butterfly effect

by olympicmayhem

Summary

“It has been said that something as small as the flutter of a butterfly’s wing can ultimately cause a typhoon halfway around the world.”

—Chaos Theory

Notes

See the end of the work for notes

If one were to ask Ann if she believed in gods of death that would guide the soul to the afterlife, she would have flat out said no. It’s a stupid thing to believe in. They exist in mythology and literature, not in real life. So why then, at around 3 am on the rooftop of her Roppongi apartment, was she talking to one?

The answer? She was about to throw herself off the building to end her life.

At the young age of twenty-five, Ann Takamaki has become a world-class model; flying all over the world to walk the runway. She was coveted by most designer brands, loved by men, and envied by women. In short, it was a life full of fame and success.
But fame and success come at such a large price. Her innocence was taken at age sixteen. At the age of eighteen, she learned that the only way to survive in this treacherous world was by giving everything all she has to offer, even her body.

Lies and deceit, lust and power. The industry in which she lives in brought her not only fame but pain as well. The fact that she was able to survive this long was proof of how strong she had become.

But even the strongest trees bend to the most powerful winds. At the age of twenty-five, Ann Takamaki decided that she simply cannot live anymore. Both mind and body have become so painfully numb there wasn't much left in her to truly live. So she decided one chilly October night that dying was the way to go.

Everything was set. Separate letters addressed to each of her friends and family explain why she had done what she did. She had even stated who to give her pet cat, Morgana, to. Her face was bare of make up for once; the blue in her eyes ablaze with determination.

She stepped out into the rooftop of her Roppongi apartment, the cold October wind pushing blonde curls gently back. She wrapped the pink silk robe around her body to try and protect herself from the biting chill as she took step after step to reach the ledge.

Finally, she reached it. One foot over and then another and then she was standing on the edge, her arms spread wide open. One tip forward, that's all it takes to plummet to her death. She looked down. There was nothing but an empty street below. Any sane person would be asleep at such an ungodly hour. Taking a deep breath, she closed her eyes. This is it. This is the end. She's going to be free at last. Just one tip forward. Just one teeny tiny push…

"I wouldn't do that if I were you."

Her eyes snap open as she heard the drawl of another person just beside her. She whips her head around to find an unknown man with frizzy black hair and grey eyes, a bored look on his (handsome) face, his arms crossed at his chest, as if he's tired of spending the day trying to stop suicidal models from throwing themselves off rooftops.

Of course she notices the black robe he was wearing: a mixture of strange and sexy meshed together quite perfectly. Underneath his elbow she could see the outline of red gloves peeking out.

Who is this guy? And how come she hadn't heard him enter the vicinity? And why isn't he minding his own business?

"Are you gonna step down from that ledge or am I going to have to drag you?"

A frown marred the model's immaculate features. Usually, don't people try to stop other people from taking their lives by being nice? This guy is just being downright rude about it. It's quite irritating.

"Excuse me but who are you and how did you get past security? I don't think I've ever seen you around before."

He waved off a gloved hand as he brushed away her words, his expression remaining pensive.

"Doesn't matter. Now, am I going to have to drag you down or are you going to obediently obey my instructions?"
Now he was just being pushy. First, he stops her from committing suicide. Then, he not-so-nicely asks her to step down? Nobody has ever given that attitude to Ann Takamaki before. Nobody.

She decided then and there that she doesn't like this guy. And that she shouldn't bother wasting her time with him. She turned her head back in front and once again closed her eyes. Just a little tip forward. A teeny tiny push and it'll all be over.

“Geez, suicidals really are troublesome people.”

She heard a swish beside her. And then something warm and rough and definitely made of expensive leather wrapped around one of her bony wrists. She definitely tipped, alright. She tipped backward, towards the safe side of the ledge. Arms wrapped in black wrap around her slender waist as someone cushioned her fall. The faint scent of coffee filled her nostrils.

If she hadn't been pissed, she would have blushed. As it was, the model could only push away the perpetrator and give him a glare that could melt the icecaps of Mt. Everest. She pushed him away from her and pointed an accusing finger at him.

“Will you please mind your own business?”

