Eren lazes around during the summer after his first year of college, wondering what he is doing with his life, going to school for a major he doesn't even enjoy and trying to outshine his perfect stepsister Mikasa. He's also oddly turned on by his stepsister’s revisiting uncle Levi, who Eren doesn't remember at all. They piss each other off a lot, then grow an odd bond of companionship—then Eren realizes Levi was shunned by his family some odd years back for coming out as gay, and for some reason, Eren's budding curiosity gets the better of him. Tensions run high, pants slide off, and Eren sweats from more than just the summer heat when he gains an abnormal craving for Levi’s "sausage." Humor and drama ensue and so does an absurd amount of smut. Outside of sex, feelings are also involved—and they soon crash hard into the ground.

TLDR: It's Ereri smut and humor with a side of stupid boys and drama. Just freaking read it.

My late-ass contribution to the 2014 SNK BigBang, also affectionately known as "the cucumber fic." Also, cissyswonderland made fanart.
Eren’s a bit of a teenage asshole, an overcurious little shit, and Levi is somehow perceived as some weird-ass sex god after Eren discovers his true sexuality. He also tries to seduce Levi a weird amount and fails repeatedly, and Levi doesn’t know whether to find him endearing or stupid. Probably both. Either this or Eren’s a smooth vixen who doesn’t even know how to handle his own charm. (I swear, I never know my own character portrayals until mid-story, so I just keep writing what I do and wondering: *what the hell am I even doing anymore*?)

Now, I present to you, my first BigBang story (originally intended to be a one-shot, but then 20k+ more words happened, so LOL nope) and my first posted Ereri story ever, told in bits and pieces with lots of stupidity and profanity. It was supposed to be 50% smut, but now it’s just 50% Eren being an idiot, honestly. This fic was meant to be sexy, but now it’s just ridiculous and romantic. I’m sorry. Enjoy it anyway.
Chapter 1

The summer Eren returned home from college was a hot one.

Since the air-conditioning in the dormitory had broken two months after its occupants moved in, Reiner sweated to the point where Eren was turning down his lips in disgust. If they were a normal school, Eren resented, then this wouldn’t be a problem. Because normal schools ended their semesters before June, but here he and other students were, finally packing their shit for summer vacation before they returned in September for another trimester of Hell. Because normal schools were already done with their school year, but his had just begun in April.

Because his school system was a disaster.

Reiner continued sweating everywhere, and it continued disturbing Eren, though not as much as the time when Eren hadn’t bothered knocking on the door to the joint bathroom (shared by their neighbors Jean and Armin) and walked in on a naked Jean, full frontal. He wanted to recommend Reiner sit in front of the little fan in their room, but given its half-foot diameter, decided it was probably pointless to suggest it, instead packing his things as Reiner complained.

“So damn hot,” he said, and Eren nodded in agreement, shoving another pair of boxer briefs into his bag. “So damn hot. Wasn’t the A/C s’posed to be fixed weeks ago? I’ve been sweating balls, man. Buffalo balls.”

Eren paused and turned to him.

Reiner sputtered. “I-I’m just saying—it’s a bunch of balls, man. What’s the look for?”

“The look” was because Reiner was always talking about ass, dick, or balls. Always. Eren was sure that even when Reiner discussed his nonsexual relations with their lady peers, he threw in ass, dick, or balls for good measure, such as “she was as hot as balls” or “how’d you like those nails two-inch deep in your ass?”

Eren never judged him for swinging both ways, but his casualness with the human body was downright baffling. When Jean drank too much and screamed late one night—or early one morning; it was three hours after midnight, after all—upon slamming his dick between the toilet seat and bowl, Reiner arrived first at the scene, and by the time Eren joined the bathroom, Reiner had been rubbing “the pain” out of Jean’s penis for quite some time, its owner being either too traumatized or drunk to do anything but sit on the floor with a grimace.

Looking back on the incident, hearing Reiner’s constant complaints, and watching as Armin carefully aimed paper airplanes for Jean’s bed hair out in the hallway, Eren suddenly realized what a wild ride this last trimester had been. The exhaustion caught up with him, and in the middle of unplugging his Xbox, Eren sat on the hard, somewhat chilled tiles beside Reiner and looked to the ceiling because finally.

Finally, he would return home.

College was nice. College meant freedom, independence from his folks, and sometimes, it was just what he needed. The escape from expectations eased him, given his father was a renowned doctor in their hometown, now a distinguished surgeon in the city, and his stepsister, Mikasa, effortlessly outshone him, having graduated early from high school and traveled abroad on humanitarian missions through a prestigious university. Honestly, outside of his stubbornness, Eren was sure he
had no strengths, but in college, that was fine. Nobody ever judged someone for his or her
inabilities or weaknesses because they were all in the same boat, just trying to make it through
their respective majors and maintain regular breathing patterns. In college, school wasn’t a
competition unless he aspired to further his education, and the importance of his social status
dropped a few rungs on his ladder of priorities, so when Eren failed, it didn’t cause a fuss and he
didn’t draw much attention.

At least the nagging about his grades was reduced to text messages and phone calls and didn’t end
with him slamming his door shut.

College was nice. So very nice.

However, now that he was a second year student in the College of Business, Eren tired of studying
numbers and charts, having chosen to pursue financial economics and regretting it terribly. He
hated working full-time at the university café, where his classmates just pissed around and annoyed
him to death. He’d had enough of the cramming sessions in the library only fueled by chips and
energy drinks, not to mention the constant meals at the dining hall with the same generic shit being
served over and over again. And—probably the least important thing on his list, but something still
worth complaining about—Eren was done with their weird-ass building coordinator who sniffed
every goddamn person entering and exiting the building instead of checking their ID card like a
normal employee.

In general? Eren was just fucking tired—tired of everything.

College was nice, but it was just so fucking tiring.

He packed his Xbox and its games, and Reiner whined because he wouldn’t have anything to play
for the next week until the dorms closed. Eren only threw his boxers at him in retaliation, making
his roommate laugh.

“Hey, you haven’t told your folks you were coming home, right?”

Eren furrowed his brows. “No, I have not…?”

Reiner only smirked. “Good luck with that.”

Once more, Eren tossed a clothing article at the other student, making him let out a booming laugh
before packing the rest of his necessities.

He couldn’t wait to go home.

After his freshman year of Hell on Earth and now the beginnings of a second, Eren looked forward
to coming home after school let out, to sleeping in his own bed, and to eating his mother’s
homemade meals, even if it meant hearing his parents’ criticism of his grades or worship of
Mikasa, who recently began an anti-deforestation campaign in Tanzania.

He honestly looked forward to coming home, but his parents didn’t know.

When they originally asked if he would return for summer break over a month ago, he’d insisted
that he’d already had plans to attend summer school and make up the classes he’d “failed.” Despite
the odds, he somehow managed to perform magically well on his finals—barely scraping by, but
he passed nevertheless—and thought, How great. He could finally relax and take a break from his
busy life, anticipating a stress-free summer full of (women and) literally nothing to do.
Or so he thought.

On the train ride home, he imagined his parents’ reactions to suddenly seeing their son again after so many months apart. His stepmother rushing to the door to embrace him in surprise, then to chide him for not calling ahead of time or ever calling enough, honestly. Even his father creaking throughout the halls, grumbling about how someone had disrupted his work, only to see Eren and put on a grin, pat his son on the back, and welcome him home.

The thought massaged his stressed mind as he stumbled off the train and onto the platform of his designated station. Lugging his backpacks and gym bags over his shoulders, Eren scuttled down the steps, turning to look at the makeshift town with its older buildings and endless crop fields. General stores and other family businesses littered the road further away from the station on his left—the nearest brand name grocery store located ten minutes away in another town—whereas beanstalks grew on his right, leading to his family’s secluded summer house near some small woods.

Before his father took up a larger clientele, going from private practice to hospital work, this was where he lived.

Before they ever considered the city an option, they lived in the clinic by a farmer’s fields for quite some time. Then Eren’s mother passed away when he was ten years old, and when they buried her, they moved to the city, where—two years later—Eren’s father met and married Mikasa’s mother, a widow with a thirteen-year-old daughter. Then Eren was raised in that city and befriended Armin, only returning to the town when he was fifteen and his father finished constructing the summer house, which was a five-year anniversary gift for his stepmother—daughter to Japanese immigrants—standing proud as the only traditional, Japanese-styled home in probably the whole state.

The moment he returned to the town, it was home again. He didn’t need to recognize the people—though he sure as hell did; it was quite a small town—but just the thought of the field dust, the open sky, and the tatami mats beneath his sweating back as the wind brushed through the woods and sliding doors, rustling the curtains that added a western touch, sent him home again. It made him look forward to every summer, even if it meant being around his disappointed father and frequently distressed mother.

He could never explain the feeling of desiring a home he didn’t miss to begin with, but he supposed this was fine.

“Home” didn’t need to be explained.

Eren kicked the dirt up from under his shoes as he made the trek to the Japanese manor from the station, the long walk being worth the surprise on his parents’ faces instead of the momentary shock when he called to ask if they could drive over to pick him up.

Of course, he forgot how fucking long the walk was.

By the time he saw the woods past the endless, endless fields of crops, his shirt sagged with sweat, and by the time he approached the front porch, he could have sworn breathing was an impossibility, his lungs aching with his every inhale and exhale.

Where was the damn wind? More importantly, when he gave up on surprising them and tried calling halfway, where was his phone service?

Spotting an unfamiliar car out front—his father probably changed models, Eren concluded—he
turned his attention to the summer home that he admittedly liked more than their city condo. Although it was a traditional Japanese-styled dwelling, only the first floor consisted of tatami flooring and sliding doors. The hallway was a sleek hardwood, ending with a staircase that led to the second floor (uncommon for these sorts of homes, but constructed upon his mother’s insistence). Complete with wooden flooring in every room and glass windows, the second floor contained Mikasa’s room, his own, and his parents’, which all had western-styled furniture, and though the thought of stairs turned him off at the moment, the thought of his soft mattress gave Eren strength to continue onto the porch and toward its paper doors.

The moment he checked the hanging flowerpot, he groaned. The spare key was gone, but that was fine because there was always someone home.

Or would be, eventually.

Oh, shit. Maybe he should’ve called after all, he realized, but his body was already a few steps ahead of his brain, ringing the chimes outside the door to signal a guest’s arrival.

For a few seconds, time froze—and not because he was on the verge of collapsing from exhaustion.

Shuffling towards the door. Grumbling unheard past the several cicada. A shadow approaching from the hallway. His father?

His heart thudded a million beats per minute, and he searched for an explanation of any sort that would make sense for coming home at last minute—since, unlike his warm stepmother, his father preferred plans over surprises—but all thoughts shrank on his tongue when the door slid open.

Instead of surprise or even indifference in his father’s eyes, Eren looked down to meet a different set of indifferent eyes, belonging to an older, glasses-wearing man half a foot shorter, who then grimaced at Eren’s sweaty appearance before wandering down the hall without explanation.

Eren lingered silently, pondering, feeling out of place in his own home.

He almost didn’t walk into the house, tempted to call his mother and ask if she and his father had moved away while he was in the city.

But there was something in that unfamiliar man’s gaze that made him pause.

Something familiar.

Something familiar in that unfamiliar man that convinced Eren to step into the house after all.

An old neighbor? A colleague of his father’s? The man’s identity eluded him, but he figured if some spark of acquaintanceship hid in his eyes, then he did know of the man—just not explicitly.

Eren shouted as he kicked off his sneakers, leaving his bare feet to touch the hardwood, “Mom! Dad! I’m home!”

“They’re out right now,” an irritated voice drifted from the other side of the house, and Eren realized it belonged to the stranger. It was gruff, like his appearance, but sterner than Eren expected for a shorter man.

Passing the photos of his childhood and adolescence hanging on the walls—of him and his mother, him and his stepmother, him and his graduating class, him and Armin, him and Mikasa—Eren followed the noises of somebody typing on a keyboard and entered the living room with his bags,
grateful that nothing in the room had changed outside of its new occupant: the stranger with an apparently grumpy demeanor, now writing something on his laptop at the coffee table.

A parted bowl-cut with shaved scruff, baggy eyes that reeked “workaholic” behind thinly framed glasses, and furrowed brows that seemed to naturally scream disapproval—it all rang a bell, but Eren had trouble figuring out just what that bell meant.

Who the hell are you?

Eren wanted to ask, but upon recalling the ache in his legs, chose to rest a bit in his own bed and wait for his parents to get home instead. He opted to not take a shower while a stranger still lurked in his house—never applying this same logic to sleeping in his house with said stranger around.

Eren glimpsed once more at the man—evidently too focused on his own project to spare him a glance—before beginning his trek to the second floor.

Most of the sliding doors in the house were open, so Eren could feel a breeze roll across his exposed legs and bring cool air to his heated and sweating forehead. The stairs weren’t kind to him in the slightest, only straining his calf muscles, but he figured this meant nothing since the whole point of walking upstairs was so that he could rest.

Or so he thought.

He didn’t even recognize his room anymore. Once messy and disorganized, the room looked as if Martha Stewart had just paid it a few thousand visits. Once scattered with video games and sports magazines—“sports” being the kinder term for half-naked ladies with some athletic articles involved—the floor was now swept clean, the desk overtaken by neat stacks of books he’d never seen or even heard of before. The sheets that he always kicked off and never bothered cleaning were now replaced with gray covers tucked neatly underneath the mattress and folded just so they could envelop the pillows Eren had never used.

Inspecting everything even more closely, from the windows to the highest shelf in the room, he realized everything was—what the shit—clean? His mother never cleaned his room, always insisting it was Eren’s job, end of discussion—though this same logic did not apply to cooking—so it made Eren wonder if her resolve wavered or if his father moved into his room while he was away at college. Were his parents fighting again, and rather than sleeping on the futon downstairs, did his father prefer Eren’s bedroom? That would explain the absurd amount of books Eren had only ever seen in his school’s library.

Sighing—this was an issue for “later,” not “now”—Eren plopped down his bags, took off his shirt, and stretched his back, feeling his bones crack before he made his way to the bed, slithering through the sheets and chucking the pillows to the surprisingly shiny floor with some loud thumps. His father probably wouldn’t mind him stealing back his bed for a few hours, he concluded, shoving off the thick quilt to avoid gathering any more sweat. Closing his eyes, feeling the wind sweep across his damp skin from the opened window, Eren allowed the breeze to lull him into sleep, waiting for his stepmother’s voice to awaken him a few hours later.

Or so he thought.

“You disrespectful little shit,” snapped someone from beside him, voice disgruntled.

Eren twitched, the voice unrecognized—not Mom—and promptly ignored. Instead, he hugged the sheets tighter to his chest, wanting to reclaim the small bits of sleep he’d managed to find.
Then something whacked straight into the side of his face, popping his ear, and he jolted awake.

“What the fuck?” Eren grumbled, eyes snapping open to see the object that just hit him—a pillow?—collide with the floor before another flew his way. Eren barely dodged it, the cushion smacking the wall behind him instead, and he turned to glare at the man from before, whose gaze challenged his own.

“Just because the floor is clean doesn’t mean it’s worthy of my freshly cleaned sheets.”

*His* freshly cleaned sheets? *What in the—*

“At least,” the man said, cutting off Eren’s thoughts, “they were clean until you kicked them off and decided you didn’t need a damn shower.”

“You fuck—”

“Your parents are coming back soon,” the man interrupted, tugging the sheets still on the mattress despite Eren’s weight on them. “Go bathe while I clean these again.”

“How should I take orders from you?” Eren grumbled, sitting up and rubbing his eyes with his fist, frowning at the loosening sheets.

“Because you smell like a bag of shit,” the man answered bluntly, shamelessly returning Eren’s glare like he honestly didn’t care about being tactful.

When the man pulled the sheets for a final time, sending Eren face first into the wall before walking off, not caring about the curses exiting the student’s mouth, Eren decided he hated this man.

He hoped to all of the gods out there that his parents came back soon.

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With no knowledge of who this man was or his purpose in his summer household, Eren chose to abandon his failed attempts at napping and, instead, try his hand at washing off the sweat becoming his second skin.

Because, logically speaking, when a stranger lurked in your house, the proper course of action was to either sleep or bathe.

He turned on the water, undressing while he waited for the tub to fill. And when he finally slid in, water lukewarm and his muscles relaxing, he thought of college.

In an instant, he tensed again.

Looking back on it, his parents never told him to major in economics. Even though they always praised Mikasa in front of him, they never forced him to go into a specific field of study (though his father strongly hinted several times that he wouldn’t mind if Eren pursued a medical degree). He didn’t have to go into economics, but at the time, he handled money well and understood economic trends. Outside of his gym teachers, the only people who ever praised him in high school were his econ and history teachers, and from this, he gathered that he’d make a good economist one day.

Now, with each passing day he spent in a classroom listening to people argue for Friedman and against Keynesian economics and vice versa, with every hour he spent over a textbook learning about aggregate supply and demand, Eren felt pointless. He understood everything down to a T,
but in the end, he was bored and unmotivated. Economics wasn’t his passion, and it showed in his grades, the only course in which he received an A being the economic history class he’d taken last year.

When he thought about his potential career options, Eren sank lower into the tub, creating bubbles with his exhales, officially giving up on his train of thought.

Later, with his body refreshed and mind numbed, Eren exited the bath, redressing in his room—the sheets had already been washed, dried, and tucked in, strangely enough—before going downstairs, expecting to see his mother and father in the premises.

Instead, he found the short man from before still typing away at his computer, muttering to himself and readjusting his glasses, scribbling notes down in a textbook a few feet away.

With little else to do, Eren sat opposite the man on the floor, and though he wasn’t quiet in the least, the man didn’t stir. Eren sighed, resigning himself to stare at the walls and floor for entertainment—

*Oh, shit.*

When the man closed his book, he left the cover in plain sight for Eren to read: *Das Kapital.*

*An econ dude.*

Where were his parents when he needed them?

Eren figured it wouldn’t take long for them to return, but within a minute of waiting, his foot tapped the floor in a quick, steady rhythm, his gaze flickering to the wall clock every two seconds.

And within a minute of that, the man snapped, slamming his laptop shut.

“I can’t do this,” he said simply and, without further explanation, walked out of the room and into the hallway.

*What?*

Eren rested on the floor for a few minutes, his eyes unfocused as the cicada roared outside, the sun streaming in through the doorway. After a brief moment of indecisiveness, he followed the stranger out the door.

He didn’t know where the guy went, so he wandered aimlessly, admiring his mother’s interior design skills until he passed the kitchen, spotting the man reading a newspaper and drinking from one of his mother’s teacups without using the handle. He didn’t look up, and Eren didn’t speak up.

He only took the seat opposite from the man again.

The stranger exhaled with exhaustion, eyebrows scrunching together even more than when he first opened the door for Eren. “What is wrong with you?” he groaned, rubbing his temples.

“Just keeping an eye on you,” Eren offered cheekily, kicking his bare feet up onto the table.

The man’s eyes narrowed at Eren’s feet—like they were a curse from the devil himself—but he didn’t comment, returning to his news pages.

Something sparked, and suddenly, Eren wanted to push it further. See how far he could go. Take this places, then drop it off and never come back to it.
“I couldn’t find the spare house key,” he pressed, looking innocently at the other man, who shrugged and, from his pants pocket, pulled out a key that strangely looked like—

What the—

“What’s some nine-to-five worker doing with our house key?”

“I’m not ‘some nine-to-five worker,’ you ignorant piece of shit,” the stranger snapped, shutting his newspaper and flicking it to the table with a glare directed at the younger male, who realized he spoke without meaning to, but still scoffed in disbelief. The man sure as hell looked like a nine-to-five worker with his plain suit and glasses to match, but—

“I’m a scholar,” the Das Kapital reader corrected, glare trained on the younger male, “and I’m house-sitting.”

House-sitting?
Eren froze.

“I think the more appropriate question,” the man said, readjusting his glasses and leaning in towards the college student, “is why the fuck are you here?”

Just like Eren thought, his father was definitely surprised by Eren’s sudden appearance, but was not pleased to have “another unexpected visitor” for the summer.

“This is Levi,” his mother informed him, gesturing to the man still seated at the table, which Eren had originally abandoned for his bedroom—or Levi’s; who knew anymore—after being dealt his fair share of embarrassment.

