor to go to sleep. It was alright though. They both earned it, even if only Kirumi knew it.

<21:30>

Kokichi and Tenko have had a relatively... interesting day. Kokichi had been flipped multiple times and Tenko has screeched multiple times, so all in all, it's been rather chaotic. However, when Kokichi finally did the liberty of being the first of the two to yawn, Tenko immediately jumped to the topic of settling down for the night. She didn't seem to notice the boy's abnormal amount of blinking... almost as if he had something stuck in his eye...

"Alrighty Chaba-chaba-chan-chan!" Kokichi cheered, "I'd say we sleep in your room—"

"Oh no no no no!" Tenko objected, "I'm not letting a degenerate into my dorm!"

"Ohoho, but then you'd be stuck spending the night in a degenerate's room," Kokichi reasoned, panicking a bit, "who knows what gross, creepy stuff I might—"

"That's alright!" Tenko assured, "I'll use it as a way to work on my bravery!"

"What if I'm a total perv?"

"Then I'll neo aikido you!"

"What if I try to kill you?"

"Then I'll neo aikido you!"

"What if my followers are positioned there to kill you?"

"Then I'll neo aikido them after I neo aikido you!"

"Please..." Kokichi muttered, "I didn't... oh wow, your face actually looks sympathetic?! I can't believe you fell for such an obvious act. I'm not nervous of anything!"

"I..." Tenko hesitated, "if you're seriously that uncomfortable, then..."
"No! No I am not uncomfortable!" Kokichi snapped, but gave off a cheery impression, "I don't get uncomfortable! I'm shameless!"

Tenko narrowed her eyes, "so your room?"

"Y... yes! Of course!" Kokichi's voice trembled a bit.

Tenko gave the shorter boy a look as the two of them made their way to the third floor. Something was obviously bothering him. The aikido master felt a bit of pride in the fact that she saw through the typically complicated boy, but she pushed down that feeling with worry. The pair made it to Kokichi's dorm relatively quick, so no complaints there. The atmosphere seemed to grow more and more tense as time went on. The dorm itself seemed normal, so Tenko still wasn't all that concerned. Then the bathroom...

"Okay, so I've got some REALLY gross men stuff in here, got that, Chaba-chan?" Kokichi cooed, but that tremble was back, "so I'd close your eyes when I go in there, okidoky?"

Despite her suspicions, Tenko closed her eyes. She moved forward warily, getting a feeling that Kokichi was too on edge to actually attempt to mess with her. The sound of the door closing greeted her ears shortly after. She felt her left hand raise as Kokichi shuffled around with something. She heard a click. Something opening. Something shutting. Tenko still had this uneasy feeling in her stomach though.

The two were out of the bathroom soon enough, Tenko opened her eyes as soon as she heard the door shut, giving her a good look at Kokichi. He had glasses on, which was news to her, but he seemed to have his right eye shut. He looked remarkably tired as well, dark bags under his eyes. On top of all that though, Kokichi look sad. In that moment, something flared up inside of Tenko. Before she could comprehend what she was doing, she was reopening the door to the bathroom and—

Oh my god.

The entire room seemed to hover in front of Tenko as if she didn’t exist. The mirror screamed ugly words written in sloppy handwriting. Such terrible words that Tenko wouldn’t wish on anyone. Things such as monster and freak or idiot and awful were scrawled all over until the actual mirror couldn’t be seen. The countertops were a similar story aside from the basin of the sink. Tenko couldn’t believe what she was seeing.

“Wh—what the hell?!” Kokichi shouted, attempting to get out of this situation, “who wrote all of this?! What awful handwriting...”

It was only then that Tenko saw Kokichi’s face. He had opened his right eye out of pure shock and...

“Ouma-san! Your eye is yellow!” Tenko cried.

“It wh—oh shit,” Kokichi panicked, “well... yea, this probably looks sorta funky now doesn’t it? Reminds me of back in the day when I delivered triplets in Area 51...”

“Ouma-san, don’t try to steer away the conversation with your weird humor!” Tenko scolded, “why—!” Tenko softened her voice, “—why did you write all of this about yourself?”

“Moi?! I did no such thing!” Kokichi gasped, seemingly astonished, “I am beautiful, thank you very much!”
“You obviously knew this was here though, so you kept it here regardless of whether or not you wrote it!” Tenko reasoned, “do you... do you really believe all of this?”

“I don’t know—maybe?!?” Kokichi yelled, “I—yea! So what! Big shocker! What are you gonna do now, huh? Of course, that’s a lie. This is all an act to make you feel bad for hating m—“

Tenko felt something in her chest. She launched herself forward, wrapping Kokichi in a hug. The small boy seemed less than amused though, almost instantly trying to wriggle free. What’s up with people hugging him when he gets pissed at them and tries to push them away?

“Well, for what it’s worth...” Tenko muttered, “I... I don’t think you’re all that bad, okay.”

“You—you don’t?” Kokichi yelped, not sure how else to react to such a surprising statement.

“Of course,” Tenko reaffirmed, “you’re sort of a weird and a degenerate, but... you’re a good person when it comes down to it. That’s what matters.”

Kokichi paused, “how... how am I a good person?”

“Welll, you... you always seem to have the right intentions, even if your way of achieving them are a little... icky,” Tenko explained, “you’re encouraging in your own, strange way and, lately, I think you’ve gotten better at showing that you care. A—“

“Okay, that’s enough of the mushy crap!” Kokichi sputtered, face pink from the praise, “I’m just gonna—"

“Oh, and your eyes!” Tenko blurted, “your eyes are super cool!”

“Are you done now?”

“Almost, I just—“

“Nope. You’re done? Okay, that’s good, night night—“

“Aww, Ouma-san, don’t be like that!”

“Y........c.....I........i........i.”

“What was that?”

“I said you can call me Kokichi.”

“Ah, then feel free to call me Tenko!”

“You want a male to call you by your given name?”

“No. I want a good person to call me by my given name!”

“...”

“Awww, you’re that unused to praise? Adorable!”

“sHUt your UP—“

**BONUS SCENE:**

Kokichi walked into his bathroom to remove his contacts. He’d been separated from Tenko hours
earlier and he had no plans to see anyone else, so it was off with the contacts and on with the glasses. What he was expecting was to see no more graffiti in his bathroom. There were sticky notes. He removed the singular one on his desk:

Kokichi,

I cleaned up in here! Don’t worry, I didn’t tell anyone and I didn’t poke around your gross degenerate stuff either. I just cleaned the mirror and counter. Enjoy these happy notes to get you through the day!

-Chaba-chan!

Kokichi snorted, removing one of the notes on the mirror.

Everything’s going to be okay! :D

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