“I am minding my own business,” he replied with a tsk, as if she was the one giving him a problem instead of the other way around. He rubbed the back of his head in frustration, messing his not-so-sexy hair in the process.

“If you could just stop dying for second, that would be nice.” He fished something out of the pocket of his long coat and produced a silver handheld device.

Pressing a few buttons on the screen, he then said, “Ann Takamaki, right? Yeah, no. You're not supposed to die right now.”

The frown on Ann's face only deepened. Just what is this guy talking about? What's the deal with “you're not supposed to die right now”?

“Who the hell are you?”

Those piercing grey eyes turn their attention on her, pinning her in place. His hand slips the handheld back in his pocket.

“Ren Amamiya. Death reaper, at your service.”

You could hear a pin drop. Ann expected a lot of answers but she definitely did not expect that one. Is he alright? Did he hit his head when he pulled her? Is he on drugs?

“Yeaaaaahhhhhhh…sure. And I'm Cupid.”

He was not impressed.

“Ann Takamaki, born November twelfth 1999, to Leo and Hana Takamaki.”

Okaaaaaay. That's not impressive. You can google her name and her Wikipedia page would show you that kind of information.

“You had a pet dog named Koromaru who died when you were eleven. You also had a pet fish who died when you were fifteen. At the age of nine, your paternal grandfather passed away after suffering from a myocardial infarction. He was seventy-nine. Your paternal grandmother followed the year
after, after suffering from depression for losing her husband. She had a cerebrovascular accident at
the age of seventy-six.”

Okay. That was a little creepy. Nobody knew about the death of her pets and her paternal
grandparents except for those who knew her before she made it big in modeling. Is this guy actually
a stalker? Ann took a step back. Is this guy dangerous? Is he going to kill her or something? Wait.
Did she want to die?

“I'm not here to kill you.” He replies in that smooth, velvety, baritone voice of his, as if he just read
her mind. Definitely not creepy.

“Then what do you want with me?”

“For you not to mess up my job. You suicidals are selfish, always thinking about yourselves. What
about us? Stop trying to die when it's not your time yet.”

Did this so-called god of death just call her selfish? After everything she's been through to get to
where she is, all those sacrifices and enduring all the false rumors and bad name-calling and the lust-
filled gazes of powerful men who just want to get in her pants.

No. Not even this pretty boy can stop her from taking her life. She once again climbed on the ledge.
Turning around, the model faced the man with a winning smile on her face. She spread her arms
wide and then…

She's falling, falling, falling. Wind whipped all over her body as she free-fell into the ground. Her
eyes close. At last.

And then everything stopped. Is this it? Is she dead? She didn't even feel the impact. She opens her
eyes, expecting to see bright white light like the ones she's seen in movies. What she saw instead was
the roof of the building she just fell into. Confusion crept in. If this isn't heaven, then she's still alive.
And if she's still alive then she should be on the pavement, dying. But she can't feel anything behind
her. She's not even hurt. It's as if everything's…suspended.

“Are you quite done?” That annoying voice drawled beside her and she yelped and almost had a
heart attack when she turned her head around.

There, standing upright with his arms crossed, was none other than Mr. Death Reaper himself. He
was just… floating in mid-air without anything holding him there. Is she floating as well?

“If you're done for the day, then go to sleep. It's almost 4 am and I have other business to attend to.”

A snap of his fingers and she's suddenly lying on her soft mattress. The man is gone, nowhere to be
seen, and Ann thought that maybe she dreamt everything up.

Since she wasn't able to die last night, she was forced to go to work with a really bad headache.
Groaning and complaining about not getting enough sleep, Ann dragged her body to her vanity to
cover the deep bags under her eyes with a heavy concealer.

Work was as fast-paced and hectic as usual. She received five e-mails and ten phone calls from her
secretary, asking her to hurry up for her Vogue photoshoot. Then she has to go for an interview for a
tv show. And then do another photoshoot. And then attend a big shot's birthday party.

If she didn't die yesterday, she sure did feel like death incarnate today. As she slumped down on her
velvety white sofa, she couldn’t help but remember the events that happened the night before.

Surely, she’d just been dreaming? Gods of death just don't exist in the real world. She's not in some shoujo manga where a mysterious, handsome man suddenly appears to save her from her tragic life story.