“So you’re Eren,” Levi said. “Great job on introducing yourself to your guest.”

Eren decided he didn’t like Levi, who was a bit hypocritical, if he thought about it.

“He’s transferring workplaces right now, so he’ll be staying at the house this summer while we’re in Italy,” his mother said tentatively from her place at the sink.

Eren sputtered.

“Italy?”

Nobody fucking told him anything about Italy.

“We were planning to go as a family,” his mother told him, wringing the nearby washcloth nervously, “but Mikasa was busy and you said you weren’t coming home for break, so it turned into a second honeymoon…and Levi was the only person I knew who could housesit—”

He was missing out on Italy.

Italy.

Typical.

While Eren silently mourned his foreign trip that would never be—he could’ve rubbed it in that dumb “cultured” Jean’s face, dammit—Levi only sipped from his tea, nodding at Eren’s mother. “Don’t worry; I’ll take good care of the house while you’re away.”
She smiled, but traded a knowing look with her husband.

Eren stared at her curiously, asking the man before him, “Who are you, anyway?”

“Levi,” he answered simply, smartly, and Eren had the faintest idea that it was probably because he was pulling the guy’s leg earlier.

Eren resisted the urge to roll his eyes. “How do we know you?” he tried again.

“I’m Mikasa’s uncle,” he offered, and Eren accepted this since he hadn’t really met Mikasa’s family outside of rare formal occasions.

Silence settled between everyone, the ticking of the clock echoing through the room, and his mother cleared her throat, grinning. “I’ll cook dinner then,” she offered. “Grisha, you got pork chops from the market, right?” Though addressing her husband, she cast a cautious glance at her ex-brother-in-law that did not go unnoticed by anyone in the room.

Eren’s father nodded, emptying the freezer, also keeping a vigilant eye on their visitor.

Levi smiled at them. It didn’t quite meet his eyes. “Thank you both, again, for letting me stay here.”

As his parents prepared dinner, the guest letting his tea grow cold, Eren looked between the three for an explanation to the tension in the room.

He never received one.

An hour later, Eren cleared his throat and poked some broccoli with his fork, stalling until his parents left so he could throw away the food he didn’t want. Feeling that conversation was better than the stale silence that settled over them so long ago, he asked Levi, “What do you do?”

“Oh, great”—like Eren hadn’t had enough of those in his lifetime.

But Levi didn’t look like a professor, at least at his age. Most of Eren’s teachers wore casual clothes while they taught, but here this man was, outside of the classroom, wearing slacks and button-down shirts like it was a requirement.

Eren played with his broccoli some more, waiting for the clarification that usually comes when a professor shares their field of study, but Levi didn’t speak another word, only eating silently, stifling the table’s conversation even more. Leaving Eren to assume he was a Marx fanatic and nothing more.

At this rate, Eren was going to die.

“Well, you guys will be gone, and I’ll be stuck with this guy,” Eren tried again, joking tone evident as he addressed his parents, “but I at least get to sleep on my own bed, ri—”

“Bed? No. You’re futon-bound, son,” Eren’s father said, eyebrows furrowed, and Eren suddenly remembered the last time he received that look, when he’d spoken of becoming a farmhand in their hometown rather than attending university. “Farm—? No. You’re college-bound, son,” he’d said.

Huh. It was a weird thing to remember, but—

“I hope it’s comfortable,” Levi muttered under his breath, eyes sliding away.
Eren bristled and seethed because how dare— “Why, you fuckin’”—

“Language,” his mom interjected, effectively murdering the thought on his lips as she continued, “It’s true; you’ll be sleeping on a futon.” She looked wary of her own words as she avoided looking at their houseguest, who only looked at him expectantly.

Eren didn’t know what to say.

Didn’t know how to feel, honestly.

All of the things he’d been expecting when he came home—the warm hugs and smiles, the bed he called his own, the homemade meals and dinnertime bonding—were gone. Eren knew if he asked earlier, if they hadn’t already made a promise to Levi that he could sleep in Eren’s bed, that he would have his bed and homemade meals, no problem, but with just a few words, the visions that kept him alive the past month of college vanished into thin air.

None of it came true, and the person to blame for that was probably the man calmly sipping from a tea cup, acting like he was too good to use the fucking handle like a normal human being.

Eren didn’t like him.

He didn’t like him one bit.

This summer would be a rough one.
Chapter 2

Even though Eren had just returned home and needed some good rest on this shitty futon—even though Levi was just a guest at their house and needed to respect some fucking boundaries—Eren was forced to do chores first thing the next morning.

He was certain he woke up before any of the neighboring farmer’s roosters did. While the sun hadn’t risen, the strange intruder had, and with his awakening came a feather duster in Eren’s face before he even opened his eyes.

“Eren, wake up,” Levi demanded, voice muffled, and Eren groaned because no.

No—it was too damn early for this shit.

He refused.

“No.”

“Wake up,” Levi repeated, voice uncaring yet hushed as he shoved the duster further into the younger man’s face relentlessly, unsympathetically, tickling Eren’s nostrils with the feathers.

Eren wondered if the man was deaf or simply couldn’t take Eren’s blatant answer as his not-so-subtle hint to leave and never come back in this lifetime, so he did what any other person in the situation would do.

He buried himself in the futon blankets, snuggling into the floor and attempting to fall back asleep —

—failing when Levi whipped his cheek with the wooden handle, sending Eren’s nostrils flaring in complete fury as he wondered why anyone would wake someone else up when it was still dark out. He hoped to whatever god existed that his parents were at least still sleeping because this bullshit right here? This bullshit was torture.

Levi exhaled, resting the duster on the side of the futon, and Eren finally noticed through the dark of the room that the man wore an apron, rubber gloves, and a bandana over his mouth. “Eren, we’re going to—”


“I want to sleep,” Eren interrupted, cozying himself into the sheets while glaring at Levi, asking for his resolve to be challenged.

Of course, his houseguest wasn’t having any of it. He turned on the light in the living room, making Eren’s eyes burn as he hissed in repulsion; the older man only stared at him apathetically, expression stern as he went to dust the student’s sleeping face again. “Eren, we’re cleaning.”

Eren swatted him away. Swatted his existence away. “I don’t want—”

“We’re cleaning, and that’s final.”

Authority tinted his voice—a quiet warning to obey or suffer the consequences—and Eren ground his teeth together because, as much as he hated this—he hated this so much—he couldn’t disobey Levi and highly doubted he could even return to sleep if he tried.
With no way out of his predicament, Eren muttered through tightened lips,

“…yes, sir.”

An hour later, Eren regretted leaving the futon entirely.

“…this summer will most likely be the hottest one we’ve had in almost two decades,” the weathercaster announced right before Eren turned on the vacuum, drowning out all noise in the room, including Levi’s incoherent humming.

He’d been doing that all morning, humming and criticizing Eren’s cleaning abilities. When Eren had turned off the vacuum a few minutes before, thinking that he was done with the assigned task, the man hovered through the room, dusting and announcing that Eren, in actuality, forgot to vacuum underneath the furniture, before promptly leaving for the kitchen. Now, Eren was vacuuming again, cursing Levi’s name as he bent down to pay attention to the dust bunnies underneath the television set.

He didn’t know why he followed this guy’s orders. He was only a houseguest, no real authority in any way, but somehow, Eren found himself obeying commands directed at him, eventually finding himself crouched and driving a sponge into the kitchen tile, scrubbing repeatedly, constantly, in the same manner, over and over again.

Levi walked by in the hallway as Eren slaved over the floor, peering in while carrying the curtains. “There’s still dirt caked in-between the cracks,” Levi observed, swiftly walking away the moment Eren gritted his teeth and smacked the sponge into the floor with a newfound vigor, cleaning at high speed and in several directions.

If only to spite this man, he’d make sure to shine the floor to a state of brand new.

Once the floor was cleaned, after Eren had enough of Levi’s humming to last him a lifetime, his parents came downstairs, dressed and ready for Italy, and their stomachs ready for breakfast as Levi finished cooking eggs and bacon, Eren’s phone finally reading eight o’clock.

Maybe it was his college experiences, sleeping in until his first class at noon. Maybe he was just lazy, his body craving sleep it was denied when he was younger. But Eren considered it a crime that this man had awakened him before eight that morning and didn’t even look remorseful about it.

After they all ate breakfast together, Eren and Levi parted with his parents at the doorway, his mother speaking with Eren as Levi helped his father fit their suitcases into the back of their car.

“It’s just such a nice surprise,” she said, smiling wide, admiring the recently swept and polished porch. “I didn’t expect for you or Levi to go out of your way to clean like this before we left. I’m glad.”

Eren huffed, somewhat pleased with the positive feedback while also resenting the fact Levi’s actions were receiving praise. “He woke me up at three in the morning,” he enlightened her, face grim, “so I’m glad my lack of sleep was worth his weird-ass—”

“Language,” she scolded, dropping her grin only for a moment.

“—idea,” Eren finished. “He’s a weird person. I don’t like him too much.”

His mother scoffed, but didn’t say anything to oppose his statements, curiously enough.
He patted her on the shoulder, reassuring her, “Don’t worry about leaving us behind, Mom. I’m gonna watch this guy like a hawk, and he’ll probably do the same.” Just like he had this morning, Eren didn’t add.

“Oh, really?” She giggled, a sound Eren hadn’t heard in a while, and confessed in a whisper, with a quick glance at Levi, “I feel better about leaving him here now, with you around,” smiling confidently to herself.

Eren paused, wondering what she meant and what about this whole situation didn’t make her feel well to begin with, but then Levi sat down on the porch with his newspaper and his father called for her to come to the car. She kissed his cheek, rubbing away what must’ve been a lipstick mark as she told him, “Have fun. Be good.”

He almost said that her words reminded him of the last thing Mikasa told him before he left for college—“Have fun. Make good choices”—but then she was by the car, his father opening her door.

“Will do,” Eren promised to her back, and she managed to wave before her husband almost slammed the door on her arm. Then his father got into the driver’s side, nodding goodbye to his son, starting the engine, and driving away from the manor and down the path.

They left dust in their wake, and once they had exited the property, driving past crops, always spinning up dirt, Eren looked to Levi for some sort of explanation for her murmured comment, but the older man stared distantly at the newspaper in his lap, only two feet away from his face.

Eren’s lips moved to say something, but he stopped himself, feeling the silence stretch out like it always had around this man.

He walked into the house and upstairs to his room instead.

Levi didn’t follow.

During the next few days, Levi existed quietly alongside Eren.

The student was shocked, expecting to be bothered before dawn every morning, but each time he awoke, he was surprised to see sunlight streaming in through his bedroom window. He expected to be forced to clean every day as well, but it wasn’t until the third day staying together that, after breakfast, Levi left cleaning supplies outside of Eren’s room—a broom, the mop and bucket, and toilet supplies—as a silent command to start cleaning. And because it didn’t interrupt his sleep, Eren didn’t mind the chores this time.

That evening, after his parents left, he forced Levi (with not much force) to take his parents’ bed in the end, arguing that it was bigger and better as they ate dinner, which was cooked by Levi, but served at the living room’s coffee table. Eren anticipated resistance on Levi’s end, but the man only shrugged from where he sat cross-legged on the ground, saying, “They won’t like it, but give me some time to move my things, and it’s a done deal.”

“They won’t like it?” Eren echoed, pausing long enough for his spaghetti to fall from his fork.

Levi only presented him with a knowing look, gathering his dirty dishes and retreating to the kitchen soon after.

The next day, their second together, Eren played Xbox on mute while Levi typed up something like he always did on his computer. “What’re you doing?” he wondered aloud, though—upon
taking into account the economics texts scattered about the table and the man’s occupation—Eren figured it was something work-related.

Levi answered, “Working on my last research project before my transfer.”

“He’s transferring workplaces right now,” Eren remembered his mother saying before, and he paused his game, setting down his controller to turn towards Levi, his interest piling up. “Where are you transferring to?”

“I wouldn’t know.” Levi pushed away his laptop for a moment to glance at a larger book with multiple post-its inside of it, readjusting his glasses on the bridge of his nose as he looked down. “I have interviews set up, but they’re all at the end of the summer.”

Eren had no idea how being a professor worked, so he questioned some more. “Why’re you working if there’s no one to give your work to?”

Levi only stared at him, and Eren mirrored him, receiving a sigh in reply. “It’s for my old work,” Levi admitted, eyes scanning the document.

Eren nibbled on his lip, opening his mouth again to inquire, “Where would you like to w—”

“Anywhere but community college,” Levi interrupted in a grumble, fingers hammering away on the keys, obviously preoccupied with a certain thought and already sensing the direction Eren was taking the conversation.

Quickly giving up on the curt man, Eren put aside his efforts and picked up his controller again, un-pausing the game the same time an unfamiliar ringtone broke the pace of Levi’s typing, which paused so he could answer his phone coming to life some feet away, demanding attention.

Eren continued his game, listening to the caller—a male voice, it seemed—and Levi make casual chitchat. Mostly about a convention of some sort, from what Eren gathered. Then Levi ended the call, and Eren saw his opportunity to jump in with more questions.

“Who was that?”

“My ex,” Levi said simply, making Eren pause his game again, but Levi didn’t mind, tossing the phone back at the wall and returning to his work, ignoring the way Eren squinted at him.

It sounded like a man, but Eren wasn’t sure. “Ex…girlfriend?” he pressed.

Now Levi stopped what he was doing to stare at him with that knowing look again.

Eren wasn’t sure what to think about that, so he returned to his game once more, feeling confused.

It was on the third day, after he finished cleaning like Levi silently requested, that his mother called and broke the quiet of their acquaintanceship.

“We’re going to Pisa to see that leaning tower tomorrow,” she told him from the other line, and he leaned against the wall, playing with the cord on the landline phone as he listened to her go on about her adventures abroad. “Oh, Eren, the food here is wonderful—nothing like Italian food back home. You never realize how we butcher foreign recipes until you go to the country and try the dishes there.”

“I figure that’s a given,” Eren shared, watching as Levi entered the kitchen, looking disoriented as he put on the apron he seemed to always wear whenever he cleaned the house or cooked. Eren
assumed he was going to start cooking dinner, but then his eyes widened, and he threw the apron back on the oven handle, racing back to the living room, where he’d been working since early morning.

“I don’t understand him,” Eren thought aloud.

“I don’t, either,” his mother replied, making him realize his mistake. “He hasn’t been giving you trouble yet, has he?”

“No?” The man cooked, cleaned, and no longer woke him up at an ungodly hour; though he gave Eren chores to do, it hadn’t been a disgusting amount, so he’d been feeling content, playing his Xbox and reading erotic books from his mother’s shelf that she tried to keep hidden. “He’s been fine.”

“Hasn’t brought any men over?” his mother tried again, and Eren stared at the phone in bafflement, as if she could see his expression through it, before repeating his response from her last question, eyes wandering to the pictures out in the hallway—then focusing on his stepmother’s old wedding photo, where she, her ex-husband, and their respective wedding parties stood neatly for the camera.

When he recognized Levi in the picture, his attention shifted, even as his mother kept speaking.

“Well then, that’s good. He’s keeping his word—”

“Keeping his word”—the tension in the room—the deep voice over the phone, and Levi’s knowing looks, his eyes annoyed—

Suddenly, Eren remembered.

He was twelve when his father remarried.

At the wedding, loud music, various drinks and snacks, and colorful lights surrounded him, and he and his new stepsister danced on the floor together at the request of other guests, who thought the simultaneous dance between the newlyweds and stepsiblings would be cute. He and Mikasa weren’t that comfortable with the idea of each other yet, leading to an extremely awkward, spacey shuffle that everyone praised.

Eren felt like a fool with everyone’s eyes on him, but Mikasa whispered that he wasn’t their center of focus—rather, the married couple beside them was attracting everyone’s attention. He doubted it, but didn’t question it aloud, shuffling off the dance floor the moment the music stopped, making half of the wedding goers laugh. Mikasa followed him—which she often did ever since her mother moved in with his father—and together, they made their way to the food room’s snack table, picking candy as they went along the line, eventually grabbing handfuls they would take back to the table with them.

There really wasn’t much to do at the wedding, he quickly realized, but as they rounded the corner to return to the main dining room, the air he breathed turned thick and tense. The music still played, but the people halted, their voices hushed, and suddenly, everyone had something to do together.

In a corner of the room, a guest stood with his father’s new wife, and together, they whispered. Eren realized everyone grew quiet in order to hear the two’s conversation, all of them wanting to either know what the commotion was about or talking of the commotion itself.

“I’m surprised he’s here; I didn’t think they’d invite faggots,” Mikasa’s cousin murmured some
feet away as Eren and Mikasa laid down their candy. Eren was intrigued by the conversation between his stepmother and the new guest, and even Mikasa walked closer to investigate.

Except Mikasa kept walking.

She never stopped.

In a panic, Eren quickened his speed to catch up to her, both of them approaching her mother, who didn’t pay them much attention as she continued speaking with the man, who—as they came closer—Eren realized was as tall as himself.

“—mean to cause trouble,” the man sighed, rubbing his temples as Mikasa stood by her mother’s side. Eren looked from the man to his new stepmother, sensing her discomfort, but judging from Mikasa’s casual attitude, he wasn’t a stranger.

“I only wanted to send my congratulations,” the man informed her, and she smiled thinly, a look Eren had never seen before. It twisted his stomach into knots, made him shuffle his stance and shift his gaze to the decorations devouring the room. Then the man looked down at Mikasa with tired eyes, nodding in acknowledgment until he spotted Eren, where he then excused himself from the reception, leaving the bride to heave a sigh of relief, turning to her partygoers and smiling brightly once more.

But Eren was curious, taking after the man, and so was Mikasa, who stepped on his shoes a few times as they followed him to the entrance of the venue, where he met a much larger man beside a black car. The short man was Eren’s height, yet stood alongside another man almost a foot taller than him—it was funny to see.

Without realizing it, Eren snickered.

Mikasa elbowed him in his ribs, glaring at him with a gravity he didn’t recognize.

The shorter man heard them, turned around, and grimaced at Eren before waving at Mikasa, who returned the gesture.

The taller man got in the driver’s side of the car, turning on the engine, whereas the shorter man sat in the passenger seat, closest to Eren and Mikasa. A quick moment passed where his eyes met Eren’s, the stone there breaking away briefly, reflecting something surly and scorned.

Then the car rolled away, and only his gaze remained.

Eren didn’t understand it—the gaze, the gravity, nor the goodbye. He didn’t understand any of it.

“Who was that?”

Eren turned to Mikasa, more questions on his tongue, but she only glowered at him for the one he already asked. She picked up the remains of her dress, the ends unraveling from her and Eren’s constant walking as she answered,

“My uncle.”

Eren finished the conversation with his mother, hung up the phone, and stared at the wall.

He was only twelve.

“Levi.”
How could he have possibly remembered?

“Levi.”

It was just that one time, the car window and height being the most he remembered—

“Le—”

“What the hell do you want?” the older man demanded, throwing down his glasses in frustration before he rubbed the bridge of his nose, eyes closed, drifting their focus away from the computer screen as Eren reentered the living room.

*Levi.*

He didn’t know what he was feeling, only knowing that it all made sense now.

This man had been shunned from his family for his sexuality. He hadn’t been invited to the wedding, but had shown up out of respect for his dead brother’s widow. That man that time—was he Levi’s lover? Did Mikasa know? She must have, with that weight holding down her gaze. And although he’d been shunned, he came back. Not once, but twice now. Since she was so cautious around him all the time, Eren had no idea why his mother chose Levi of all people—

“Levi was the only person I knew who could housesit—”

*Ah.*

So.

“You’re gay” was all Eren said as he picked up his book from the coffee table, and Levi gave him that look again—the one that told Eren he was an idiot—but the older man also seemed surprised at the comment, like he thought Eren already knew. Then Levi shook his head and resumed working, leaving Eren to read his paperback romance.

“I think that’s fine,” Eren told him, feeling it was necessary to say. “You’re fine.”

Levi shot him another look; he could sense a question from Levi’s direction, but couldn’t understand it. But by the time Levi’s gaze moved away from his computer, Eren was paying full attention to the erotic novel, now at a part where the main heroine was moaning drastically underneath a werewolf-man-person. While Eren wondered about his stepmother’s freaky taste in fiction, he felt fingers ruffle the hair on his head for a second, moving away the next, followed by typing noises.

That moment, something shifted in the household.

After Eren remembered Levi, suddenly, his presence became less quiet.

Explaining it to himself was difficult—the feeling of realizing someone was hidden in his memories, then surrounding himself with that person daily, with the knowledge of where they came from always lingering in the back of his mind. He hated to say it, but when he realized Levi’s sexuality and just why the tension existed between his parents and houseguest, he found it easier to be around the older man. In the same way, Levi seemed more at ease—even more so than after his parents left. When Levi rested in the living room, typing like always, Eren sat nearby with a book from his mother’s bookshelf, basking in the silence. When Eren napped in his bedroom, the pillows tucked neatly between the mattress and headboard rather than kicked to the floor, he would awaken to Levi working at his desk rather than snapping at him like he did the first day he mistreated the
clean pillows.

The mutual feeling of companionship seemed to exist, but regarding the way Eren’s gaze lingered unnecessarily sometimes—

He wasn’t sure that his staring would ever be shared by Levi, mainly because he didn’t understand the action himself.

One day, Levi annoyed the piss out of him. The next, when the heat was especially sweltering and Eren walked around the house wearing nothing but boxer briefs, he passed by Levi, who had moved the table out onto the porch outside of the curtained doors and began burning incense while he was working on his...research paper? Whatever it was.

And Levi would be sitting there, wearing nothing but his boxers. The sweat would sheen off of his skin, and suddenly, Eren would think about how toned Levi was for a smaller man. How Armin and his floormate Connie were that size, but nowhere near as muscular. He wondered about Levi’s workout routine, if he had one outside of the morning jogs Eren had caught him taking once or twice, and what was underneath the boxers, which he thought were too baggy—

—then Eren wondered what was wrong with him, the natural bulge in his underwear growing just a bit bigger, and he raced upstairs to shower.

He didn’t understand his reaction. He didn’t understand why he stared at Levi when he thought the man wasn’t looking. He didn’t understand why he began viewing him that way, and he hoped the thoughts would disappear because, although they didn’t bother him, Levi was Mikasa’s uncle, and that alone was disturbing enough.

But the man was polite. He was snarky and sarcastic, but he always made Eren meals and dealt with his barrage of questions. Eren figured this made Levi a pretty nice guy, even if he did fuck up Eren’s sleep cycles occasionally, though no longer intentionally—more like Eren would fall asleep in front of the TV, and instead of leaving him there, Levi would kick him awake in the middle of the night and force him to go to his actual bed.

Their acquaintanceship had broken. That quickly became apparent one afternoon when Eren had walked outside to spot a shirtless Levi watering the garden and, randomly, Levi drenched himself for a few seconds, the water soaking his pants before he casually aimed back at the plants. Eren had snorted, and before he could react, his own clothes seeped with water, Levi smirking from where he stood before he turned back to the plants, exposing his broader-than-expected back to Eren.

And so, the younger man reacted on impulse.

He charged and tackled the older man to the ground, landing roughly. Levi coughed, and Eren laughed as Levi tried sitting up—

And suddenly, Eren realized what a precarious position they were in.

He hovered over Levi, who wasn’t wearing a shirt. His hand rested on Levi’s chest, feeling him cough from the awkward landing. Eren’s crotch was in front of one leg, and if he brushed it a certain way—

He rapidly jumped off and raced inside.

He never saw Levi’s face in regards to the situation, and he wasn’t sure he wanted to stick around just to see it since his underwear was suddenly tight—uncomfortably so—and his clothes were see-
It was a quick moment, but when he realized Levi gave him a raging boner that he couldn’t get rid of, it was official that they were no longer acquaintances—at least in Eren’s eyes. Eren didn’t know what Levi thought since the man never changed his behavior around him, but the comfortableness had faded, leading to tension at every corner for Eren.

And though he was sure Levi wasn’t aware of his thoughts, he was bound to notice that Eren had trouble meeting his eyes from that day forward.

Two weeks after his parents left for Italy and a thousand questions later, Eren finally asked Levi for his age, mainly because he felt like a creep, feeling attracted to his stepsister’s uncle.

Levi only removed his glasses, shaking his head. For once, he wasn’t working on his paper or reading the newspaper—rather, he was just watching the news on TV. “You have asked when I lost my virginity.”

“Yes,” Eren replied, though it wasn’t really a question.

“You have asked about my starfish back in college, Starmie.”

“Yes.”

“You have asked about my BMI.”

“Yes, and within good reasoning.”

Levi did not look amused. “And you are now just asking for my age.”

Eren nodded and confirmed, “Yes.”

Levi cursed under his breath, and Eren understood. He had asked things in a weird order, but still. Leaning against the coffee table alongside Levi felt natural. Asking questions and learning more felt natural.

At Levi’s blank expression, Eren stammered, “I-I was just curious, you know. I just assumed you’d —”

“Answer every personal question you asked?” Levi interrupted, and Eren felt warmth in cheeks, a small amount of embarrassment quickly sweeping in, but he nodded. With a smirk, Levi joked, eyes trained on the newscaster, “I’m young enough to fuck around with students like you, and that’s all that matters.”

The static of the TV hummed. Eren’s cue to laugh passed.

An urge to act came upon him, and it was the dumbest reason—

Levi sighed. “Jesus, I was kidding—”

Eren shifted a leg over Levi’s lap in one movement, his entire body towering over the shorter man’s, and he knocked him back against the table, meeting his gaze for the first time since the “getting wet and tackled” incident. The sudden intimacy pounded blood through his veins, his hands stroking Levi’s shoulders, and Eren didn’t bother holding back.

“Then why don’t you?”
When Levi stared at him silently with widened eyes, his fingers stilled on the older man’s shoulders.

*Oh.*

*OH.*

The words had left Eren’s mouth before he even processed them, and his mouth turned into that of a fish’s, opening and closing, and he licked his lips because suddenly, they felt disgustingly dry and *holy fucking shit*, he just hit on Levi.

Openly. Obviously. Not even discreetly.

*Very obviously.*

“Eren,” Levi said, eyes calm but stern, “are you seducing me?”

Eren paused.

He actually wasn’t sure, and honestly, his heart beat in his throat so hard that he couldn’t tell up and down from left and right anymore.

Out of pure impulse, he’d straddled Levi. Without thinking about it, he felt him in ways he would never feel any other man—not even Armin. He didn’t know what he was doing anymore, but—“Yes.”

That was out of his mouth before he thought about it as well.

Contrary to his expectations as always, Levi sighed, and Eren’s soul sank.

*Rejection.* This was the taste of rejection, wasn’t—

“Next time you try to seduce someone,” Levi interrupted his thoughts, the older man’s fingers settling on Eren’s sides, “don’t ram their already screwed-up back into a table. It hurts.”

*Oh, shit.* “Sorry, I didn’t—”

Levi’s lips met his.

Eren stopped talking.

Levi pulled away and continued, “Of course you wouldn’t know, even though you’re the one who caused it.”

Then they both stopped talking.

The tension Eren had created with his intense staring and lack of eye contact faded away the moment they began exploring each other’s mouths, and he felt grateful. Levi was harder, sturdier—unlike any woman Eren had ever kissed before—but he was still warm, and it was that heat combined with the summer temperatures that probably drove Eren to do things he normally wouldn’t, like kiss his stepsister’s older, gay uncle.

Eren pulled away for a moment to breathe, his tongue sliding away from Levi’s, the saliva they collected dribbling from his lips until Levi leaned in once more, taking in his bottom lip first before pressing his chest against Eren’s—
Eren had kissed before. He had gone on dates before.

But the way Levi sucked his lips and treasured his mouth, nipping here and there, and the way Eren found himself lightly scratching Levi’s back—trying to relieve the pain he caused from his coarse actions earlier—felt like the most natural thing in the world.

Everything about Levi seemed as natural as the red fluid in his body, as the calcium in his bones, but all so foreign at once.

As they paused from kissing, their pants of breath fanned each other’s faces—Levi tasted and smelled like the tea he drank almost an hour ago—before continuing. Levi’s hands drifted to the sides of Eren’s pants, tugging on the belt loops, the fabric brushing against his excited bulge—

They pulled away for air, and as Eren caught his breath, Levi pushed him to the floor, lingering above him, lips wet and cool in comparison to the evening sun roasting Eren’s skin.

As his mind faded away from Levi, he could hear the weathercaster talk about the blistering heat wave to come over the area that night, and suddenly, he felt extremely hot, his shirt restricting his breathing.

Levi was close, his lips on Eren’s jaw, and Eren returned the favor, his blood pounding in his ears as he bit at the exposed part of Levi’s collarbone through his button-down shirt. Levi moaned, rolling his hips into Eren’s, and when their lips met again, Eren gripped onto Levi’s shirt, undoing the buttons while Levi tugged his pants down to his knees—

They both paused as Levi submerged into the depths of his shirt and Eren’s pants hung around his knees, their actions working against each other.

Silence—then Eren chuckled.

*Ridiculous.*

Levi gave up on his pants, pulling them up as he crawled back to nip on Eren’s lip, his crotch brushing against Eren’s.

They were both hard. Achingly so, judging by the hitch of Levi’s breath.

It was unexpected and astonishing to see Levi sharply inhale like that from a single touch.

Eren wanted to see more.

After more kissing, Levi backed off of Eren, standing up and walking out to the hall, pausing to glance over his shoulder with *that look*.

The knowing one that Eren couldn’t decipher for days, but understood now.

Eren was certain of what came next.

He didn’t hesitate to escort Levi to his bedroom.
Chapter 3

Somehow, Eren ended up wearing no pants, kneeling in front of Levi, whose own slacks were unbuttoned, his boxer briefs of the day pulled down to reveal his stiff cock, upright and receiving Eren’s full attention—

Maybe more attention than necessary.

It obviously wasn’t the first dick Eren had seen in his life—nor the most impressive; Reiner’s boyfriend was hung like a horse—but it was his first dick seen in this context and sort of sexual situation. And having another guy’s dick in front of him, standing at attention, with precum to salute was—

Well, it was—

You know—

**Different.**

Yeah, he was pretty sure that was the word for it. Yeah.

“It’s not gonna stay hard all day,” Levi blurted, interrupting Eren’s thoughts as he briefly wondered, if he should do nothing, how long the excitement of the situation would last on Levi’s cock.

Glimpsing from the other man’s face to his penis, Eren gulped.

Levi’s eyes focused on his Adam’s apple.

It was his own idea, Eren reasoned, licking his lips and grabbing the base of Levi’s dick—this gesture already feeling foreign enough. A familiar shape, yet an unfamiliar perspective. However, he sensed this was nothing like experiencing it for himself, whether it be by hand or mouth. And as this was his own suggestion, he should follow through with it, even if his own inexperience suddenly worried him.

Then impulsiveness struck as always, and Eren threw caution to the wind, wrapping his mouth around Levi’s penis like it was a popsicle—

—which resulted immediately in Levi removing himself from Eren’s mouth, frowning deeply at the younger male, automatically showing his criticisms of the newbie’s abilities.

Eren supposed he did something wrong.

*Whoops.*

Retry?

This time, he curled back his lips, the dry skin rubbing against Levi’s cock as he took it in, and though Levi’s reaction was better this time—as in, he didn’t remove himself immediately from Eren’s mouth—Eren’s wasn’t. When it brushed across the top back of his mouth, he began gagging an abnormal amount, his eyes tearing up rapidly, and so he pulled back at an odd angle until Levi’s dick popped out entirely, still erect in front of Eren and dripping with saliva as he coughed painfully, cursing internally.
Dammit. He was doing this all wrong; he knew that, but didn’t know how to fix it.

Maybe his face seemed unmistakably lost or disappointed because he heard a sigh come from up above. “Here.” Levi rested his hand on Eren’s head, weaving his fingers through some of the locks there as he looked down at Eren, who returned his gaze curiously. “May I?”

Eren figured he knew what he meant, so he nodded—a silent message of “you do the honors.”

And Levi did, right off the bat, jerking his hips into Eren’s mouth, sending his cock into Eren’s cheek, where he could feel its bulge and was sure it was visible from the outside. When Levi began handing out directions, he focused less on where the hand on top of his head led him and more on the words being spoken.

“Run your tongue along the bottom of the shaft,” Levi said casually, as if reading from a how-to manual, and Eren obeyed, stroking the base as he listened to Levi go on:

Lick the underside. Flick the head with his tongue, focusing on the curves and aiming for the hole occasionally. Then work it slowly further into his mouth, sucking as he moved his head back and forth, paying attention to the sides when the penis lodged itself in his cheeks, redirecting his focus to the tip of the dick when his tongue was in the right position to do so.

It was when his tongue brushed the underside of the cock, licking the curve of the head, that Levi closed his eyes and bit his lip, audibly sucking in a mouthful of air as he twitched, fingers trembling in Eren’s hair.

Levi’s sensitive spot.

Yes.

Suddenly, Eren’s underwear suffocated his junk, but at that moment, he focused on jerking Levi off more quickly, bobbing his head, moving his tongue over and over again in the way that drove Levi crazy until the shorter man said, “Alright, we need to stop.”

Eren shook his head, the dick hitting the inside of his left cheek as he did so, and continued working on the spot he knew to be just right, even if his jaw was feeling slack and his energy was draining a bit.

“Eren,” Levi warned, hand firmer in his hair, “I’m about to cum, I hope you know.”

Oh, Eren knew. He could tell from the way Levi’s balls tightened, his cock twitching like rapid fire, and so, he took Levi deeper, hoping this would be a turn-on of sorts.

It was a mistake.

Such a huge, messy mistake.

Levi came in five spurts, but when the first hit the back of Eren’s throat, he choked, turning his head to cough it out, leaving the remaining four to coat his hair and face to point where one eye stayed closed after the deed was done in fear of Levi’s seed getting into it.

Levi breathed heavily, panting as Eren wiped at the cum around his eye unsuccessfully. The moment his high faded, Levi grimaced—at least from what Eren could tell with his good eye. “That’s disgusting,” the older man noted, walking over to the desk in the room to grab the box of tissues, then setting them back down, looking conflicted.
As always, Eren was curious about his actions, just as he was curious about his measure of success. "How long were we at that for?" he asked, feeling a sense of accomplishment that he got Levi to finish at all, honestly.

Levi glanced at the clock behind Eren, scowling with speculation. "Twenty minutes?"

…well then.

Nevermind, Eren thought, his hopes crushing to the floor. However, confusion soon replaced his disappointment when Levi headed towards the hallway, determined as a man on a mission from God. Still wiping at his face—a doomed, eternal battle, he was beginning to realize—Eren questioned, "Where are you going?"

"To get cleaning supplies," Levi answered simply and, at Eren’s incredulous expression, clarified further, "You should probably clean up as well. You have cum, well, everywhere."

Eren continued staring at him, disbelieving.

Levi furrowed his brows. "What?"

"Are you serious right now?" Eren insisted, shocked.

But Levi’s face said it all.

He wasn’t kidding. Not one bit.

Apparently, he would clean this floor, and Eren would clean his face. End of story.

Levi exited the room to go to the cleaning closet, and Eren went to the bathroom, still unable to wrap his mind around the fact that the sex was interrupted because he had a cum-covered face.

This would’ve never happened in a porno, he thought bitterly as he turned on the faucet, washing his hands and then slapping his face with the cold water, scrubbing at whatever remains of cum lingered behind in his hair. He briefly considered walking back without using soap first, but upon pondering the possibility of Levi having a sixth sense specifically for cleanliness, he decided against it.

When he exited the bathroom, Levi had already gathered up the supplies, having scrubbed away the cum on the hardwood floor. By now, his own erection had gone flaccid—due to no stimulation and, well, the cleanliness was a definite turn-off—so when his and Levi’s eyes met, he wasn’t sure what to do. Carry on and continue? Give up and sleep? Or—

"Eren, sit on the bed," Levi ordered, snapping off his rubber gloves and throwing them inside-out into the supplies basket to clean later.

"…yes, sir."

Eren plopped down on the bed, his underwear still intact and somewhat damp earlier from his raging boner.

Levi glanced at the dirty boxer briefs, grimacing. "Take them off," he said with authority, motioning to the clothing article with a nod of his head.

Unexpectedly, with just these three words, Eren felt very timid.

Again, he was familiar with dicks. He’d seen Reiner’s, Bertolt’s, Armin’s, and most definitely
Jean’s. But Levi’s was an entirely different story, and just like he was unfamiliar with treating other men’s genitalia as sexual objects, he wasn’t used to another man treating his as such, either.

With these thoughts fresh in his mind, Eren gulped. “You mean…now?”

Levi simply stared, his face deadpanning a “yes,” as in yes, he meant now. When else?

Eren’s body shook. His nerves stood on end. But he didn’t want this to stop. He didn’t want to be the reason they stopped.

Just—fuck, he’d never been with a man before, he really hadn’t, and so far, he already—

“Eren,” Levi sighed, and at first, Eren assumed he was impatient, but then he looked up into concerned eyes that were weary and gentle, and his anxiety stilled in amazement.

Suddenly, Levi did not look like the person Eren wanted to jump and tackle to the ground, but rather a mentor, and it felt strange. Unnatural.

Then Eren remembered Levi was supposed to be an assistant professor presumably in his thirties with a sense of responsibility whereas he was only a nineteen-year college student, and some people would see this as a crime.

Eren’s mouth turned dry at the gravity in Levi’s gaze, which held his own straight on for the first time since they met. It was the kind of gaze where they could see each other for who they truly were rather than the fronts they put up, and Eren wasn’t sure what Levi saw, but he liked to think he saw worry, trepidation, care, and most importantly, dependability.

“Are you sure you want this?”

Eren stared, thinking the answer was rather obvious, but he decided to humor the man and his sincerity, if only for a moment. He was here, after all. “Yes?” he replied, acting like he wasn’t quite sure what the correct answer was supposed to be.

Levi exhaled long and loud, probably whiffing Eren’s bullshit from a mile away, and Eren deflated, realizing the older man truly was being as serious as he could. “You won’t regret anything come tomorrow?” he challenged again, and this time, Eren pushed aside his jokes.

He shook his head. “No.” He was sure that this felt right, that Levi felt right. He had never been with another man before, but looking into Levi’s genuine eyes, Eren decided none of that probably mattered on the grand scale of sex.

In the next minute, he stripped, underwear tossed across the room, only his tank top remaining. Levi smirked, leaning over him in a way that had his heart screaming, making him fall back on the bed, bouncing steadily as that gaze wandered from his face to his stomach and—

Oh.

Well.

Seemed like his erection returned to stay after all.

Levi’s hands grabbed Eren’s hip and waist, one thumb rubbing circles on a rib, the other hand cupping the side of one of his butt cheeks, Levi’s fingers kneading its skin, causing Eren’s hips to roll upwards. “I should return the favor,” he murmured, his eyes scanning Eren’s dick up and down, making Eren even harder, anticipating whatever sexual attention he would soon receive—
But Levi’s specific word choice reminded Eren of his roommate and the boy’s constantly expressed belief that oral sex didn’t need to be requited. In the words of Reiner: it wasn’t an obligation, but rather, a gift (cue thumbs up).

Then Levi’s lips closed around the head of Eren’s cock, and he gasped, deciding to damn Reiner and his opinions to Hell as he gripped Levi’s hair and moaned.

The feeling of Levi’s tongue automatically working on him, trailing veins and the curves of his head naturally, almost drove him insane. Levi’s speed, too—it wasn’t some sort of race, and yet, he acted like a pro, slurping and sucking away, bobbing his head this and that way to reach new areas. He almost tugged on Levi’s hair before realizing what an awful idea that would be, not wanting to rip out the other man’s hair. Instead, he smoothed his palm against Levi’s forehead, pulling back his bangs, revealing more of his face.

Levi had to be much older than him. Eren knew this, and yet, without his bangs, he looked younger, almost Eren’s age. The sensation was surreal, but it didn’t compare to the next flick Levi’s tongue gave to his head, quick and against his hole, the motion swift but effective.