But the letters she found earlier in the day was enough evidence for her to believe last night wasn't just some fever dream. She had decided to place the letters in one of her drawers in the meantime.

Then she gathered just enough energy to walk to her bedroom and grab the bottle of sleeping pills just resting innocently on top of her bedside drawer.

If she couldn't jump then she’ll just have to go out by overdose. Ann sat on the edge of her mattress and popped open the bottle, taking out more white pills than necessary. Taking a deep breath, the model opened her mouth wide and raised her hand close to her mouth.

“Really? Again?”

Suddenly there was another presence inside her bedroom. She groaned. Has he come to stop her again? She decided to ignore the man and just bring her hand to her mouth to ingest all those pills.

Somewhere along the way they have been replaced with fluffy white marshmallows melting in her mouth. Delicious, but she'd really much rather have the sleeping pills right now, thank you very much. She shot Ren a glare before shaking the bottle for more pills. Only marshmallows came out of it.

Why oh why does this stupidly handsome, stupidly sexy (no she definitely does not think he's sexy in that stupid-looking coat) death reaper trying to stop her from dying?

“I really wish you'd stop popping out of nowhere and just mind your own business.”

“I am. You're not supposed to die yet so stop changing that, dammit.” The irritation in his voice irked her. She threw the bottle of marshmallows at him and he caught it flawlessly with one hand.

“You're trespassing, you know that? I could call the cops on you.”

He didn't look impressed.

“Yeah? I can just disappear. The cops will find you with a bottle of sleeping pills and suicide letters inside a drawer and what would they do? Call the doctor? You can't win against me, Takamaki.”

“I will not lose to you. Never.”

Her fighting spirit burned bright inside her. If this man is challenging her, then she wouldn't give up without a fight. Death reaper or not, she will have her way with death soon enough.

Ren only snorted. He gave her a steely look and disappeared.

For her third attempt, Ann decided to poison herself with carbon monoxide. She turned the AC on full-blast in her Maserati Spyder, as she sat in the shotgun seat. Her eyes close and she leans against the backrest, just relaxing as she patiently waits for death.

“You're a stubborn lady, you know that?”
There he is. Not the kind of death she wanted, but she kind of expected him to come to stop her.

“Shut up, I'm trying to sleep,” she mumbled with eyes remained close.

“Carbon monoxide poisoning is such a stupid way to go.”

“Oh? What's carbon monoxide? Please, tell me more about it.” Although she couldn't see it, Ann could feel Ren's stare boring holes into her face.

The car suddenly moved. Ann cracked an eye open and stared at him.

“What do you think you're doing? With my car?”

“Driving. What else?”

“Stop the car.”

“I don't think I will. Take your nap if you want to. I'll just drive.”

Both eyes are now wide open, staring at him accusingly. Just where does he plan on taking her precious car?

“You're not gonna sleep? Thought you wanted to take a nap.”

It's so unfair that he could look so handsome, so sexy with that half-smirk while driving her Maserati under these dim lights.

“Don't you have anything better to do other than to annoy the hell out of me?”

“Oh? It's working?”

Ann just wants to wipe that half-smirk off that stupidly handsome face. Maybe she should punch him…?

“There are other people dying out there. Maybe you should do your job? Aren't you a death reaper?”

“I am doing my job. In fact, we're heading to a client right now.”

“Then why do you have to take my car? Can't you just snap yourself there or something?”

Ren gave her a glance out of the corner of his eye. Ann thinks she sees humor there but she can't be sure.

“I can. But I have to keep watch of a certain woman from doing something stupid. Besides, there's no hurry. Sometimes it's nice to do something more normal.”

One elbow leaning on the car door, he rested his cheek against a gloved hand as his other continues to grip the steering wheel. Ann watched in awe. Never in her entire life has she seen a man this beautiful before, and she lives in a world of beautiful people. He just looks good in every damn angle. It's just not fair.

They drive off in silence, Ann staring at the death reaper from his reflection on the window, Ren with that half-smirk still on his face.

They stop in front of a hospital. She’s not surprised. Lots of people die in hospitals. Of course they would come here. She took off the seatbelt and opened the door, waiting for the driver to get out as
well.

“You frequent a lot of hospitals, huh?” She questions once the reaper got out, leading her to one of the private rooms. Funny enough, it seems that nobody has noticed both of them. Nurses and doctors run about without giving them a glance; patients’ visitors look with either happiness, sadness, or anxiety. Ren doesn’t answer. He enters room 501 without any hesitation.

“Hey, wai-“

Nobody looked at them. A family of four surrounds a white hospital bed, two doctors and a nurse standing in front of it. Lying on the bed, a little kid probably about six years old is fighting for oxygen. Her eyes are barely open and she could hear the mother whimpering.

Ann brought both hands to her mouth to suppress a gasp, her eyes wide and heart audibly breaking. Beside her stood Ren, checking the handheld she saw him use the first time they met.

The blonde couldn’t get her eyes off the little girl as she slowly closes her eyes. The machine beside the bed lets out a flat line and the wail of the little girl’s mother entered her ears as the middle-aged woman hugged her dead daughter’s body.

She heard the swish of a cloak beside her as Ren walked away, back the way they came from. She took one last glance at the mourning family before she follows Ren back.

The reaper led her to the small garden behind the hospital. He stood there for quite a while and Ann didn’t know what she was supposed to do so she just stood there, a little ways behind him, watching. Even his back looks good. That really is not fair.

Finally, he seems to have remembered that he was not alone and turned his attention back on her, taking those few steps to close the distance between them.

“Are you crying?”

“Wha-?” She placed a hand on her cheek and sure enough, it was moist. That’s funny. She doesn’t remember crying. When did she…?

She sniffled and patted her coat pockets for a hanky to wipe her tears with when a hand on her chin forced her to look up. Gloved thumbs caress her cheeks, wiping the tears away. Surprise was evident on her face as a light pink colored her pale cheeks (obviously it’s because it’s starting to become really chilly and not because of someone).

“You really are a handful,” he muttered his complaint, shaking his head. Yet he continues to catch the tears that fall from cerulean eyes.

Finally, her tears stop and he lets both of his arms fall on each of his side. Ann did not wish he would hold her face with those big, warm hands again, and she most certainly did not want him to caress her cheeks with those long, slender fingers of his.

“Wh-What are we doing here? Is that really all you do? Watch as someone dies? That’s like invasion of privacy, isn’t it?”

Ren looked at her funny, like she said something silly. She probably did but it’s not like she’s well-versed in the art of death reaping. The shoujo manga she read as a teenager most certainly did not cover this topic.

“I led the little girl to where she should go.”
“Ummm…here?” Ann looked around, confused. The girl should go to this garden…?

Ren shook his head again, clearly exasperated.

“Ann,” She shivered at the mention of her name. He’s never called her by her given name before. Admittedly, it sounds better when he says it. “I led her to the afterlife. It just so happens the door is right here.”

“Oh.” That makes sense. “I see.”

Another shake of the head. It seems he’s been doing a lot of it with her around.

“Want go back now?”

“Nah. Let’s stay here for awhile.”

The garden has a swing set for children patients to play with in the morning. The blonde decided to occupy one of the swings and pushed herself off the ground. The reaper claimed the other beside hers. For a moment they were silent, Ann swinging herself while Ren sat there, arms resting on his thighs.

“Why do you want to die so bad?”

Heels dig into the ground as she stopped the swing forcibly. Her eyes downcast and lips pursed, Ann contemplated for an answer. Ren’s careful eyes watch her.

“The world I live in…” she starts, neck craning up to watch the stars twinkle at her, inviting her to join them. “At the surface, it looks perfect. A glamorous world everyone wants to live in. But I wouldn’t wish it for anyone. The fashion industry is a mess. A lot of lies. A lot of people dragging each other down to rise to the top. Models are used as sex toys and when you don’t comply with the norm, you become a target of bullying. It’s something I just can’t live in anymore.”

“Then why not just quit?”

He makes it sound so simple when it’s not. God knows how many times she’s tried to leave, to stay as far away from the industry as possible. It’s one of those once you enter, you’ll never get out situations.

“It’s not something a god of death like you will understand.”

Ren hummed his approval, nodding his head. No use trying to deny it. Ann suddenly turned her attention to him, curiosity bright in those deep pools of blue that he’s trying so hard not to fall into. He coughed, turning his attention towards the ground, trying to find something more interesting to look at.