Eren’s hips bucked up, trying to immerse himself further into the sensations of Levi’s mouth, but with every attempt, Levi pushed him harder into the mattress, the movements from his head and tongue enough to drive Eren into an orgasm, which he felt coming on much sooner than he would’ve liked—much sooner than Levi’s, anyway. He groaned even more when Levi realized his sharp intakes of breath meant he liked a particular spot or technique more than another, and with every little new thing Levi learned about Eren’s crotch, the younger man was being pushed further towards the edge, his breathing becoming ragged, his balls tightening—

Even before he came, Eren knew he would forget to courtesy tap—it was just one of those things. But judging from the way Levi took him in deeper, easing Eren’s dick further down his throat, he sensed Eren was about to orgasm and planned to swallow anyway.

His seed hit the back of Levi’s throat, and unlike Eren, the older man let it slide down smoothly, gulping lightly to make sure he drank it all up. Eren went to remove himself from Levi’s mouth, but then Levi stopped him, halting the head of his cock in front of him so that he could lick the remnants of Eren’s cum away.

It was highly sensual—his dick was overly sensitive post-orgasm—and Eren probably made noises he wouldn’t be proud to hear repeated on a recording device.

When Levi finished, leaning back with a satisfied simper, Eren rested against the mattress, mind hazy, bottom half still naked. He was spent—done for the evening, maybe done for this week. He had his orgasm and honestly couldn’t imagine another coming along anytime soon.

But he was wrong, very wrong, he realized when Levi’s hands slid under his tank top, coaxing him out of his remaining clothing.

Judging by the bulge in Levi’s pants, he wanted to keep going, and though Eren wasn’t as horny right now, he didn’t entirely reject the notion, either, wondering what being inside of Levi would be like. When Levi lifted the shirt above his head, Eren slipping out of it like butter, their mouths found each other again, Eren’s tongue delving around Levi’s teeth as his hand wandered down to Levi’s pants, tugging at them, insinuating they finally come off, once and for all.

Levi groaned, eyes shamelessly meeting Eren’s, whose owner waited patiently for Levi to become fully naked as well. The slacks slid off entirely, followed by the button-down shirt that Eren had tried so hard to cope with earlier, and then his boxer briefs.
The moment Levi’s underwear hit his thighs, Eren extended a hand to grab and stroke the cock leaning against his stomach, his thumb massaging the head as Levi lowered himself over Eren on the bed again, his lips meeting Eren’s once more, their spit mixing another time as they resumed where they left off.

As Levi bucked into Eren’s hand, he gripped onto Eren’s butt cheeks, squeezing and kneading them. Eren moaned into Levi’s mouth, feeling excited all over again as Levi’s fingers drifted towards his asscrack, poking—

“WHOA!”

Did Levi just—

In a heartbeat, Eren scurried to one end of the bed, Levi at the other, staring at him with a large-eyed expression, as if he was clueless as to why Eren reacted so violently to his advances.

Eren glanced in between them, noting that they both were hard and ready for more—but Eren wasn’t quite sure he wanted to take on the job position Levi recommended for him. “I’m bottom?”

“Well, I’ve never bottomed before,” Levi informed him, eyebrows furrowed, as if the very notion of receiving a dick in the ass bothered him—as if it was so obvious that Levi being top was the only option available on their sex schedule.

“Neither have I,” Eren argued back, and soon, the next minute turned into the two staring at each other, wondering who would give up their title as rising champion to be the underdog.

Eren stared at Levi.

Levi stared at Eren.

A tumbleweed probably rolled by outside of the house.

It seemed neither would yield.

Finally, Eren sighed, looking down at his boner. He leaned over to resume kissing Levi, who didn’t expect the gesture, but welcomed it warmly, pressing Eren’s back to the bed when he leaned forward and over him.

Next time.

Next time, he’d have his chance to shine.

For some reason, Eren assumed he would have topped, so this resignation served as a crushing blow—but they were both horny and, apparently, Levi had experience and knowledge in the top department.

Hopefully, he wouldn’t ruthlessly tear Eren’s ass apart to the point where the poor guy couldn’t sit down ever again in his lifetime.

Eren pulled away from the kiss to say in all seriousness, “I trust you with my ass.”

Levi only rolled his eyes, replying, “Yeah, I’ll take great care of it.” He reached into Eren’s nightstand drawer, pulling a bottle of lube and a condom—

Wait, what—
Levi spotted his aghast expression and explained, “I saw you didn’t have anything, and I personally believe everyone should be prepared, in case the opportunity presents itself.”

Well then.

He handed Eren the condom so that he could open the lube container, but Eren didn’t know how to react, only able to gawk as Levi smeared his fingers with some lube before making his way to Eren’s asshole. He only paused to look up at Eren, who hadn’t yet opened the condom packet. “Do you mind making yourself useful?” he prompted before prodding at the younger male’s opening, which was subconsciously clenched tight, and Eren simmered, on the verge of tearing the packet open with a force they never recommended he use in health class lest he want to damage the condom.

Then Levi managed to wiggle the tip of his index finger inside of Eren, and he about dropped the condom in surprise.

It wasn’t bad, but it wasn’t good, either—just some sort of grayscale of weird, Eren decided, grimacing as he messed around with the condom. Already unsure of how to feel about being bottom, Eren felt even stranger when Levi added his middle finger as well and then shaped his digits into the form of a hook inside of him, moving them around.

Eren was about to protest and say that it was hopeless—he was born a top; it was a sign from the gods—but then Levi’s fingers brushed something that made Eren’s dick feel even heavier and harder than it already did, the warm air becoming even more noticeable on his foreskin.

“Wait— Sto—” He tried cutting Levi off, his breathing becoming more labored, but the older man continued with his administrations, focusing entirely on that one spot, building energy that Eren immediately associated with his climaxing, but not quite—

His fingers couldn’t properly tear open the condom package, either, mainly because Levi wasn’t pausing his motions at all and wouldn’t do so anytime soon. Eren groaned, his hips rolling into Levi’s fingers—now a total of three—as he complained, “I’m trying to get this goddamn thing open, and you keep—”

Again, Eren made an embarrassing noise—something high-pitched for a male and out of the blue, causing even Levi to gape at him in surprise—his legs retracting as he came silently, breathing hard, his cum streaming across his stomach and the condom falling from his fingertips.

When his high faded away once more, he stared at the paneled ceiling above, thoughts lost in ejaculation as Levi grabbed a tissue from his desk and wiped down his chest for him.

Eren wanted to express gratitude, but unintelligible syllables fell from his lips instead once he realized, if Levi was a good top, he’d experience that sensation all over again.

Levi grabbed the abandoned condom, opening it in the short second it should have taken Eren and rolling it over his cock before grabbing the lube bottle again, this time applying a dab or two to his dick.

Eren stared from where he lied below Levi, who began stroking himself when he asked, “How would you like it done?”

Eren didn’t register the words right away, but when he did, he drawled out a lengthy “um,” finally raising an eyebrow at Levi. “I thought we already agreed I’d be on the bottom, but I mean…”

The older man rolled his eyes. “I meant position, Eren.”
There was more than one position for anal?

Levi must have known what he was thinking because he clarified with a dubious expression, as if speaking to someone with questionably lower intelligence, “Missionary? Doggy? Cowgirl—well, cowboy—”

*Unbelievable.* “I was expecting doggy style, honestly,” Eren interrupted, and Levi’s gaze requested further detail, so he added, “I thought that was the only way you could do anal?”

Levi tilted his head, squinting his eyes at Eren, almost like he was dealing with an idiot.

Eren didn’t know how to feel about that.

“I’m astounded by your ignorance, but whatever,” Levi sighed, grabbing Eren’s hips and leading him along to the doggy position with his knees on the mattress and his ass hanging in the air. “We’ll do it however you saw it done in the pornos you watched.”

Eren sputtered, indignant and slightly mortified at having been found out, until he felt Levi press against one of his butt cheeks, sliding his dick back and forth along the crack before finally pushing in the tip.

Eren gasped soundlessly, gripping at the sheets, expecting the pain he had always heard about associated with anal sex, but instead, feeling an odd tightness and awareness in his lower half that left his knees trembling on the mattress. Slowly, Levi pushed himself inside—still, with no pain in the receiving end’s hindquarters—and Eren wondered at the amount of lube he used, even which *brand*, because this was all happening much too smoothly.

Finally, Levi had gone as far as he could, his hips lightly tapping Eren’s ass bone.

He paused, probably to let Eren get used to the feeling, but really, the younger man was nearly bored *stiff* of waiting, wanting the good stuff to happen already. Simply having it in there wasn’t doing anything—and as of the moment, the current state of their union only left him feeling awkward with a dick in his ass that wasn’t doing anything.

“How are you feeling?”

“ Weird,” Eren admitted, gazing at the headboard of his bed, “but it’s not bad.”

*If only you’d do something about it,* he added bitterly.

“That’s good,” Levi said, his grip on Eren’s hips tightening as he slowly slid out of him—

—before ramming full-force back inside of him, making Eren gasp and lean forward.

His fingers immediately entangled themselves in the sheets when Levi pulled back, brushing across that one spot that did something fantastic to Eren’s dick, and Eren wanted to reach down and grab himself, touch all the spots he knew just to be right so he could cum right away, but when he loosened one arm’s stance to do so, he found himself tumbling into the mattress face first. Levi didn’t seem to notice, and even if he did, he wasn’t concerned, continuing his efforts of moving about inside of him at the pace of a snail, only occasionally brushing *that spot* and neglecting Eren’s cock entirely, where he most craved being touched at the moment.

“You’re so tight and warm,” Levi said, one hand coasting from Eren’s hip to his ribs, rubbing him sensually. Though Eren appreciated this gesture very much, it did not compare to the fact that Levi missed that spot again and *still* wasn’t touching his dick at all.
“You’re not getting it,” Eren finally informed him, disappointment coating his tone.

“Hm?”

He groaned, turning his head back to repeat, “You’re not—”

*Oh, this asswipe.*

Levi smirked, continuing at his achingly slow speed. “What is it? I’m not hitting your prostate enough?”

Oh—so that was the spot. Made sense now. Eren sighed before blurtling, “You’re too slow. You’re not hitting that spot you did earlier, and you’re not—”

Just like before, Levi slipped out of Eren, except this time, when he came back in, he repeated the process at a much faster speed, causing Eren to gasp and rock his hips. Every thrust of Levi’s cock in his ass sent his own swinging back and forth until Levi grabbed him tight, stroking him at the same speed with which he fucked him.

At this rate, Eren was going to lose it.

He never thought Levi would be the type to tease in the bedroom, but apparently, he was. And Eren had to say, the wait was damn worth it with the speed he used now, hitting that spot again—the prostate—his hips smacking into Eren’s ass quickly but lightly, making Eren’s legs shake with pleasure as he allowed himself to be pushed into the mattress, back curving at an angle he never even realized was possible until now. “You’re really good at this,” Eren confessed shamelessly, gasping when Levi brushed his prostate once more. “I’m glad I bottomed after all.”

Without warning, Levi slowed down his thrusts to rest his dick inside of Eren’s ass and his forehead on Eren’s back, exhaling noisily. Eren tried to turn around to see the reason for the halt—not really approving of the change of tempo at all, to be honest—but all he could see was Levi’s left ear, which shined a bright shade of red.

From embarrassment, arousal, or the sweltering heat of the summer, Eren couldn’t tell.

Then, just as suddenly as he stopped, Levi started again, slamming back into Eren, concentrating solely on his prostate whereas his hand went back to Eren’s dick, massaging the head furiously as Eren began his own thrusts, on the verge of falling apart as Levi slowly drove him to the edge, almost pushing him over the cliff and into the chasm.

Wasn’t this summer supposed to be full of women?

Instead, his ass was full of—

“Well then—” Hot breath hit his ear, lips pressing against the lobe, and Eren could feel Levi smirk as he continued in a murmur, “Maybe next time, I’ll let you fuck me instead.”

That shoved Eren into the abyss, making him ejaculate all over his stomach and the sheets. He collapsed on the bed, assuming that was the end of it, that Levi would climax soon enough.

But then Levi smirked and switched him to the missionary position, Eren’s back rubbing against his own cum on the bed. “Oh, we’re not done yet. The night’s still young.”

Eren couldn’t help it.
He whimpered.
Levi looked fucking awful in the mornings.

Drool piled from the side of his mouth and onto the pillow and newly washed bed sheets (Levi refused to leave Eren’s cum on them, and Eren didn’t blame him, given that Levi made Eren orgasm another time from his prostate before finally finishing himself). His mouth was upturned so that the entire top row of his front teeth showed. His bed hair resembled a Mohawk, its shape especially extraordinary since he took a shower before bed last night—

Who in the world was this man?

Eren sat up and stretched, a discomfort rising in his lower back as he did so. Though the idea pained him, he swung off the bed—smacking down to the floor in the process—and groaned, remembering again what happened last night. He used the nightstand as a makeshift cane, attempting to get back on both feet, and once his balance was regained, he bent to grab his underwear from the floor, his dick sensitive from the night before, making him hiss as he put back on his boxer briefs, the suddenly coarse fabric like a gentle form of sandpaper against his morning wood.

Eren wondered if that simile worked at all.

He stared at the sunlight streaming in through the curtains, his mind drawing a blank, the remnants of sleep still clinging onto the edges of his focus. Then he turned to Levi, admiring the fine piece of artwork before him with fantastic hair and beautiful night etiquette—Picasso?—and the red marks on his shoulder.

…red marks?

Curious, Eren pulled back the sheet—

“Holy shit!”

His unintended outburst caused Levi to stir, blinking his eyes open, then closed for a short moment, then open again once he realized Eren sat on the bed in front of him. “What?” he mumbled incoherently, eyes squinting, evidently sleepy.

As explanation for his exclamation, Eren flicked one scratch he left behind while they were in the missionary position.

Levi jerked awake, audibly grinding his teeth together as his eyes grew to the point of popping, his hand smacking the nightstand in what seemed to be a frantic search for his glasses. “Fuck, Eren, are you trying to ruin my back?”

At this rate, probably, given Levi’s back looked like a demon tried to claw its way out of Hell using Levi as a ladder.

The rest of the day, Eren massaged Levi’s back with the “healing cream” his mother kept in the bathroom cabinet, working to alleviate the aches settling into Levi’s skin. The older man grumbled and worked on his paper, and though Eren lost circulation in his arms over time, the eventual thud resulting from Levi falling asleep to the constant motions on his back left Eren smiling, thinking his work was worth it after all.
They reached a new level of intimacy, and the anxious spring nesting inside of Eren’s stomach ever since his mother’s phone call finally released, their crossed physical boundaries destroying the ones that Eren had teetered around for days on end.

Levi began drooling again, this time into the tatami mat he slept on.

Eren created a hickey on a scratch mark to wake him up, but Levi continued dreaming.

From that day on, sex became a norm in their relationship—ranging from random make-out sessions on the porch to spontaneous intercourse in the kitchen—as did other forms of physical intimacy, such as sharing Eren’s bed at night and always spending their leisure time together, even if in their own separate worlds.

As such was the standard of their relationship, there was one thing Eren quickly learned about his houseguest: Levi could talk dirty when it came to sex, and the moment it was over, he was as clean as Eren’s bedroom, which had been really fucking clean ever since Levi showed up.

The only thing that never changed was the constant reference to Eren’s shithole.

Whether they were fucking and Levi spoke of how tight Eren’s ass was or they were cleaning and Levi commented on Eren’s “constipated” expression, it always came back to shit when it was Levi speaking. Eren had no idea why the guy had such a fixation on excrements, but hey, who was he to judge? He dealt with Reiner for a roommate for so long that overly casual behavior toward disgusting topics no longer surprised him.

He occasionally wished it would, though.

No one deserved to be used to this shit. Ever.

(No pun intended.)

It was these small things, however—the shit talk, the constant cleaning, the accidental cuddling—that created the comfort between them. Made things less awkward, much easier. Not to say there weren’t awkward moments—Eren didn’t realize Levi would almost die upon discovering Eren’s habit of peeing off the porch and into his mother’s garden just like Levi didn’t realize that his habit of showering after fucking Eren made the younger man feel dirty and used—but they weren’t plentiful. Eren and Levi were used to each other, but they didn’t know each other, even with all of Eren’s random Q&A sessions, and within the space shrinking between their bodies, this knowledge distanced them from one another.

Eren didn’t know how to describe it. He didn’t like Levi like he would, say, Armin, but he liked the man the same way he came to like Reiner—through adaption, from being around him daily and without choice. Unlike Reiner, Levi came with physical benefits and a short limit—until the end of the summer, Eren told himself, and he fully believed it. Come autumn, Levi would be gone from his life, Eren gone from his.

It was never voiced, but it was their unwritten agreement.

And even with these unspoken words, with these casual comforts and touches, Eren wandered along the border separating them. Because although every wall felt crushed, every line crossed, it didn’t at the same time.

He wanted to know more, and he didn’t know why.
One day, Eren mentioned the lake an hour away to Levi and didn’t know his own reason why.

“When I was eight, my mom and I went to this lake for a few weeks in a row,” he began, his head resting on Levi’s lap and moving with every drop of his jaw against muscular thighs. Again, Eren wondered if Levi ever exercised outside of his morning jogs around the fields. “She wanted to teach me how to swim, and my dad was out of town for a trip, I think, and you know my dad—sucks the fun out of everything, so of course, moment he left, we jumped on the chance to do something outside of the house.”

He wondered why he mentioned this at all, then turned anxiously to Levi, awaiting a response.

Once the older man realized the purpose behind Eren’s extended silence, he muttered a simple “Oh?”

Feeling this to be more encouraging than discouraging, Eren continued. “I almost drowned the first time we went there ’cause I hit her when I was learning how to float, and she let go of me, and I started sinking. Think I practically locked myself in my room—my old room, not my room here—for a few days, but she talked me into going back and, after a week or two, I managed to get over it and learn how to swim properly.” He laughed lightly, his chest lifting from the wooden porch briefly. “Mom should’ve gotten a fucking medal back then for putting up with my shit so much.”

Levi smirked, and Eren’s breathing hitched, a smile ripping through his lips as he quickly resumed his description of his childhood. “One day, when I finally learned to float, we just lied there together on the water, side by side, and we stared at the sunset—not at the sun; fuck, that’d hurt—but we watched the sky go from blue to orange and purple before our skin pruned and Mom forced us to go back—”

“Eren,” Levi sighed, tired, almost amused, turning a page in his newspaper.

The Business section lightly brushed across Eren’s face in the process, making him wrinkle his nose. “Yeah?”

“Correct me if I’m wrong,” Levi drawled, attention seemingly directed to the words on paper, “but are you implying that you’d like for us to go to this lake sometime?”

Eren didn’t answer.

Levi finally glanced down at him, eyes expectant, and suddenly, he sputtered, “W-well, I mean, if you want— It was just a thought, real— You know, it was a stupid idea to begin—”

“Why not,” Levi said, putting down the paper to his side, and Eren felt exposed and unprepared for the entertained gaze that greeted him. “Nothing else going on, right?”

“Well—yeah—”

“Tomorrow,” Levi decided, hand brushing through Eren’s bangs, effectively shutting him up.

Though the hour-long trip consisted of Levi’s annoying humming habit and much dozing off on Eren’s part, when they finally arrived at the lake, the sunlight reflecting from the water like a camera’s flash in a mirror, Eren looked at Levi’s admiration for the scene and decided it was worth it to come here.

Even though the lake felt scorching hot in this weather, Eren dove right in after taking off his clothes, immediately regretting it when his body momentarily forgot how to swim and he ended up drowning for a few seconds, sputtering water before paddling ashore.
He coughed on the sandbank, Levi by his side, still dry in his swim trunks. “I thought swimming was one of those things you weren’t ever supposed to forget,” Levi wondered aloud over Eren’s gasps for air as he waddled into the water slowly, easing into the small change of elevation.

Eren glowered at him, then smirked, splashing him before immediately swimming away.

Levi went cross-eyed to stare at his now wet glasses. “Little shit,” he muttered under his breath, and Eren smiled cheekily back, which resulted in the older man chasing him, both of them only going so far as the jetty before turning back, Levi probably stroking with all of his might on purpose to knock more water Eren’s way.

When they finally reached the shore where they left off again, Eren was almost out of breath, Levi being much fitter than the student realized—Levi only panted a bit whereas Eren hovered along the border of Wheezing and Coughing. While Eren tried to breathe normally again, he decided to temporarily float, the water sliding under his body when he shifted himself parallel to the surface and allowed his ears to go under, hearing the lake and himself move in unison, the waves gliding with him as, past the jetty, boats and jet skis skimmed the water and created new ripples. Soon, his breathing evened, the calm of the lake bringing down the high from his race, and Eren retired from his floating.

The same moment Eren went back to standing in the water, Levi huffed and jumped, his back smacking into the water, instantly submerging himself before straightening out his stance, standing upright, and acting like he had never went underwater to begin with.

And Eren had seen the same thing before many times with Armin at public pools, over and over again over the years, to the point where he could not mistake this incident for anything else.

Eren stared at the wandering Levi in awe, feeling the sand and rocks slither between his toes. “You…don’t know how to float?”

Levi’s head jerked up as if he were being accused of a petty crime. “Of course I—” He paused, looking into Eren’s questioning eyes, then sighed. “No. Never figured it out.”

“It’s nothing to be embarrassed about,” Eren reassured him with a shrug.

Levi glared at him. “I’m not embarrassed by it,” he denied, and Eren didn’t believe him, but he let Levi keep up his tough front.

Swimming in a circle around the older man, who simply lingered, Eren offered, “I’ll teach you.”

Levi’s head snapped up, his attention abandoning the ripples on the water, his lips immediately twisting into a grimace. “No,” he flat-out refused, no reason provided.

Eren sighed, continuing his backstroke. “Why’re you so embarrassed?”

“Probably because I’m a man almost twice your age,” Levi snapped, walking towards the shore.

Eren pursued him, tugging on Levi’s swim trunks. “Just let me try to teach you,” he insisted, and the droll look he received in response egged him on. “It’s not hard at all, and I want to see the sky with you.”

Levi stared up, nodding in confirmation. “Yep. There’s a sky. We’re done here.”

“No,” Eren drawled out, glaring at the smartass standing before him, who had turned to walk back ashore. “You’re learning how to watch the sky like I did. C’mon.”
Levi groaned, but followed him back into the water, signaling Eren’s victory. They stopped when the level reached Levi’s shoulders and Eren’s pecs “Here,” Eren demanded, instructing, “Jump so that I can catch you.”

“Oh, how romantic,” Levi deadpanned, obeying orders anyway. Eren rolled eyes and briefly considered letting the man sink, but caught him as planned, deciding that piling on trust issues to their relationship was not a necessity on today’s schedule.

The moment he landed in Eren’s arms, Eren quickly realized why Levi wasn’t floating.

He wasn’t allowing himself to.

Rather than relaxing and levitating, letting himself become “one with the water” as Eren’s mom always said, he let his negative emotions drag him to the bottom of the lake, increasing his weight tenfold.

Despite this, Eren was determined to teach this anchor to float.

He brought him to the surface and rested his hands on Levi’s back, helping him to align with the top of the lake. He instructed Levi to put his ears underwater and his chin up, grabbing the man’s arms and stretching them above his head. He arched Levi’s back for him, even lifted his chest and stomach, finally telling Levi to bend his legs and let them dangle.

Still, the moment he let go of Levi’s body, the man sunk quicker and deeper than a Lifetime original movie.

Eren resisted the urge to laugh when Levi sputtered, shaking his head profusely, glaring at Eren as if it was all his fault. “You’re not relaxing enough,” Eren explained, reaching for Levi’s body again, but the older man dodged him, shaking his head. “Oh, c’mon—I know you can do it. If Armin learned to do it, so can you.”

Levi scoffed, shaking his head again like a child rejecting broccoli.

Against the older man’s protest, Eren grabbed him and shifted him to position again, following each of the steps his mother taught him, insisting this time around, before he let go of Levi’s body, “Now, think of the lake.”

“I’m on it,” Levi insisted, purposely trying to be a little shit, judging by his challenging stare.

Eren ignored him. “Feel the ripples. Don’t think of me—think of the sky above you, the lake below you, the—”

“Oh, yoga instructor; what now?”

Eren ignored him again, taking it a step further. “Just close your eyes and think of something that makes you perfectly content and pointless compared to the vast lake surrounding you right now.”

That seemed to do it because Levi suddenly furrowed his brows, only murmuring, “…oh.”

Eren let his hands linger underneath Levi for a few moments, staying silent, letting the other male think about whatever he wished under his closed eyelids. Then he stepped away slowly, watching as Levi floated on his own, and, as quietly as he could, joined him on the water.

He knew Levi could float—that he just wasn’t allowing himself to.
Up above, a cloud rolled by in the mostly clear sky. Underneath the surface, he could hear boats and their motors as they travelled by the end of the jetty further away, their ripples meeting his face and massaging his cheeks gently.

He smiled.

“Eren,” Levi said, his voice sounding bubbled through the water.

“Hm?”

“When are you gonna let go?”

Eren grinned wider. “I already did.”

Just like that, Levi promptly sank again.

Eren’s chest heaved with frustration.

Sometime later, after they had splashed and swam around and Eren finally taught Levi to float properly, they exited the water and went back to Levi’s car, removing the packed towels from the backseat and drying themselves off as quickly as possible. Eren kept an eye on Levi’s toned muscles—wanting to feel them, remembering the little opportunities he’d gotten during their fucks thus far to do so—until Levi sighed, turning to Eren, who then acted as if he had done nothing wrong.

“How do you feel about sex on the beach?”

Eren replied by kissing him.

And so they did it on the shore for the experience. Afterwards, Levi complained about sand in places it shouldn’t have been and how badly they would both need showers when they got home, so Eren figured it’d never happen again, but he still held hope for the situation since exhibitionism was more exciting than he originally expected.

After they had packed up and headed for the summer house, the sunset hit the windshield at an unavoidable angle, and Eren remembered his mother and the endless floating feeling under the violet evening sky, the light from the sleeping sun and stirring stars—he figured tomorrow, he would visit her grave. He drank in the air drifting in from the windows; Levi’s eyes seemed trained on the road, and Eren noticed the breeze quickly dried the damp bangs above them.

He wanted to ask if Levi had genuine fun outside of the sex, but then he wondered why he’d care about such a thing. Why he even brought up the lake to begin with. Had he wanted to share something special to him with Levi?

When he realized Levi sensed him staring, he leaned against the side of the car, feigning sleep.

Not a single word was spoken on the way back, but Eren thought it was better that way, given he wasn’t sure what to say nor was he certain he wanted to hear Levi’s reply.
Chapter 5

Eren never realized how lewd he could be until post-sex with Levi.

One example: They were out getting groceries a week later when Eren spontaneously suggested fellatio in the meat aisle.

Not giving fellatio in the meat aisle, but simply suggesting the idea of fellatio at a later time and place while they happened to be shopping in the meat aisle for that night’s curry dinner.

Levi’s face scrunched up, his face screaming disapproval at Eren’s open suggestion as he dropped a package of chicken breasts into the cart, gaze never leaving Eren’s face.

“What.”

Evidently, Levi wasn’t amused.

“I said,” Eren began, repeating himself as if Levi hadn’t heard him to begin with, “I should blow you later today.” Levi’s incredulous face drove him to explaining himself again, rambling, “You know, for practice, like, when we get back home or back to the car—”

“Car?” Levi echoed, and Eren realized his mistake.

He assumed Levi would give him grief for it; he assumed Levi would be the type uncomfortable with more-public-than-the-lake exhibitionism; he assumed Levi wasn’t cruel enough to actually—

“I’m looking forward to it,” Levi confessed, grabbing a bag of cucumbers and tossing them Eren’s way.

He just barely caught them in his fog of disbelief.

Well then.

He assumed wrong, it seemed.

Moments later, after they went through the checkout line and piled the groceries into the trunk of the car, Eren leaned over from the passenger seat to face Levi’s crotch, unzipping Levi’s pants to pull out his dick.

He’d never done this alone before, especially in a car.

Why was he the one to suggest it?

But they were just walking through the meat aisle, and Eren saw the sausages hanging from the ceiling, and it reminded him somehow of the previous night, when Levi had pounded into him feverishly and Eren had dragged his nails across Levi’s back, moaning and kicking the wall. And while they were walking past all these penis-shaped items in the store, Eren kept glancing at Levi’s crotch, confined by his usual slacks, wondering what his cock would feel like once more in his mouth, surrounded by his tongue and poking into his cheek.

And now, that dick was before him again, only slightly erect from the suggestion of oral, and Eren realized he could not remember for the life of him how to do this, like it was some sort of art form or language he had to study repeatedly so that he never lost the knowledge. Why can’t it just be pure muscle memory? he wondered bemusedly.
Eren stared at Levi’s length, and an anxiety overcame him and he was suddenly conscious that they were in the car, about to something dirty, and Eren was no longer under Levi’s guidance.

Reiner once talked about how wonderful his first blowjob felt. How his girlfriend at the time didn’t know what she was doing, but how her nervousness and eagerness to please only intensified it.

Would it be the same for Levi?

Levi had already experienced a blowjob from him. Eren wasn’t new to this, and yet, he felt like a newbie all over again, the break between their first time having sex and this time being so wide that he was sure he forgot everything there was to pleasuring Levi.

And then Eren remembered when Reiner had practically kicked down their room’s door after having his first blowjob by a man, saying that a man knew what he was doing down there much better than a woman ever would.

He hoped to god Reiner was right.

He moved to put his mouth over Levi’s dick’s head, then paused, his breath fanning it instead. It wasn’t so much that he worried that he forgot how to suck dick—rather, it was the fact that he forgot how to suck Levi’s dick, and he didn’t want to fuck up and get disowned as a sex partner since Levi was good in bed—stupidly good. Eren didn’t need to be experienced to know that fact, either, considering Levi gave Eren two orgasms from his prostate alone before reaching his own climax.

Levi was ridiculously good to the point where it was like Eren’s life was some sort of smutty fanfiction, and honestly, he was hoping he could be of the same quality.

He supposed he could never achieve the same quality if he didn’t try, though.

Without another thought, Eren reached for Levi’s dick, encircling his fingers around its rousing heat before closing his eyes, trying to steady his breathing as he slowly pumped the older man. As expected, the member grew harder, more rigid, and Eren’s own penis stiffened again at the memory of this being inside of him, messing him up both in his mouth and backside. But when Eren opened his eyes again, Levi was merely staring down at him expectantly.

Oh, right—he did say blowjob, not handjob, didn’t he?

Eren gulped.

And as Levi stared at his throat, Eren remembered the first time he gave Levi a blowjob and now wondered if his Adam’s apple was actually that prominent when he swallowed air.

Taking the first step, he opened his mouth—

—and swept his tongue against Levi’s head timidly.

Levi kept staring expectantly.

Eren stared back just the same.

Crickets chirped.

In the silence, Eren was certain his dignity died.

Finally, he must’ve looked beyond lost, unwilling, or self-conscious because Levi sighed—
exasperated or impatient, Eren couldn’t tell—and asked outright, “Eren, do you gag easily?”

“No—well, depends,” Eren answered, eyebrows furrowing. “Wh—”

Suddenly, he felt the head of Levi’s dick hit the roof of his mouth, brushing across a ticklish spot that made him gasp and take the cock deeper down his throat, effectively cutting off whatever question was on the tip of his tongue.

“Good,” the other man interrupted, tightening his hold on Eren’s hair, concluding with a cool expression that turned Eren’s cheeks furious and puffed as he choked around the penis lodged inside of him, “because I’m going to fuck your mouth.”

The back of Eren’s throat hurt now.

In the middle of the drive back to the Jaeger household, Eren suddenly spoke up, turning to Levi with tight lips and a casual glower. “I want ice cream,” he said.

“What about no,” Levi replied. “We’re not stopping for ice cream. What are you, five?”

At this rate, probably. “I just want some ice cream,” Eren whined, purposely batting his eyelashes in what he assumed to be an attractive manner, “to soothe the salty burn in my throat.”

“Bullshit you do,” Levi rejected him again, never once reacting to Eren’s implication, turning left and proceeding out of town.

Eren stared at him and stared at him—and stared at him—still staring at him—

Levi ignored him, unfazed.

Son of a bitch.

“Ice cream please,” he tried again.

“Why,” Levi demanded, and his tone didn’t even imply it was a question—just verbally expressed annoyance.

“Because,” Eren argued back, and Levi finally paid him proper attention, cut him a short glare, and fuck, Eren liked the way he glared. Made him want to push some more buttons, see what Levi’s reaction would be and if that reaction would result in Eren bent over the coffee table and breathlessly violated when they got home—

But that wasn’t his mission right now.

Right now, his goal was ice cream.

The sex could come later.

He could cum later.

“You do realize,” Levi began, turning a left towards the local ice cream joint, “that the whole reason I decided to ruin your mouth was because we have frozen goods in the back that I prefer not melting in this heat, and you were taking an awfully long time for something that could’ve been done in one minute.”

Eren actually didn’t realize that at all, but he was stubborn and refused to give in to Levi’s logic.
“And you do realize—”

“I know you’re going to make some dumb argument,” Levi cut him off, pulling into the parking lot and getting out his wallet, “so I’ll just stop you now to save us time. Just go and order your damn ice cream.”

Eren happily obeyed those orders, taking the ten dollar bill from Levi and going up to the outside counter to request a double chocolate cone and a cherry popsicle. When he came back to the car holding both, Levi glowered at him, but Eren only smirked, feeling oddly proud of himself for being able to get on the man’s nerves so well today.

He reentered the vehicle, licking his cone and extending the popsicle for Levi to unwrap and devour, but the older man only shifted gears and drove out of the parking lot, back to the house, apparently no longer in the mood for Eren’s bullshit.

“Better drive fast before your popsicle melts,” Eren taunted, whacking Levi’s exposed arm with the plastic.

Levi only glared at the road. “Why should I care if it melts? It’s going to end up all over your arm, not mine. And I didn’t want anything to eat, anyway.”

Well.

That was a very good point.

“Better drive fast before it melts all over my arm,” Eren tried again, singsong tone more desperate this time.

Levi sighed, his lips twitching, trying to refrain from smiling, and Eren felt proud that he started getting another reaction outside of annoyance, though Levi’s irritated expression was just as welcomed. “Are you sure you’re nineteen?”

“Certain my body is,” Eren assured him, licking his cone, “but my mind might be twelve.”

Levi chuckled.

It was a welcomed sound.

When they got home, Levi’s popsicle had already melted partially on Eren’s arm, and the older man cursed, running to the trunk after he parked the car to check on the frozen goods. He rushed the grocery bags inside while Eren struggled with opening the passenger side door, both hands being preoccupied with ice cream, forcing him to kick off a sandal and try pulling the handle with his foot.

When Levi returned to the trunk to grab the second load of groceries, he passed by the passenger’s side, stopping to stare specifically at the way Eren’s foot was rubbing all over the car door. He then threw open the door, catching Eren by surprise when he muttered something about the disgusting nature of feet.

Eren only slipped his foot back into his sandal and walked back to the house, using his hip to close the door, earning a disapproving click of the tongue from Levi, who carried in the last of the groceries to the house.

Eren decided to take a seat on the porch, his ice cream taking priority as Levi unpacked the groceries by himself. He expected that when he finished with his cone, he would have to eat Levi’s
popsicle for him, but then the man took a seat beside him some moments later, ripping the popsicle from Eren’s hand and opening the plastic.

He immediately began to deep-throat it, taking it into his entire mouth, then upon removing it, licking the drops that gathered the bottom, though he didn’t seem happy about it.

Eren stared for a bit too long, his own ice cream beginning to drip onto his pants before he forced himself to look away, towards the sky above, which didn’t have a single cloud in sight. No storms tonight.

They silently licked away at their respective cold foods until Levi had another sudden burst of energy, running back into the living room for a short moment to scribble something down on his notepad. Another moment of inspiration for his research paper, Eren noted when the man came back, licking the popsicle vigorously again to get rid of the dripping cherry liquid that built up from him abandoning it for a few seconds.

Levi felt so passionately about economics.

Eren wondered why he couldn’t be the same way.

“I’m majoring in economics, but I don’t even like economics,” he declared at random, the chocolate melting from the top of his cone and trailing to his fingers, into his palm, but he didn’t care. He preferred to continue speaking because it felt good to finally say it, to share the thoughts that had been buzzing around his mind for months now. “But I feel like changing my mind would be a shitty thing to do.”

Eren noticed the sunlight sneaking in through the tree leaves above, and Levi followed his gaze. “I didn’t like econ, either,” he admitted.

Eren almost dropped his ice cream in surprise; Levi did not seem to give two shits. “But you’re an econ professor?” No response. Eren could only imagine the sarcastic responses building up in Levi’s mind, so he tried again: “Why you’d study econ then?”

“My father,” Levi said simply.

His father? Mikasa’s paternal grandfather?

Eren’s furrowed brows must have spoken for his confusion because Levi sighed, preparing himself for an explanation. “I was adopted, you know. Felt grateful to the old man for taking me in when no one else would, so when he saw I was good with numbers and fiscal policy, he suggested I go into accounting or economics. Never forced me, but I wanted to make him proud. Went into econ, realized right off the bat that I hated it, but I was stubborn and stuck with it.”

That…sounded like himself.

Like Eren.

Eren stared into the depths of his cone, suddenly feeling very strange about this whole situation, but Levi continued on, oblivious to his listener’s thoughts.

“Went to grad school, got my master’s, was an idiot and got my doctorate’s, and now I’m working on finishing some research.” Levi shrugged, eyes still trained on the fields beyond the trees. “He expected an award-winning economist, but I’m surprised I even decided to teach, really.”

Eren had never heard Levi talk this intimately before about himself, recalling the way his questions
bounced off of him like rubber. Curiosity gripped him, and some of his cone’s remnants cascaded down his arm, drawing his attention and forcing him to continue licking. “What else would you have done?” he wondered, trying to make it sound as casual as possible as he licked a large portion of his ice cream off the cone.

Levi either didn’t believe him or didn’t care. He only bit a chunk off of his popsicle, gaze still trained away from his younger companion. “Acrobat.”

Eren choked on his ice cream, getting a glare in return. “Sorry,” he coughed. “You just don’t… Acrobat?”

“It seemed cool at the time,” Levi defended in a mutter, shoving the rest of the popsicle back in his mouth before popping it back out. “Anyway, my point is that eventually, you push aside your dreams—or just idealized expectations for what you deserve. You settle for the reality you’re given. And you know what? Reality’s not half-bad.” He shrugged. “It’s all about perspective, honestly.”

Eren thought about how Levi mentioned his work circumstances sometime ago—that they didn’t want to tenure him, so he was given two options: to transfer to another college but give his current research to the university or to keep his research, but have trouble finding a job elsewhere. Levi had resigned himself to the circumstances and decided to part with the work he had been slaving over for years, now consuming his free time this summer. Eren wanted to admire him for his resolve and handle on reality, but he supposed Levi didn’t have much of a choice in the long run. Should Eren have been put in that situation, he was certain he could not remain calm. And when he thought about it, the misfortune was a reason why Levi was available to house-sit this summer.

Overall, Eren concluded the “adult world” was too complicated. College wasn’t much better, though, when he was studying things he didn’t like. Revolving the cone in his hand, Eren blurted, it being the first thought that came to mind, “I like history.”

Levi’s brows rose. “Do you?”

Eren nodded. “Not sure what I’d do with it, but my econ history class is the only thing I put any effort into last year. It’s interesting.” He turned to Levi. “You should do something you like, you know.”

Levi sighed. “I’m dealing with the hand I’ve been dealt,” he said, the words resigned but the voice unbothered. Embracing his circumstances. “I’ve lost that opportunity. You, though? You’re just at the right age to change your plans. You should take advantage of it. Change majors or something.”

Eren stared, chewing over the idea, but not necessarily going anywhere with it as he focused on finishing his ice cream cone instead. Meanwhile, Levi continued licking his popsicle, a drop of cherry liquid dribbling from the corner of his lips.

Eren didn’t know what to say, so after staring at the leaking juice, he kissed it from where it slid down to on Levi’s chin, licking it off of his own lips, staring the stunned Levi straight in the eye.

A short silence passed.

Now, Eren’s eyes trained on the stick lingering, frozen, on Levi’s tongue.

Then he insisted, “I want a retry.”