“I wanna know more about you. How did you become a grim reaper?”

A small shrug.

“I’ve always been one. Dunno how I came to be. Just woke up one day and I’m here, taking souls.”

“Do you have giant scythes?”

Now he blinked, before laughter left his lips. Humans have such weird misconceptions of grim reapers.
“Ann. Have you ever seen me with a scythe?”

“Well…no. Not really. But this is also the first time I’ve met one. Saaaaaaay, you don’t happen to have a Death Note inside that pocket, do you?”

Ann made a show of checking his pocket out and he snorted. He gets the reference. Does she honestly think he looks like the god of death from that show?

“I don’t.”

“So basically you just lead the souls to the afterlife. And stop me from killing myself every single time I try.”

“Basically.”

“That’s boring.”

That’s one way to put it. He stood up.

“C’mon. Aren’t you tired for today? Supermodel like you, you’re bound to have a packed schedule.”

Ann sighed. She really didn’t want to be reminded of her work right now. But he was right. She remembered the schedule her secretary mailed her earlier in the day. *Three* magazine photoshoots and a fitting for a gown she was going to wear for a ball she was invited to. Why did she accept that invitation again? Oh. Management said it was to further boost her status as a supermodel.

She stood up and a gust of wind blew past her. She shivered. Gucci should have made this coat a little thicker because she felt that wind down to her bones. She felt something heavy fall onto her shoulders and oh. Why is Ren’s shoulders suddenly exposed? And why does he look so good?

“Keep that. At least, until we reach the car.”

Ren trudged off back to where he parked her Maserati and Ann followed a little ways behind him. After making sure he wasn’t looking, the blonde took a whiff of his coat. It didn’t smell of death at all. In fact, it mostly smells like coffee. Maybe gods of death like coffee?

Somehow that little fact made him a bit more endearing and a little less annoying. She was never a fan of coffee but she sure as hell is now.

“Hey. Hurry up.”

“Coming!”

For her day off, Ann decided to give trying to die a short break. After trying, and failing five more times since that trip to the hospital, the blonde has to wonder if she’s still doing this to escape. She will *not* acknowledge the little skips her heart does whenever he shows up out of nowhere, or the higher than usual tone of her voice whenever she speaks to him. She most definitely will not admit that maybe, just maybe, she still keeps trying because she knows that he will be there every single time.

She buried her face with a pillow. She will not think of the way his hand would tug his glove out of habit or the almost irritating, really not endearing smirk he wears on his face. She will not think of those grey eyes that seem to suck her soul out and that fluffy, fluffy black hair that she sometimes
wonders if they’re as soft as they look. And she will not…

She’s clearly losing it. Is this… is this what having a crush feels like? Does supermodel Ann Takamaki actually have a crush on a grim reaper? Just how silly is that? This is not some shoujo manga she read when she was in high school!

Groaning, she decided that maybe indulging herself with that crepe she tried so hard to ignore inside her fridge would help keep her mind off a certain man.

She was just about to take a bite when her phone rang. She glared at the infernal device. Whoever it is that tried to keep her from her crepe would receive a mouthful and-

It was her best friend, Shiho. Her face instantly morphed into something happier. She quickly accepted the call.

“Hey there~! What’s up with the most amazing supermodel in the whole wide world?”

Ann grinned from ear to ear. It’s been quite a while since she last heard that voice.

“It’s my day off today. What’s up with my most favorite volleyball player, huh?”

Ann heard laughter from the other side of the line.

“Nothing much. Since today’s your day off, wanna hang out? I can come by your place and we can watch those sappy movies you love!”

“Sounds like a plan.”

“Great! I’ll be there in an hour.”

It’s always good to see her brunette best friend. The minute she heard the doorbell, she almost leaped out of the couch as she ran to get the door as fast as she can. Shiho was wearing a beige coat (the one she gave her last Christmas), paired with a pair of dark skinny jeans and knee-high boots. In her arms are two huge paper bags, no doubt full of goodies.

She offered the brunette one of her extra pairs of slippers as she took the paper bag out of her arms. Shiho gave her a huge smile as soon as she was out of the boots and helped her settle the goods on the coffee table.