“Retry?” Levi shot him a look as he finished his popsicle, dragging the entirety of it into his mouth, now only a red-stained, wooden stick.
Red—just like Levi’s lips and the insides of his mouth.

“Redo,” Eren clarified, giving the older man a pointed look as if saying do you really speak English, sir? “Retake. Do over. Mulligan—”

“I know what a retry is,” Levi interrupted, glaring at Eren. “I’m asking what you’re wanting to retry.”

After setting down his emptied cone on the porch, Eren unzipped Levi’s slacks without permission.

“Whoa, wait a— I don’t mind, but you should brush your teeth at least,” he recommended as Eren tugged his boxer briefs down far enough for his dick to spring out. Without heeding the advice, Eren twisted his tongue around the tip and took Levi’s cock whole, bobbing his head and letting it hit the roof of his mouth, then allowing it to ease into the back of his throat.

The sharp breath that escaped Levi was gratifying in a way Eren couldn’t describe, only encouraging him to continue his tactics and elicit more reactions from Levi, some noises he’d never heard before.

He wanted Levi to meet the clouds in the same way he made Levi float in water.

When he felt his tongue had wrapped around it enough times, after he had sucked it for a few moments, he released the penis with a wet plop, and Levi hissed as his now saliva-covered dick hit the hot air, leaving Eren’s just as warm mouth.

“You were saying?” Eren said, suddenly feeling very in control of the situation, and Levi glowered. He was about to say something, but then Eren continued, his tongue brushing along the underside of Levi’s cock, licking the curve of the head—

—and judging by Levi’s sharp intake of breath, rediscovering the shorter man’s sensitive spot.

Eren silently cheered as he eased Levi’s dick further down his throat, pulling it out to continue paying attention to the curve of the head on the bottom, hearing as Levi’s breathing became more labored, his hand shooting out to weave his fingers in Eren’s hair, pushing back his bangs. His feverish gaze met Eren’s own, and the younger man shivered the moment Levi’s dick twitched in his mouth, his tongue flicking against the head even when Levi told him he was close—trying to prevent another “clean up on the bedroom aisle” incident.

Eren challenged it—taking the hot cock further into his mouth, Levi’s precum thick and coating the back of his tongue until Levi climaxed, his cum hitting Eren’s throat. Eren expected it this time, though, so he made sure to keep his head still, swallowing each spurt until Levi went flaccid in his mouth. Eyes trailing from Levi’s thigh to his face, Eren then licked the head of his cock clean, his own expression shameless whereas Levi’s looked satisfied and breathless.

When Eren finally moved away, pulling up the other man’s underwear and zipping his pants, he sat up straight, taking a risk and leaning to rest his head on Levi’s shoulder. “We got ice cream because it was apparently hot,” Levi noted casually, turning an eye to Eren, whose heartbeat thudded in his temple as he tried to pretend he didn’t notice Levi’s curious gaze.

He just wanted to do this.

It felt right.

He didn’t necessarily want to explain his actions.
He rubbed his cheek across Levi’s shoulder, dragging the shirt with his face, and Levi stated the obvious. “Your face is sticky.”

From sweat, ice cream, or Levi’s leftover cum, Eren didn’t know his insinuation. He assumed it had more to do with how warm it felt, lying on the older man’s shoulder like this, and how it only added to the endless heat of the summer.

“Yeah,” Eren decided to simply, quietly agree, munching on the remains of his waffle cone that had been briefly abandoned on the porch.

Silence passed again.

Levi’s comment tempted Eren to feel his cheek and discover what residue caused the stickiness, but then, with the heat from the sun, the warmth from Eren’s body, and the complete lack of a relieving breeze, Eren assumed Levi broke because he began speaking of his own will.

“I don’t even like cherry,” he finally admitted, referring to his popsicle, “and your mouth is disgusting”—referring to Eren’s blowjob—“but I don’t want us to brush our teeth right now.”

Eren didn’t understand his comment, but felt too comfortable to question it. Only continued resting his head on Levi’s shoulder, admiring the tunes of the cicada.

Taking another risk, his hand moved closer to Levi’s, which moved away the moment one finger brushed his skin.

Eren tried not to think much of it.
Chapter 6

When it came to the meals, Levi cooked them all, from breakfast to dinner and the occasional midnight snack, when both he and Eren lay awake in the living room, writing or reading their respective media. Simply put, Eren never had to cook—his mother was a champ and never felt like teaching him how to whip up even a grilled cheese sandwich—and Levi always assumed the role, never once directing Eren like he usually did.

But one day, Eren smelled something warm and memorable from the kitchen while he played Xbox in the living room. He knew that Levi was cooking; the man had complained about how hungry he was the entire time they had been at the lake that morning, so the moment they came home, he disappeared into the recesses of the kitchen instead of showering—that was how hungry he was. What Levi was cooking, Eren didn’t know, and so he paused his first-person shooter and walked across the hall and onto the tiled floor of the kitchen, quietly sneaking towards Levi’s back and snaking his arms around his apron-adorned chest in a quick, fluid gesture.

As always, Levi was unaffected, somehow hearing Eren approaching as always. Eren clicked his tongue when Levi swatted him away, continuing to stir a thick, brown sauce over the stove.

Eren leaned against the counter, intently watching Levi work. “What’re you making?”

“Caramel pie,” he answered simply.

Ah—that was why the smell felt familiar. Affectionate. His stepmother often made caramel pie for their parties and holidays. This aroma reminded Eren of happier familial times.

At Eren’s intense staring, Levi grabbed a spoon, scooped a bit, and held it out for the younger man to try. Eren used his finger instead of licking it off the silverware, but when it met his tongue—“Tastes like my mom’s,” Eren mused with surprise, sucking the rest off of his finger in front of Levi, who pointedly ignored the gesture.

The other man set aside the pan once the sugar fully caramelized, pouring it all into a creamy mixture in another bowl, before informing Eren, “Because it is.”

Eren blinked, paying his full attention to his companion. “You know my mom’s recipe?”

“Oh course,” Levi said, shooting the younger man a questioning look from under his brows. “I’m the one who gave it to her.”

Eren stared.


Eren was torn between eternal shock and amusement. “It’s nothing,” he decided to say instead.


Eren had been eating his meals for quite some time, and yet, upon learning that Levi had made his own recipes, he found it cute. Stupidly cute.

It wasn’t even cute.

*What is wrong with me?*
“I’m surprised you’re making pie, of all things,” Eren admitted, thinking of how hungry the older man was earlier and how long he’d been cooking, just now finally putting the cream-caramel mixture onto the pie crust, finishing the dish.

Levi glared, brushing off Eren’s comment with “I was craving it.”

On cue, the older man’s stomach rumbled.

Then they ate in silence at the table, Levi digging in with an intensity Eren had never seen before whereas Eren ate his pie slice at a normal speed, steadily, slowly. “I really need a shower,” Levi said the moment he finished his half of the pie, pushing his plate away for a brief moment, then staring at Eren’s pathetic excuse of a second slice and glancing at the remains of the rest of the pie.

Oh, god.

“Just eat the rest,” Eren told him, shaking his head, and Levi didn’t need to be told twice, swiftly scurrying to the counter to retrieve more of the dessert.

Eren huffed a laugh before realizing he would’ve never seen this side of Levi, never have taken the man for a sweet tooth if they hadn’t spent all of their time together this summer. Eren’s rash decision to visit his parents—Levi’s decision to transfer universities—his parents’ decision to vacation abroad—

He wondered how things would have changed had none of these decisions been made.

Eren washed the dishes as Levi did last-minute cleaning around the house, the afternoon having escaped him due to their time spent at the lake and his making a pie. The evening sky settled through the window above the sink now, and Eren dried off all of the dishes as the sun hit the horizon, turning off the sink and almost walking away until Levi came up next to him, still wearing his cooking apron and now cleaning gloves. “Eren, turn off the sink all the way,” Levi sighed, referring to the droplets still falling from the tap. He muttered something about being wasteful, and as Eren followed orders, he bit his lip to refrain from commenting on how cute the older man was being, instead spewing out,

“If you really want to save water, we should bathe together.”

Eren never knew he could be this forthright and seductive before.

What was wrong with him?

Still, he stood precariously on the precipice of his comment, waiting, almost wishing it’d follow through. No matter how embarrassing the prospect felt, the adrenaline reached higher limits, sending his heart racing.

What if Levi said no?

What if Levi said yes?

Levi dried his hands and removed his apron. Focusing on folding it, his eyes never meeting Eren’s, he simply murmured, “I’ll clean up here if you go get the bath started.”

Eren hurried so quickly up the stairs that he tripped and stumbled two times.

He’d never expected Levi to agree to his ridiculous notions, but as always, Levi left him guessing as to whether he’d put up resistance or follow Eren’s strange whims.
Eren found out that he’d even been surprising himself lately.

A few minutes after Eren had undressed himself and plopped into the full tub of water and suds, Levi walked into the bathroom, only wearing his underwear, which immediately fell to the floor the moment the door behind him closed. He settled in across from Eren, near the drain, and they didn’t speak a word, only scrubbing themselves with their soap bars before meeting each other halfway as Eren rubbed Levi’s ribs and Levi instantly reached for the younger man’s lower half. After one stroke, Eren caught the message and returned the favor, and soon, Eren rested on Levi’s lap, his position secured by the older man’s hands as he thrust his length against Levi’s. Eren gasped and panted as Levi worked his way against him, wrapping his hand around his and Eren’s cocks, and Eren tried to match his pace despite Levi’s left hand holding him down.

Eren climaxed with a loud sigh, cumming into the water, and Levi kept going, riding against Eren’s sensitive dick before reaching his own orgasm—

Then, a few moments after their high, the older man cursed and searched through the depths of the bubbly bathtub.

“What’s wrong?” Eren asked, his hair not even wet yet.

“The water’s all soiled,” Levi muttered, throwing a bar of soap from the bottom of the tub to the unsuspecting Eren, off of whose forehead the block bounced. “We didn’t even clean ourselves first. Fucking—”

Despite the stream of curses leaving the man’s mouth, the pure ferocity covering his face over the fact they hadn’t cleaned yet, Eren thought, How cute.

That moment, he probably should’ve realized he was too far gone.

A half hour later, Eren lied on the porch, the evening having drifted into sleep, leaving only the night sky with its eternal stars behind. The moon was somewhere out there, too, but hidden by the roof above him, leaving only trees and constellations visible to him and Levi, who was drying his hair properly with a towel, unlike Eren, who rarely bothered. The water droplets wove down his face slowly, leaving chilling trails in the comfortable warmth of midnight. As one drop slid around his eye and he followed it, his stare then turned to Levi, who stared at the sky with an expression Eren couldn’t identify, but recognized every time they came out here at night, to lie on the porch and talk.

He wanted to ask. He’d been wondering for awhile.

“When’d you know?”

Pausing the towel in his wild hair, Levi blinked and turned to Eren as well, as if to ask what he meant, but maybe his face gave it away because Levi held his gaze confidently and shared, “A long time ago.”

Ah.

Eren looked back to the stars, unsure of where to go from there, but then Levi lied down beside him, surprising him, also focusing on the faraway suns.

He also seemed to follow Eren’s train of thought.

“It was when I was twelve, I think,” he said, and though they never turned to meet each other’s gazes, their biceps were so warm and close to the touch that Eren didn’t think there was really a
point to it. This was comfortable.

They were comfortable.

“It was fairly easy, realizing I didn’t like girls,” Levi continued, “finding them sexually repulsive. There was never a question to it—just build up. College helped, too. Lots of people wanting to experiment and be themselves, so I’ve never lacked anyone.”

Eren imagined always having someone to be interested in, always having someone interested in him, always being so sure of who he was and what he wanted. It sounded nice, but at the same time, this felt nicer.

Being with Levi, biceps almost touching, voices ghosting in the starlight, was so nice.

It wasn’t college-level nice, where he could deal with it, but always wished for more. Always wished for home. And it definitely wasn’t home-level nice, where he enjoyed his family and the calm, but always was cautious of his actions. Always worried of the next wrong move.

Being with Levi in this exact moment, in this exact way, was the nicest he ever felt.

“I never thought of men until I met you.”

Eren stiffened and wanted to slap himself the moment those words were uttered.

He didn’t mean to blurt that out. *Shit.* What if Levi thought something awful? Though, admittedly, he really should have. Eren never began any of this with pure intentions, but then again, he supposed Levi hadn’t, either.

He didn’t even know how Levi was supposed to interpret his words.

What was the point of speaking them at all, honestly?

He stiffened, but Levi hadn’t. He glanced to his side in order to inspect the older man’s reaction, but Levi was far away from him, in the stars and night sky, eyes reflecting their lights, and Eren stared longer than he needed to, but it was long enough for him to realize Levi had smiled.

The back of their hands brushed once more.

Levi didn’t speak another word.

Neither did Eren.

Often times, they didn’t need to speak. Even though they didn’t understand the specifics, the feeling hovered in the air, explaining just enough to get by without words.

Other times, the curiosity ate away at Eren’s skin until he scratched and itched to speak up.

That day, the heat drove them to the lake, where they soaked and floated until Levi deemed his fingers too pruned. Swimming shore, Levi’s strokes caused gentle ripples that met Eren’s chest as he slowly drifted toward the twig nestled and dirt beach. “I need a shower when I get home,” Levi observed, tugging at his swim trunks with disdain.

Eren paid special mind to the action, walking ashore to stand beside Levi, intently watching and tugging the swim trunks as well without saying another word.
They had already fucked enough times to catch the other’s proposals for sex, so from just this simple gesture, Levi’s dick stood up, and Eren got on his knees, pulling down the trunks with him before he took Levi’s cock into his mouth, tongue brushing along the underside of his penis, Eren’s hands abandoning the trunks to coast over Levi’s thighs, eventually reaching and massaging his balls. Already, they tightened under his touch, and Eren bobbed his head as his tongue stroked the end of Levi’s dick, licking the head like Levi liked it before flicking against his hole.

He loved how hesitant he was to give his first blowjob to Levi, and now, he handed out his mouth like it was nothing. He loved how Levi knew from Eren simply tugging on his pants that Eren wanted to blow him.

Eren loved that about their developing relationship.


Bluntly phrased, but Eren didn’t mind.

Levi pulled himself out of Eren’s mouth, eyeing the string of saliva between the younger male’s lips and his own dick heatedly. Then he temporarily pulled up his pants to walk back to his car, where he got out a towel from the back then rummaged in the passenger side compartment—

Eren almost laughed. “Are you shit— Lube and condoms in the car? Really?”

“I never know with you,” Levi defended as he walked back, and with his recent habits, Eren supposed this was a good excuse, given that, when they were last at the lake, the furthest they could go was giving each other a handjob.

But still—the fact Levi considered it at all…

Eren didn’t know why he was happy.

Levi spread out the towel on the lakeshore, and Eren lied down, spreading his legs and lifting his ass into the air for Levi to finger him. He felt like missionary today, mainly because he liked leaving marks—mainly bruises of hickeys of kisses or scratches or bites—and missionary was great for leaving marks.

He wanted Levi to leave more marks all over him.

He wanted to do the same to Levi.

Lubing two of his fingers, Levi slid his digits right into Eren, commenting as Eren bucked his hips, “I think we’ve been doing it so often, all we really need is a bit of spit and we’re good to go.”

Eren stared at him, semi-curious, semi-horrified.

Levi rolled his eyes. “I was mostly kidding.”

“Mostly?” Eren echoed, raising one brow.

“Well, we could,” Levi clarified, his hooked fingers digging into Eren’s prostate and making him gasp, “but we’re already using lube. Might as well stay with it.”

Eren nodded, rolling his hips into Levi’s hand, and Levi nudged his thumb over the younger male’s ball sack. His dick felt heavier and hotter than ever, and Levi wasn’t at it for much longer before
Eren insisted, “Just fuck—”

Levi cut him off with a kiss, sucking in his lower lip before biting it softly as he inserted himself inside, already knowing the rest of Eren’s sentence. Eren drew in a breath as Levi filled him to the hilt, his nails already beginning to sink into Levi’s back, birthing scratches there.

They moved in unison with one another until they came, and instead of going for round two, they agreed it was probably time to head home, bathe, and eat lunch.

After lunch, they rested in the kitchen—the only tiled floor on the first floor—where Eren lounged in his swim trunks near a plug-in fan and Levi leaned against the counter near the sliding door, hoping for some chance of a breeze to come from outside. As he relished the feeling of cold air through his air and across his face, a warm cup of tea in his hands, Eren admired the shining sheen of sweat across Levi’s slim body.

While he lost himself on Levi’s skin, his phone buzzed. Before Levi could turn and notice Eren staring at him, Eren devoted every ounce of his attention to his phone, heart exploding in his throat when he read his mother’s name and a photo of a café with a brief, attached message:

*Authentic Italian food, Eren. Much better.*

He could feel Levi’s eyes on him, prodding but not pushing; he avoided meeting his gaze when he answered both the text and the other man’s silent question. “My parents.”

Levi paused, then nodded, thoughts trained out the window.

Often times, words weren’t needed between them.

That day, however, Eren drowned in his musings and desired to hear them spill like tea from Levi’s mouth. Eren’s parents may have been in Italy, but he was home, French kissing the houseguest they didn’t approve of, and it nagged at his conscience until—

“Do you ever think about what we’re doing?”

Levi stopped drinking from his cup. “Always,” he confessed, setting his beverage down on the counter. “Don’t you?”

Eren blinked. “Yes.”

“I’m aware of what we’re doing,” Levi clarified, “but it’s so natural that I don’t stop myself. I don’t see the point in holding back as long as we’re discreet about it. And you?”

Eren thought over his response before nodding. “It’s natural, I just—I feel guilty sometimes. About what we’re doing.”

Levi hummed in agreement, picking up his cup again in that weird way to take another sip. “That’s natural, too, though. Guilt.”

“Yeah. I know.”

Levi smiled, and Eren melted in the summer heat. The older man walked over to the kettle, grabbing it and heading over to the sink to fill it with more water. “Hey, want tea?”

His companion shook his head as Levi set the kettle back on the burner. “Nah, I’m good.”

“Sure?”
Eren paused, looking into the eyes of the man who’d been dick-deep inside of him minutes before, and decided, *fuck it*—not literally. “Make it iced,” he finally said.

The edge of Levi’s mouth twitched, but he clicked his tongue as he got out a cup from the cabinet for Eren. “That’s barbaric,” he criticized, but still reached into the ice box in the freezer to grab a few cubes for Eren’s drink.

And this was why he liked Levi, Eren thought.

He slid his arms around Levi’s waist, and the man saw it coming like he always did. Eren pressed his lips against the top of Levi’s hair because it was the impulse which came to him. It was natural. This was natural.

They were natural together.
A week before Eren’s parents were supposed to return, Levi felt especially horny, kissing and touching Eren every chance he got.

Although Eren was happy, it made him uncomfortable at the same time.

What were Levi’s intentions? Whenever had he wanted so much from Eren? His thoughts raced as Levi hugged him from behind while he played Xbox, the older man’s cheek brushing his ear, his lips sucking in the skin on Eren’s neck.

Earlier, Levi had massaged his shoulders and back while Eren attempted to cook their lunch, using a recipe Levi had taught him a few days ago, and then Levi attempted to make out with him once the food was done, but Eren’s mother called to check up on them for “the last time.” Sometime after that, when Eren began reading a new erotic novel from his stepmother’s shelf—really, the plots and sex scenes got more ridiculous the more he read them—and Levi was supposed to be finishing up his research, Levi snuck up behind him, reading random lines aloud during the heroine’s “losing my virginity in the heat of the moment” chapter. Then another phone rang, this time Levi’s—his phone company calling to talk about him changing his number to avoid spam or something; Eren didn’t remember. Then later on, when Levi watered the garden, Eren came up behind him—sensing the mood Levi was in—but he must’ve sniffed Eren because he backed away a few seconds later, complaining about how he reeked of sweat and needed a shower—a good shower, not an impromptu one with the hose.

Eren had no idea how horny and desperate Levi was the entire day until that night, when he pushed Eren down in front of the TV after his shower, the video games forgotten, and attacked his mouth.

Levi was desperate, and Eren viewed it as cute in such a weird way.

He bit and sucked Levi’s lips right back before plunging his tongue inside Levi’s mouth, brushing it against the top like Levi liked it. His hands dragged along the shorter man’s sides, feeling the muscles there, which tensed and relaxed under his touch. Levi’s own palms pressed against Eren’s chest from where he hovered over him, erection already prominent in his boxer briefs as he rubbed himself against Eren.

“Eren,” Levi whispered against his lips, their cheeks brushing as he moved his tongue to Eren’s ear, sucking the lobe. Eren always felt Levi was seductive, but tonight felt different.

Levi felt different.

Eren hummed, suckling on Levi’s lower jaw, hoping it would leave a visible mark there the next day. He couldn’t explain the feeling of wanting to bruise Levi in obvious places, but the desire filled every empty cavern in his chest. “Levi,” he whispered back.

Automatically, Levi rolled his hips into his, his ass grinding against Eren’s erection, and all of a sudden, Eren realized Levi was on top of him in a bottoming position even though that never happened—

All thoughts froze when Levi nibbled on Eren’s lobe again, pressing his lips against Eren’s ear in a kiss and whispering,

“I want you inside of me.”
Eren froze for a moment, Levi’s lips still trailing along his ear and neck sensually, and with the thought of the lube is in the bedside cabinet, it’s—

His head promptly whacked into Levi’s.

“FUCK, Eren!” Levi hissed, and though Eren felt that same pain, he evidently had his priorities not-so-straight and raced upstairs to his darkened bedroom, to the nightstand, where he turned on the lamp to pull out a bottle of lube and a condom.

He turned around to jog back downstairs only to face Levi, who glared at him, holding the side of his head as he sat down on the bed, muttering, “Fucking hell…”

“Really?” Eren asked, adrenaline on high.

Still, without waiting for a reply from Levi, as fast as he could, he started opening the condom, not considering even once that his accidental head butt could’ve ruined the mood.

“Whoa, Eren—” Levi shook his head, putting up a hand to halt the rapidly approaching younger man, who stopped halfway while opening the condom package. “What happened to the preparation part of it?”

Ah. Right.

“You’re a dumbass,” Levi grumbled when Eren kissed his cheek, letting himself fall back onto the bed.

Eren climbed on top of him, hands coasting up Levi’s chest as he asked, echoing the older man’s words from the first time they had sex together, “How would you like it done?”

“With me on top,” Levi commanded immediately, pushing Eren off of him, and Eren sputtered in disbelief until Levi ground his ass into his dick again, tongue tracing the lines of his lips as he continued, “Cowboy position.”

Levi wanted to maintain control. Typical, but Eren didn’t argue. The man knew more about what he was doing, and ultimately, it was his decision if he handed out his ass to anyone—wow, of course it was his decision, Eren thought with a mental eye roll, since anything else would be considered nonconsen—

Yikes.

Not the direction he wanted his mind to go during his first time topping—well, having Levi ride him.

After Levi rubbed himself against him, practically humping him at this point, he growled and got off of Eren to remove his underwear. Eren instantly read his distress appropriately by removing his boxers—and then his tank top, when Levi sent him a look that asked if he really wanted cum all over his shirt by the end of this session.

With both of them completely naked, both of their dicks nestling against their stomachs, Levi made a suggestion at the same time Eren was thinking it. “Maybe we’ll…skip the foreplay this—”

“Yes,” Eren agreed a bit too quickly, grabbing the lube bottle and planning to squirt probably half of it onto his hand—Levi never used this much, but then—

Before he could do anything, Levi ripped the bottle out of hands with a glare, putting some drops
onto his hand before reaching around his balls, pressing one of his fingers against his asshole, his face scrunching as he struggled to put in the first digit.

Eren stared, mesmerized.

Levi squatted in front of him in the full nude, his dick so hard that it lightly slapped against his stomach as he inserted a finger into himself, then two, looking so awkward yet anxious—

Eren wrapped one hand around Levi’s dick, another around his own, feeling both pulse differently in his palms as he stroked them, paying specific attention to the head on Levi’s, causing the older man to breathe more heavily, the sound almost heavenly. Levi’s reddening face—complete with sweaty bangs and an unfocused gaze—drove Eren mad, and he sat up to better enjoy the view, returning to the mark on Levi’s jaw, wanting to make it bigger, darker—

Levi gasped, his hips jerking into Eren’s stomach, and he removed his fingers from his ass, pushing the younger man away as he concluded, “It’s ready. I’m ready. We don’t even—”

Eren cut him off with a kiss, his saliva mixing with the nearly out-of-breath Levi’s. Levi only nodded in understanding, grabbing his ass cheeks and spreading them, and Eren assumed his hole was open and ready for use.

Suddenly, as his excitement climbed to a nearby high, so did his nervousness.

He’d never done this before. Fuck, Levi had multiple times, but he had experience topping and not ruining his partner’s asshole. Eren didn’t.

What if Levi can’t walk tomorrow because of me?

In a panic, he opened his mouth to voice his worries when Levi huffed impatiently, grabbing Eren’s dick with one hand to prod at his ass with it.

Well, Levi certainly wasn’t worried about tomorrow.

The moment the tip found its way in, Eren hissed, and Levi panted, noticeably gritting his teeth together as he let the rest of Eren’s dick ease into him, slow and steady.

Inside Levi, it was tight and warm and—oh, god—so much better than his mouth. Even with the lube’s assistance, even when he fingered himself for those two solid minutes straight, and even when Levi had his ass cheeks spread, the hole partially open for Eren to slide through, it was so fucking tight, and Levi’s hitch in breath when Eren was finally all of the way inside of him did something to the air in Eren’s lungs that he didn’t even know how to describe.

They paused for a few moments, leaning against each other’s shoulders, catching their breaths like they had just ran a marathon, until—

“It’s really fucking tight,” Eren eventually said, stating the obvious and expecting a sarcastic remark in return, but Levi’s quiet panting hit his shoulder instead, warm yet cool compared to the summer night. His hands still rested on Levi’s back, the muscles there strong but small, and he moved his fingers soothingly on Levi’s spine, feeling the bumps there gently.

Eren’s chest swelled with adoration when Levi let out a strangled exhale, his nose digging into Eren’s collarbone as the other man’s cock began sliding out, Levi’s hands leaving his ass in order for him to wrap his arms around Eren’s shoulders.

This sort of connection—it was foreign, but yet so familiar, and Eren never wanted to let it end.
“It’s tight,” Levi murmured, lips puffy and finding Eren’s in the dimly lit room, “because you’re my first.”

Eren’s heart burst.

He remembered Levi towering over him. That endless amount of confidence as he made Eren orgasm from his ass, as he suggested that Eren could fuck him their “next time,” and it had never occurred to him that Levi hadn’t ever been on the receiving end before, even when the man specifically stated he had never bottomed.

He would’ve never thought he would be Levi’s—

“This’s all your fault,” Levi whispered into his Adam’s apple.

Eren didn’t know what that was supposed to mean, but his hands drifted down to massage Levi’s ass, feeling the soft, taut skin under his palms until Levi clenched around him, making him hiss.

“It doesn’t hurt,” Levi cut in, kissing his jaw hard, “so you can move, you know.”

Eren still hesitated, taking a moment to look at the man on top of him, inside of whom he was dick-deep. Levi looked so flushed and at a disadvantage—it was maddening in the best way. Eren wanted to make him even more of a mess, to kiss him sloppily and leave Levi to wet his face with his own saliva, to make him bite his lip so hard that he bled, to make Levi claw his own back so that Eren could experience that same feeling Levi did when Eren was spent and exhausted on the bed in front of him, because of him.

Eren honestly wanted to return the favor, even if he didn’t quite know what he was doing, and he wanted to see that side of Levi—every side of Levi, really—so, when Levi gave him a questioning look, he quickly swept his hips in a sharp motion, and though the movement was so strange to him, Levi gasped quietly in surprise, teeth scraping Eren’s collarbone in an instant as he began moving at a constant pace, doing his best to find Levi’s prostate by thrusting at different angles.

“Fuck, Eren,” Levi gasped the moment his teeth left Eren’s shoulder, hips rolling maniacally, so messily into his partner’s, and Eren decided at that moment that Levi was probably the sexiest person he ever met, initial appearances of the man be damned. He wasn’t sure anything else could compare to the moaned curses and random, tightening convulses of Levi’s ass at the moment or—when Eren was on the receiving end—even Levi’s subtle kisses and unpredictable thrusts as he took Eren on his knees.

When Levi groaned but obviously wasn’t losing his sanity yet, Eren wondered if he’d ever find Levi’s prostate, if the damn thing even existed.

Then Levi went dead quiet, eyes wide, the light from the lamp reflecting off of his glasses, and Eren thought he found it.

Finally.

He concentrated on that general area, Levi silently running out of breath when Eren gripped his dick, stroking the older man to force him to make noise and lose composure.

Then Levi’s teeth clamped down on his shoulder, and Eren knew he found the spot, thrusting against it as much as possible, not minding as Levi’s jaw grew tighter, his bite rougher as his mouth moved, finding new spots to mark—mainly along Eren’s collarbone—until he finally drew in the largest inhale of air yet, teeth leaving Eren’s chest as he climaxed, his seed shooting up to hit his abdomen.
It probably wasn’t from his prostate—Eren knew for sure that it would be awhile until he could make Levi orgasm from his ass alone—but still, seeing Levi’s cum coating his stomach, his breathing turning ragged and heavy as Eren kept thrusting, keeping every swoop of his hips quick then slow in a steady pattern, was the most satisfying thing Eren had ever experienced.

After he finally came—the feeling of Levi’s ass convulsing finally pushing him over the edge—Eren slid out of Levi, tying the used condom and tossing it in the nearby trash bin. “Shower?” he asked, though he viewed the question as pointless since Levi always showered after sex.

“No,” Levi groaned, surprising Eren, falling back onto the sheets with a thud as he laid himself out, spreading his limbs, not even bothering to readjust himself on the pillow. “I suddenly have a new respect for bottoms. So much fucking work.”

Amused, Eren hummed his agreement, plopping down beside his partner, whose face turned red, his gaze focusing on the wall. “Fuck, being catcher’s weird,” Levi grumbled under his breath with a scowl, shifting away from Eren and into the one pillow on the bed.

Oh, god.

Eren couldn’t help himself.

With a laugh, he kicked off the sheets and draped an arm over Levi, who whacked it off only for Eren to kiss the back of his neck, his leg sneaking in-between Levi’s.

The older man complained some more under his breath, but didn’t oppose him any longer.

As Eren drifted into sleep, he thought about how endearing Levi was. He wanted to dream of him. That night, Eren didn’t dream.

With his Mohawk, drool pile, and now Eren’s baseball-sized bruise of a kiss mark on his jaw, Levi looked fucking awful in the morning, as always.

But today, Eren was the same way, and he mostly realized this because—although his lips felt rawer than usual, his shoulders stung from something his fogged mind couldn’t register, and his leg muscles ached almost as much as when he first arrived at the house—it was only obvious when he stood in front of the mirror.

Mussed hair, though that was a given, and his face glowed in the light dancing in from the window, but he didn’t know if it was due to the summer heat combined with Levi’s arm draped around him in the middle of the night or simply a “first time topping Levi” aura. His eyes trailed down his body to the bruises Levi’s lips left behind, to the bite marks covering his shoulders, and to the complete lack of scratches on his back—which was somewhat disappointing, but he supposed the biting made up for it, that Levi was simply more of an oral person than a hands-on person.

“Oral”—“hands-on”—

“Pffft,” he blurted at his own thought’s dirty connotations, being a bit louder than he meant to.

Levi rustled, effectively shutting Eren up when he cursed and shoved his head underneath the one pillow Eren had allowed on the bed. The motion reminded Eren of an ostrich, turning his stomach into butterflies, but more importantly, Levi’s ass was exposed to the air, and morning sex sounded amazing.
He sauntered over to the bed, plopping down on it noisily, and Levi stirred, lifting the pillow to glare at Eren, who just smiled without a care. “What?” he barked, and Eren decided to just be blunt about it.

“Morning sex,” he suggested, still grinning large.

Levi raised an eyebrow at him, sitting up somewhat in order to rest on one arm. “Morning sex?”

“Morning sex,” Eren confirmed again, and Levi jumped on top of him with the verification—

—evidently forgetting last night’s activities, his legs promptly turning into Jell-O, his body collapsing onto the younger man. Despite this, he played it off, pressing his still-wet-from-his-damn-drool lips against Eren’s because any kiss further than that first thing in the morning was “just disgusting” due to bad breath. Despite the sloppiness, the kiss felt nice, playful, and just as quickly as it started, it ended, Levi lips trailing down to Eren’s neck instead.

His morning wood rested on Eren’s stomach until he moved downward, kissing along Eren’s neck, chest, and stomach before reaching his dick, only semi-erect until Levi lapped the tip, licking the slit before wasting no time and taking it fully in his mouth. Sometimes, the way he worked his tongue made Eren wonder if he was a quick learner, a natural, or just extremely experienced—and those thoughts bothered him for stupid reasons he couldn’t comprehend—but other times, it was just so good that Eren didn’t even think, bucking his hips naturally into Levi’s mouth at a slow, gentle pace. Eren gasped as Levi licked all his sensitive spots, already common knowledge in their relationship, because fuck, the morning had only just begun and already, he lost his thoughts in the clouds.

As his breathing grew harsher, as his dick twitched sporadically, just as he edged closer to climax, Levi suddenly pulled his head away, Eren’s cock popping out of his mouth with a wet sound—and a groan escaped from Eren’s throat when he felt Levi’s saliva-soaked fingers prod at his asshole.

Oh, god dammit.

The moment one finger slid inside, hooking and stretching the space there, Levi looked up from his ass, all business—but when he saw Eren’s face, burst out laughing.

Full-out laughing.

Eren had never heard it before—maybe an amused smile here or there, but first thing in the morning? Laughing like it was so natural? Eren was thrown for a loop, and Levi removed his fingers from Eren’s ass, climbing up to touch foreheads with him—which Eren found too cute, holy shit. Levi whispered, that morning breath that he disapproved of so much fanning Eren’s lips, “What’s that look for?”

What look? What did his face look like?

And how should he even begin to describe his hopes of topping Levi again?

Thumb dipping into the crevice of Levi’s collarbone, feeling the smooth muscle near there, Eren ghosted his nails of his other hand over Levi’s spine, causing the other man to shiver. “I wanted to —”

“Be in me,” Levi finished, sounding like it wasn’t a guess at all—just stating a fact—and Eren’s mouth snapped shut, turning into a scowl when he realized Levi knew what he wanted all along, but didn’t want to grant it to him.
Levi kissed him before moving his fingers back to Eren’s ass, spreading him out again until he was wide enough for Levi to slip inside, wearing a condom with the usual drop of lube. He went in leisurely, making Eren hiss with impatience, then slammed into Eren, who gasped and tightened his handle on Levi’s shoulders.

“Next time,” Levi promised, pulling back and brushing across that spot that made Eren’s blunt nails dig as deep as physically possible into his back. Eren could only glare in response to the older man’s smirk, his lips deciding to enclose that large hickey on Levi’s neck in order to continue biting and suckling there, leaving an even darker bruise as Levi continued rolling his hips, uncaring.

“Next time”—Eren planned to hold him to that.
Chapter 8

What happened next was a flurry, and within a moment’s notice, paradise was lost.

One moment, Eren stood in the kitchen downstairs, cooking omelets just like Levi had taught him, adding in the vegetables as instructed while toasting his own breakfast on another skillet. One moment, Levi brushed his teeth upstairs, the radio blaring that day’s weather report on the staircase, and Eren wondered what their plans were for today, if Levi was close to finishing his paper as scheduled.

The next moment, the phone rang, breaking their calm.

“Levi!” Eren yelled as if the other man couldn’t hear it. “Could you get it?” Irritated, incoherent half-mumbling, half-shouting descended from upstairs in response, and Eren only screeched in reply, “What?”

Footsteps echoed through the house as Levi thudded down the stairs awkwardly—the effects of last night still lingering—racing to the phone on the other side of the kitchen, toothpaste still on his lip. “Hello?” he answered, glaring at Eren with eyes that seemed to say “you little shit,” confirming that Eren’s shenanigans had won this time around.

Eren’s chest swelled with the victory, and he almost smirked at the older man until he realized Levi’s face had gone still, his eyes directed at the nearby wall, but focused much further away.

Eren paused, nerves on end, breakfast forgotten on the stove.

“Alright,” Levi said, slowly shifting back into animation. “Right. I’ll be there in a bit.”

“Who was it?” Eren asked once Levi hung up the landline.

There was no answer.

Only a command.

“Turn off the stove and get dressed.”

It was normal for Levi to make commands. Not so urgently or seriously, but Eren had grown used to following them without even asking about their purpose anymore, so he immediately started obeying orders, trusting Levi’s judgment.

“Who was it?” he tried again after moving the skillets to the other burners, leaving their omelets half-uncooked.

“Might want to apply makeup,” Levi added, nodding toward Eren as he scanned his neck and chest, the kiss and bite marks from last night and that morning evident and proudly on display.

Eren smacked his collarbone, where he knew Levi’s largest hickey to be. “Who—”

“Your parents.”

His voice thin. His words coarse. The frown which engrained itself between Levi’s eyes setting deeper than it had the entire time they had known each other.

“They came home early, but their car’s broken down a town or two over,” Levi relayed, brushing
through his hair with his fingers, which visibly trembled.

He was on edge, but Eren couldn’t blame him.

He was, too.

“We got lucky,” Levi said, and Eren had to agree. If they had come home like Eren did earlier that summer—with no warning call—and first thing they saw was their son and houseguest wearing only their underwear, covered with kisses and bite marks, possibly embracing—or worse— “I’d say you have twenty minutes at most to clean up.”

Eren jumped to action.

As Levi quickly finished getting dressed in their bedroom upstairs, Eren ravaged his mother’s bathroom, hoping she left behind something for him to use for his skin. His girlfriend from high school always used foundation to cover her hickeys, so hopefully his mom—

Ah! He found it, looking into the mirror to access the damage once more before spotting the dark bite marks spreading across his collarbone.

He instantly remembered the dark bruise he left on Levi’s jaw.

One that the older man probably forgot.

He abandoned his station in the bathroom to run to the bedroom.

Levi wasn’t there.

Outside?

He raced down the stairs, cursing as he saw Levi unlock his car. “Wait!” Eren called after him, jogging onto the dirt and gravel driveway with his bare feet. “What about your own?”

“My own—?” Levi echoed, pausing to turn to Eren with narrowed, suspicious eyes.

Eren rubbed his neck as a hint.

“Oh—god dammit!” Levi groaned, kicking his front tire before opening the driver’s side. “I don’t have time for makeup,” he decided, getting in to start the car.

“Let me go grab a Band-Aid,” Eren offered, and Levi only stared at him like he was a moron, but he didn’t care. Feeling like he wanted to be of use, even if just a little, Eren sped back inside, the rocks digging into his heels, and he went to the first aid cabinet in the kitchen to remove a large Band-Aid—big enough to hide the monster of a hickey on Levi’s jaw—and hurried out of the house.

Levi rolled down the window as Eren came up, only wearing his underwear, his feet aching, a Band-Aid in one hand. “Here,” he said, unwrapping it and reaching into the car to apply the square to the mark, smoothing it down to make sure it covered every discolored spot.

It did. Eren felt proud for choosing the right Band-Aid, but at the same time, disappointed that his hickey wasn’t nearly as big as he hoped.

“Clean up the house,” Levi reminded him, and the idea wasn’t up for debate.

With a gulp, Eren nodded.
Levi’s tired eyes followed his Adam’s apple, then he pulled out of the drive, dust in his wake.

Eren didn’t waste any time.

He ran inside to brush his hair, get dressed, check that all visible hickeys were covered with makeup, and redress his shirt to hide the bite marks Levi had left behind. He scurried about the house, double checking that nothing was out in the open, ready for criticism or speculation—the lube and condoms were hidden away in his drawer, the erotic novels he read tucked back into his stepmother’s shelf for the sake of her dignity—and then he did minor things, like take out the trash in the kitchen and throw out his attempt at breakfast.