The two plopped down on her white couch, both of them grinning, but she could see Shiho scrutinizing her. Is there something wrong with her face…?

“There’s something different about you.” She said finally, narrowing her eyes as she tried to pinpoint it. As for Ann, she just stared at the brunette, blinking. Aside from the fact that I focused a lot of my time trying and failing to kill myself, what else could be different about me?

And then Shiho gasped. She clapped both of her hands together. Oh no. She knows that look. That’s the look Shiho has on her face whenever she thought of something crazy. Or something stupid. Or both. She’s already dreading it.

“You like someone, don’t you?”

Her mouth gaped open. Was she being that obvious? Heck, she doesn’t even know if she likes the guy. How can Shiho draw such a conclusion after one look? What kind of hocus pocus did this girl
do to figure that out so easily?

Her face certainly didn’t help. She was as red as a lantern on a Christmas night. Her eyes were wide, as if she was caught stealing a cookie from a cookie jar. And yet she tried so damn hard to deny it.

“Th-That’s not true!”

Shiho busted out laughing and Ann’s face only turned redder.

“Oh my gosh, Ann! You’re still as bad a liar as you were in high school!” She wiped a tear out of the corner of her eye before continuing. “But why the heck would you keep this from me? I thought we were best friends, Ann. You don’t keep stuff like this from your best friend!”

Ann was quick to console the other woman, trying to make up a bunch of excuses. How was she going to explain Ren to her? “Oh yeah, I met this ridiculously handsome grim reaper when I tried to jump off a building”? That would make no sense at all. And it will only make Shiho worry for her mental health.

“I was only kidding, Ann.” She said, chuckling. “It’s alright. I know you have a good reason. I trust you.”

“Thanks, Shiho.” Ann grinned. She really lucked out on having the best best friend a girl could ever ask for. “I’ll go get my laptop in the room. Fix the food for me?”

“Aye aye, cap’n!” She saluted.

Ann laughed and walked back to the spacious bedroom. Where did she leave her laptop again…? It wasn’t anywhere in sight. She last used it to search for more ways to…creatively meet with Ren. Oh! Inside the drawer right next to her bed! She quickly got it out and made her way back.

She heard it first before she saw it. She hurried back to the living room. There she found Shiho, sniffing as she held a piece of paper in both hands. Oh no. She found those, didn’t she? A quick glance towards the open drawer confirmed it. She sighed.

“A-Ann…what’s the meaning of…this…?” Shiho asks, finally looking up with tears falling down her pretty, pretty face.

Ann placed the laptop on the table before wrapping her arms around her best friend. The brunette hugged her back, her face buried on her shoulder. Gently, Ann took the crumpled piece of paper out of her hand and placed it on the couch behind her.

“H-How could you…th-think of that?!” The brunette continued to sob. “Y-You have no idea how lonely I w-would be…without you!”

“I know,” the blonde whispered in the brunette’s ear. Her own tears cloud her eyes. “I was stupid. I’m sorry.”

“Yes you are!”

Shiho pulled away, giving her a glare. She gripped the model’s shoulders tightly.

“Since when has suicide been the answer?! Did you even think what I would feel about this? And your other friends? Your parents?”

Ann looked away, biting her trembling lip. She tried not to think of the aftermath. She knew they
would be crushed but still, she wanted to be selfish. Because she knew the moment she thought about those she would leave behind, she’d cower.

“I know that, Shiho… but it’s hard. It’s so hard. I can’t take it anymore.”

The tears spill the same time as the story spills out of her mouth. All the online bullying she receives from nameless people, the amount of stress the management puts on her as their top-paid model, the lies and the sex and the dirty, dirty men that want to make use of her body for their sexual desires. Everything she tried so hard to endure up until now.

Shiho was horrified. She didn’t know. Of course, she knew it wouldn’t be easy. But for Ann to hide something this big. She couldn’t blame her for wanting the easy way out. Her arms wrap around the blonde protectively, trying to shield this frail woman from the outside world.

“Promise me you won’t do it again,” Shiho whispered into Ann’s ears, and she felt the blonde nod. It was good enough for her. Her hands rub her back soothingly. It took a while, but Ann finally calmed down enough. This time, it was the blonde who pulled away from the hug.

“Thanks, Shiho.”

“Anything for you, blondie.”

They both giggled, their eyes puffy from crying.

“Oookaaaaaay. Enough drama. Let’s start our little party!”

Ann took the laptop into her lap and booted it up, starting up Netflix. But Shiho still has one question left in her mind.

“What stopped you from doing it…? I mean, I’m glad you were stopped but what stopped you? I know you Ann. You’d do anything you put your mind into.”

Was that…a blush? Did something else happen the night Ann was going to take her life? Her face morphed into a teasing grin as she nudged her best friend.

“*He* stopped you, didn’t he?”

Instead of replying, Ann squeaked out, “The movie isn’t gonna wait for anybody!”

“When am I gonna meet this man you fell for, huh Ann?”

“I don’t know what you’re talking about!”

Shiho laughed. Enough questioning Ann for the day. She was just glad someone was there just in time to stop the blonde from doing anything drastic.

November means her birthday and that means several parties will be held in her honor. From close friends and family to colleagues to the management agency to the different brands she’s modeled for, Ann was both glad and exhausted.

By the end of the week she was ready to pass out of exhaustion. Every night was a party and every day was a different runway. Her parents visited from Finland to spend a couple of days with her before they depart to France for a fashion show. Shiho and her other friends decided to have a sleep over the other night. Only one person hasn’t yet spent his time celebrating with her. And there was
only one way to summon him.

She made sure the strawberry cheesecake looked perfect before she put the noose on her neck. She took a deep breath. If anyone else barged in, they would surely get the wrong idea. She took another deep breath and closed her eyes.

"This is getting really old."

Her lips curve into a smile as she opened her eyes. Leaning on the wall just beside her was the grim reaper, Ren Amamiya, his arms crossed against his chest, a small smile on his lips.

"There you are."

"Oh? Were you actually expecting for me to come? What happened to the sass?" He asked, cocking an eyebrow. But Ann will not be deterred by his words tonight. Tonight she just wants to celebrate her twenty-sixth birthday with him. She took the noose out of her neck and stepped down the chair.

"Are you busy tonight?"

"People die every second," he answered, fishing out handheld from his pocket. "But I'm sure the others will do fine without one grim reaper."

"There are others?"

"Of course there are. You don’t expect me to gather all the souls by myself, do you? That would be a nightmare."

That makes sense.

"So what’s up?" He prodded, pushing himself off the wall. Ann grinned at him.

"Celebrate my birthday with me."

"Celebrate your birthday with you?" He repeats, humor lacing his words. "I don’t think I’ve ever been asked to celebrate a birthday before."

"Yeah well, you celebrate a lot of deaths everyday. A single birthday celebration couldn’t hurt, could it?"

The sweet smile on her face made it hard for him to resist.

"I suppose so. What do you have in mind, birthday girl?"

"Let’s share this cake together!"

"That’s all?"

The blonde shook her head, blonde curls bouncing on each side of her head.

"Nope. There’s something else. But let’s finish this cake first."

Ann takes a knife out of the kitchen and was about to slice the cake herself when a gloved hand stopped her. Taking the knife from her hand, Ren said, “Sit down. I’ll cut it.”

The model suppressed the urge to laugh. She sat down and watched as the grim reaper took his gloves off and placed it inside his pocket before he cut the cake into pieces.
“Are you that untrustworthy of me?” She couldn’t resist asking. “I promise I wouldn’t cut my wrist with it.”

“You better not. You’re going to make it a hassle for me afterwards.”

Ann laughed, as Ren placed a piece of the dessert on her plate.

“You sure this is fine? Shouldn’t you be on a diet?”

“Don’t deny me my sweets, Ren. It’s only one day. I’ll just have to burn it after!”

Ren hummed, placing his own piece on the plate in front of him.

“Well, happy birthday, Ann.”

“Thanks!” She gave him a brilliant smile before she dug in.

They made small talk as they ate. Usually it was about her: how she’s been, what she’s been up to, where she went the last couple days. Occasionally the conversation would be directed at him. If he’s been to places outside of Japan, how long he’s been alive, what the afterlife is like. He gave her vague answers but she didn’t mind. She expected vague answers.

“Do you really try to stop people from committing suicide? It’s not just me?” She asked on her final piece of cake. He hesitated for a moment before replying.

“No. You…were the first.”

Her heart skipped a beat and the butterflies in her stomach fluttered like crazy. Ann asked them to calm down. She shouldn’t get excited over this. She can’t get excited over this.

“O-Oh! I see!”

They’ve gone quiet as they finished their last piece of cake. Ann’s heart wouldn’t stop pounding and she desperately begged for it to stop. She had to remind herself that this guy is a god of death. If there is truly an unattainable guy out there, it would be this guy eating cake beside her. Ann bit into her last piece bitterly.

“You have something on your face.”

She blinked, snapping out of her thoughts.

“Huh?”

Instead of repeating what he said, Ren reached out and ran his thumb across the corner of her lips. If that didn’t make her heart bound out of its cage, then what he did next most certainly did. He drew his thumb back and swiped his tongue across it quickly, cleaning his thumb of the whipped cream. He gave her that playful smirk she had come to love.

“Yum.”

Her face a beet red, she looked away and tried to hold her glass of water as steadily as she can, hoping the water will find its way to her heart and wake it up to the fact that he will never see her in that way so don’t even try to hope.

“So what else were you planning to do with me?”
“Oh yeah! Follow me!”

She led him to the rooftop, stopping right at the exact same spot where he met her what felt like a long time ago but in reality, was only a month ago at most. Her hair was like sunlight in this sea of night, gently swaying with the wind. He so wanted to run his hand through that hair of hers.

“I think it was best I celebrate my birthday with you,” she told him, hands clutching the ledge. He tensed. She looked like she was about to do something incredibly stupid again. Her eyes sparkled even in the moonlight. “After all, thanks to you, I was able to celebrate it.”

He remained silent. Why exactly did she want to meet him here? What were her intentions? She leaned back, letting her arms stop her from falling to the ground.

“What did we come here for?”

“I just want to let you know that you won our little game.”

Wait. What?

She gave him that angelic smile of hers, that smile that made him want to sweep her off her feet and declare his love for her; that smile that made him decide she wouldn’t get herself killed that night or any other night, for as long as he lived. That smile was just too precious to let go.

“I’m going to stop. I’m going to stop trying to commit suicide. My friends made me realize that I’m not really alone in this world. I have them. I have my family. What more could I ever ask for?”

“You have me too,” he wanted to say, yet he remained silent, waiting for her to go on.

“So I guess this is good-bye for us too, right?”

The smile didn’t quite catch her eyes this time. Was she… saying good-bye?

“Why?” He croaked out.

“I’m finally going to stop so there’s no need for us to meet anymore, right?” She laughed, a little bitter. Did she really think he would stop meeting her just because she decided to leave?

“To be honest, I’ve decided to stop awhile ago. I talked to Shiho and she made me solidify my decision. But I didn’t stop doing it because it was the only way I knew to summon you. Now that I’ll stop, there’s no way we’d see each other again, right?”

She did all that stuff… just to be able to see him? Ren didn’t know if he had a heart but he was sure of the strange feeling in his chest. Was she… was she going to say what he thinks she’s going to say…? Ann took a deep breath. Then, with the most breathtaking smile Ren has ever seen in all those centuries he’s been alive, Ann once again opened her mouth to utter three words.

“I love you.”

And he couldn’t help it. The grim reaper wrapped both arms around her, holding her warm body close to his. He didn’t think it would be possible, that a goddess would fall for him, out of all people, but here she is, confessing her love for him. Confessing that she tried to off herself not because she wanted to, but because she wanted to see him.

She was a sweet, sweet idiot. His idiot. This woman who he fought other grim reapers for, just for a
chance to save her soul. This woman who is the human incarnate of sunshine, who makes him feel feelings for the first time in centuries. It was her existence that set everything into motion for him. And she loves him, him, him…

His answer was whispered into the hollow of her ear. Words she didn’t think she’d hear, words that would eat at her heart many years to come but right now it was all that matters. They’re all that matter in this world.

“I love you too.”

End Notes

when will i ever make a non- au fic? i honestly have no idea.

-olympicmayhem

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!