He was straightening up Levi’s research papers scattered about the living room—his impromptu work study—as well as his Xbox controllers when he heard the car rumble up. Quickly, he set up a futon on the floor—making it seem like he’d been sleeping there this whole time—almost stumbling over his own feet as he jogged through the hallway to the front door.

He slid open the door. “Welcome home, Mom and Da—”

Something was wrong.

His father’s face of rage—his mother’s expression of discomfort—Levi’s own visage wearing an emotion Eren had never seen on him before, his jaw—

Eren stopped breathing.

Where is the Band-Aid?

His father and Levi walked up the steps to the house whereas his father pushed past him in the doorway, stomping up the stairs—

Oh, shit, no—

Wait—he had cleaned his room. His clothes and Levi’s were picked up, crammed into Eren’s closet, and Levi had washed the sheets that morning, so nothing incriminating was in that room.

At least, Eren didn’t think so until his father called Levi’s name.

Everyone trudged up the stairs together, entering Eren’s room, and his heart exploded out of his body when he saw his father tilting the trash can, revealing the condoms they used last night and this morning—

Eren never emptied out that trash can.

He forgot about it entirely.

“What were you doing on my son’s bed?”

Levi kept quiet.

Eren’s mind tumbled into a cave of remorse.

His father spat to his mother, who never met his eyes, “I told you trusting someone with his—his lifestyle was a bad idea. Just think of what kind of—” The man cut himself off, fists clenching, and shook his head.

Eren felt his entire body shake. His breathing labored. He stared at the ground, waiting for the
barrage of scolding to assault him at any moment.

It never came.

As his father continued spewing bullshit at Levi and his mother looked ashamed for reconnecting with her ex-brother-in-law at all, they never once turned an angry eye to Eren.

With his father’s next words, Eren realized why.

“You were—with men in my son’s bed, and he didn’t even know—”

They still trusted Eren—trusted when he said no, Levi hadn’t brought any men over. They never even considered Eren would know, had participated—

He felt like vomiting and turned to Levi, who did not return his gaze. He wished there was something he could do, but then his brain erupted an idea, and it slid from his mouth without a second thought.

“It was me,” Eren interrupted, stepping forward. “I brought girls—”

“I’m sorry,” Levi said even louder, his bruise now looking like a mark of shame rather than ownership, and Eren did a double take at the words as the man stepped ahead of him. “I broke my promise. I didn’t keep my word. I’m sorry.”

Eren felt even more sick.

He looked to the side, at the mirror hanging from his closet, at his vulnerable gaze and uncertain posture, and suddenly, he seemed very small.

He wanted to grab Levi and run down the stairs and out the door. Start up the car, take him anywhere else but here, where his father wasn’t on the verge of setting the house on fire with Levi in it. He wanted to protect Levi, but as he was now, he couldn’t.

He was so weak in comparison to Levi, who eventually met his father’s gaze and held it, not bothering to glance away even when his father seemed to demand it.

Finally, his dad stormed out the door, stomping down the stairs, cursing in shouts.

Eren and Levi were left with his mother, who shook her head, rubbing the bridge of her nose. Levi tried once more, “I’m sor—”

“Levi,” his mother interrupted, sighing, her eyebrows furrowing with the largest amount of disappointment on her face that Eren had ever seen. “I want you out of this house tomorrow morning. No exceptions.”

Levi’s lips parted, then closed, thinning. He only nodded.

She left, following her husband’s footsteps down the stairs.

The silence was stifling, fragile, and Eren itched to break it with how conflicted Levi looked—hurt eyes, reddened cheeks, lost gaze. “What happened?” Eren asked, his voice just under a whisper.

Levi didn’t say a word—only placed his phone on the desk, its screen cracked, its keyboard smashed, his thoughts seemingly lost in its damage.

Eren never found out what happened when Levi went to pick them up—what must’ve happened in
the car—what must’ve been said in the car.

Eren didn’t know what happened with his phone, either—only that it resembled his current emotional state.

That night was the last they spent together on the porch under the stars.

Unlike the usual feeling of endlessness he got under the large sky—like they were just another natural part of eternity—Eren felt weak and small.

“I made this decision myself,” Levi assured Eren once more, the faraway suns shining a bit dimmer than usual, their purpose lost on blurred eyes. “If they blame me, you can still go to college, get an education, have a life with them in it—

“I probably sound dramatic, but I’m just speaking from experience.”

Eren felt physically ill—from his guilt, from the situation, from Levi’s reasoning, from the facts and logic and “speaking from experience”—

His brain hurt. His eyes hurt. He didn’t want to focus on anything, but he wanted to carve Levi’s everything into him before he left. In the end, he threw his arm over his eyes so that he didn’t have to see anything he didn’t want to.

“I don’t have a lot of family left,” Levi confessed, “so I was happy when your mom reached out to me again. Given, it was just to house-sit, but—”

Even though he wanted to hear what Levi had to say, he wanted Levi to stop talking.

It all hurt too much.

“This way, you still have your family. I’m not used to having people anyway,” Levi chuckled, and it was painful to hear it. Eren didn’t want him to cover up the pain—he didn’t want him to feel it at all—

Didn’t he know Eren would be there for him? He didn’t have to shoulder any of this alone?

Eren rolled over to lean against Levi’s shoulder, breathing out, “I’ll still be here.”

Silence passed.

Levi felt warm even in the humidity of the night, and Eren briefly wondered if they’d have a storm tonight before Levi sighed, readjusting himself to rest his forehead against Eren’s.

“I’m glad what we did meant something to you, too.”

Eren couldn’t contain it anymore.

He kissed Levi shamelessly, not caring if his parents could come downstairs and see him doing it at any moment. He sucked in Levi’s lips, wrapping his arms around him, and when Levi sighed, Eren felt their bodies mold together as Levi eagerly embraced him back.

He wished he was an adult, a fully fledged one capable of taking care of Levi and owning their own place so they could have their own haven to fuck each other and just—be whoever they were.

Eren didn’t know what they were.
He was just sick of living with all of these expectations. He just wanted to wake up beside Levi every day, touch him whenever he wanted, and cook alongside him for all of their meals before gazing at the stars together.

It was all he wanted, and now, it was going to be taken away from him.

Even with the hovering light of Mikasa over his life, he hated his parents now more than ever for what they did to Levi—were doing to Levi.

They pulled back; Eren’s lips felt as raw as Levi’s looked.

“I wish I could give you my phone number, but I just changed it, and then they—” Levi cut himself off, sighing, burrowing his head into Eren’s shoulder. “I think I have a P.O. box. I’ll give you the address later.”

Eren would hold him to that.

The cicada cried even when Eren’s internal clock read midnight, the leaves on the trees rustling with the dark breeze from the fields. Even though the moon shined above them, even though the promise of departure loomed over them, Eren still felt the summer in his veins, this moment as sunny as the days they spent together.

His fingers tapped against Levi’s spine before making their way down to his arm, and Eren thinks the other man knew what he was doing because, even with the lack of space between them, his own hand met Eren’s in the dark.

This time when Eren reached out to him, he accepted it.

Levi breathed against his neck, letting out a single word in a whisper: “Eren.”

Eren closed his eyes and wished he was dreaming.

The next morning, when the mechanic arrived with his parents’ car, Levi packed his bags.

Eren and his mother stood at the doorway, her hand on his shoulder, burning his skin as his father stood over Levi, watching him stow away his bags into the trunk of his car, never once offering to help him. Eren had initially wanted to carry down the suitcases for Levi—suddenly recalling the times he complained about his back hurting, courtesy of Eren—but his father had turned down the notion.

And Eren didn’t know why, but he didn’t want to sass his father like he usually did.

He no longer knew what to say.

He simply stared at Levi, whose sweat swept across his bangs as he caught his breath, and his father, who only watched Levi heave the last suitcase into the truck in the middle of the great summer’s heat.

Eren sneered at his father, but the man didn’t notice.

Levi only narrowed his eyes in warning.

“That all?” his father asked.

Levi turned his attention from Eren to his father, nodding, never meeting the other man’s eyes,
only facing his direction. He trained his gaze on the vehicle next to him, probably to avoid any judgment that floated in either of Eren’s parents’ stares, but Eren’s brain numbed.


To just look at him.

Eren’s heart desired nothing more than jumping into the situation, but he thinned his lips instead, his mother’s hand on his shoulder equating to lead. Part of him still wanted to scream that he was the cause for all of this, that he seduced Levi and that the elder man had more morals than they thought—or, at least, the morals they didn’t think he had—but Levi’s gaze shot directly to his at that moment, finally meeting his eyes, and drove him into silence.

Although he understood the reasons for Levi’s submission, it didn’t mean Eren preferred this. Not at all.

Levi got inside, closed the door behind him, and started the engine. As he turned back to the house for a final time, his gaze met Eren’s through the window.

Suddenly, Eren was twelve again—Levi sat in a black car, staring at him from the passenger window, eyes sullen and shining with something he would never understand, and Eren looked back, eyes never once turning away.

Except this time, he understood.

And he liked to think, maybe—just maybe—Levi did, too.

Their gazes held each other’s, then broke as Levi turned to the road, shifting gears and driving towards the fields, away from the woods, gravel rumbling under his wheels and dirt kicking up, settling easily because of the lack of breeze.

Eren wished for some wind.

He did not expect simply staring at the car driving away from him to be so painful, but his mother kissed his cheek, ignoring or simply not noticing the way he winced at the contact. “Dinner will be ready around five,” she said, undisturbed by the events entirely, and walked back into the manor.

His father followed shortly thereafter, patting Eren on the shoulder as he passed by, the touch just as unwelcome, but the reaction still not registering. “Sorry we made you deal with that,” he said, and suddenly, Eren wanted to vomit from the guilt piling up with his lies and desired to escape the property he once considered his haven.

Instead, he forced a grin and lied again.

“It’s fine.”

In the weeks following, Eren never found out what happened in the car—how the Band-Aid was taken off, how conclusions were drawn. He never found out to which university Levi ended up transferring, which interview ended up working out. He never found out about “next time” because Levi’s name became taboo in their household, his contact information deleted from their address books, his leftover belongings thrown into a trash bag and donated to charity, and his only photo being taken down from their hallway of family memories.

Eren never found out what happened to Levi.
Just like that, the hottest summer of Eren’s life came and went in a haze.
So, Eren,” Armin said, directing his attention towards his oddly quiet, distracted suitemate, “how was your summer?”

Eren stopped stirring his dorm food—today, mashed potatoes with peas—to look up at Armin, whose features seemed softer than usual. “Alright,” he replied, the question throwing him off. Since he wasn’t in the mood for speaking, he figured the best thing to do was quickly give some details about his time to avoid further questioning. “My ’rents went to Italy. I house-sat the entire summer. It was pretty fucking boring, but nice to get away from the nagging.”

There. No extra details. No blatant lies.

He was off the hook.

Armin bit his lip, and Eren sensed he wanted to linger on the topic, but Jean—of all people, Jean—saved Eren, interrupting with “Italy’s a fucking riot. Went there when I went to France. Doubt your parents hit up the places I did, though.”

Oh, fancy fucking Jean with his fancy fucking France trip. Eren was probably as upper-middle class as Jean was, he realized, but he’d never been abroad anywhere, so he figured some resentment was reasonably due.

Probably noticing Eren’s bother, Jean smirked, scooting his food and seat closer to Eren, who scooted away. He spewed some gibberish in what Eren assumed to be French—he didn’t understand it—but when he scowled at Jean, who only grinned in response, he realized he didn’t need to know French since a fist to the face was a highly universal gesture.

“That didn’t even make sense,” Armin noted in response to Jean’s dialogue, his eyebrows drawn back in disapproval as he automatically cut Eren’s annoyance down in half.

Jean sputtered unintelligibly, Armin shaking his head as Reiner checked his phone and texted back whoever had been contacting him the past hour. Bertolt, probably, Eren guessed, eyes focusing on his untouched food again.

He wished he had Levi’s number, any way of contacting him outside of the P.O. box that, for some reason, didn’t accept his mail. His first day back on campus, Eren gathered the media he and Levi had spoken of in passing—specifically, shitty econ books that Eren bought for his old classes and couldn’t make sense out of and Levi praised and belittled at once—and put all of it in one package, handing it over to the post office that afternoon. He’d received notice a few days later that the package hadn’t sent at all since that P.O. box “wasn’t operating.”

After that, Eren lied in bed all day, staring at the cracks in his dorm room’s ceiling, wondering what to do when his only discreet connection to Levi was lost.

Had Levi lied about the P.O. box? But Eren was certain when Levi held his hand, when he said he was glad what they did meant something to Eren, too, that his feelings weren’t unrequited. He knew if he sent a package to Levi, Levi would contact him back.

He imagined himself as an old man lingering at the P.O. box address, waiting for Levi’s arrival.

Then he spotted Reiner sitting in front of their fan—scrunching and pulling back the skin on his face before moaning into the blades demonically—and thought of something quicker, acting out
the idea on impulse.

“Reiner.”

“Hm?” The boy in question looked up to Eren, who stared across the room at him from his bed.

“When did you first get with a dude?”

“Eighth grade,” Reiner said without hesitation, the sweat from his ears dripping down his nape, and Eren stared a little harder than he usually did at the sweat, remembering the stalk of Levi’s neck, but duly noted that Reiner wasn’t his type. Wasn’t sure if anyone was his type outside of Levi, really. “I was out and proud back then, too, and he half-jokingly gave me shit for it all the time, but he was hot and I knew he wanted me, too, so I didn’t beat him up too bad for it.”

“How did you know he wanted you, too?”

Reiner squinted his eyes at the other student, and Eren squirmed under the attention, realizing how unnatural and obvious he sounded. “We fucked,” Reiner answered simply.

Well, shit.

The complete lack of grace in this conversation would astound even Levi, Eren presumed.

“Why all the questions, Jaeger?”

The question was casual, spoken without a second thought or implication—no suspicions behind it—but Eren still tensed when he answered. “Nothing, really. Just wanted to know about you.”

Reiner snorted. “If I didn’t know any better,” he said, voice distorted and echoing through the fan, “I’d say you’re thinkin’ you’re gay.”

Eren laughed a bit harder than necessary at that, but Reiner was dense and didn’t notice, laughing alongside him jovially. Eren considered speaking up when his roommate said, “You can always ask about these things, you know—no reason,” but decided against it.

He decided against telling his friends and family a lot of things.

He still had more questions. He wanted to ask Reiner how to maintain a relationship, how to realize if someone was trying to blow him off, etc. The question of Levi weighed heavily on his mind since the summer’s end, and with the constant reminder of Bertolt and Reiner’s open, honest relationship, he realized that, through the entirety of the summer they spent together, he and Levi never did everything Eren would have liked for them to.

Now that Levi wasn’t with him every day—ever since he left—Eren thought of the things they could have done. Should have done. He imagined them wandering into the forest together and climbing trees, but then he wondered about Levi’s reaction to that idea. He briefly mused the possibility of them riding a rollercoaster or Ferris wheel together, but Levi seemed to be the complete opposite of an amusement park kind of guy. Then again, the man did want to be an acrobat, so what did Eren really know about him?

He quickly realized that, even though he felt close to the man and they spoke about things Eren had never mentioned before to anyone else, they did not know each other at all. This fact drove Eren mad, and it heightened his longing to contact Levi, hear his voice once more, hold him all over again, and ask more. Answer more. Grow closer as people, even closer than their bodies had been to each other, and mold into one another effortlessly over time.
It was the way Reiner and Bertolt were when Eren first moved into the dorms. It was the way Armin and Jean were slowly becoming. It was the way he dreamed about when he didn’t expect to, in the middle of taking notes for his macroeconomics class.

He wanted nothing more than to cross the bridge that had always been between them, but now, he had to pass through another bridge first, and how to approach that bridge eluded him.

He wasn’t even sure of Levi’s own motives in pursuing the relationship, if the moment when they had finally separated had been a blessing in disguise all along.

Eren chewed on the inside of his cheek, his thoughts racing in utter turmoil.

Reiner continued making weird noises into the blades of their fan.

Eren wondered why he ever thought confiding in Reiner would be a good idea, finally turning on his side and praying for sleep.

Sometime in October, a few nights before Halloween, when their floormates screeched in the halls with poorly made costumes and holiday spirit, Armin knocked on Eren’s bathroom door from the other side while he was doing homework for his marketing class.

When Eren opened the door, his best friend held two coffee mugs, filled to the brim with milk and cream, and he only stared.

And stared.

Still staring.

Finally: “Where did you get the milkshakes?”

“You ass,” Armin said, glaring, shoving one mug at Eren, the liquid sloshing from the rim and to the floor. “You know it’s comfort coffee.”

Yes. Eren could tell from the scorching heat of it searing through his socks at the moment.

Armin made himself comfortable on Reiner’s gaming chair, spreading his legs out in front of him, and Eren went back to his desk to work on his homework.

Except, when he reopened his textbook, he noticed Armin’s gaze fixed on him, intently waiting for something, and he sighed, knowing what Armin meant by “comfort coffee.”

“What did you want to say?” he asked, moving his mug and ass to the floor.

“More like, what do you?” At Eren’s blank look, Armin added in a deadpan voice, “Have something to share. Do you have something you want to say. God dammit, Eren, you know what I meant.”

Eren suddenly couldn’t let Armin meet his eyes, afraid of what his friend would see in them and unsure if Armin wanted him to address the same issue Eren thought he did. “I don’t really have anything to talk about,” he fibbed, eyes trained on his friend’s shoulder, but then Armin made an unintelligible noise, jumping around in the chair, drawing Eren’s full attention again.

“See? See!” Armin accused, pointing a finger, and the cream from the edge of his mug plopped onto his pants without him noticing. “You’ve been so—so—twitchy. Yes, twitchy,” he added at Eren’s incredulous expression, like he was on the verge of denying the adjective as his own.
“You’ve been avoiding everyone’s eyes, talking less, doing more homework. It’s not like you at all.”

Being a student wasn’t like Eren at all. Great to know.

But he knew Armin’s worry. Understood it. Eren looked down at his fingers wrapped around the mug handle, remembering the way Levi grabbed the rims of his teacups.

“Eren,” Armin coaxed, tapping one foot against the other boy’s leg. “Say something.”

Say what?

That when he got home, he reintroduced himself to Mikasa’s gay uncle and suddenly saw him differently? Over the course of a week, he seduced the man, and over the course of a month, had almost daily sex with him? Over the course of the summer, he suddenly couldn’t sleep without someone else in his bed? Over the summer, he felt a kind of intimacy he had never experienced before, built his own haven, and in the end, it all crashed down around him?

He couldn’t tell a story that he wasn’t even sure how to begin.

His memories scattered.

One moment, Levi was a short man who cleaned his house and briefly owned the spare key, and the next, he fucked Eren into the mattress and started a seasonal ritual. One moment, he taught Eren how to make his mother’s caramel pie, and during a compilation of others, they were by the water, in a car, under the stars, on the porch, so close but always just far enough away.

How did he even begin explaining Levi’s presence in his life to anyone?

They weren’t in a romantic relationship. They weren’t ever in a normal relationship to begin with. Curiosity bit Eren in the ass, and because of it, eventually, so did Levi.

Eren sipped from the coffee, trying to buy himself more time for his explanation, but the moment the coffee hit his tongue—urk—he spat it back out into the mug, coughing manically and shaking his head. “This is awful,” he wheezed, setting aside the cup.

Armin furrowed his eyebrows, grimacing in disbelief. He took a sip to verify Eren’s comment—and proceeded to spray that sip all over Eren, who suddenly regretted his choice to move to Armin’s eye level on the floor.

A moment of silence passed in which Eren sat with still warm coffee dripping down his face and Armin’s face scrunched up in perpetual displeasure. Then Armin said, “Yeah, that was bad. My bad. Don’t know why I thought milk and cream would make it better.”

“Might’ve made it worse,” Eren suggested, and Armin’s silent frown told him that he resented that, but mostly agreed. “You can’t even cook ramen correctly, Armin. What were you expecting from coffee?”

“I don’t know,” his best friend confessed, looking to the floor in resignation. “I barely found my way to the kitchen, honestly, and I couldn’t find chocolate syrup, so I couldn’t make hot chocolate or chocolate milk and— It’s almost Halloween. They have candy at the check-in desk. I could’ve brought you candy.”

“You could’ve,” Eren agreed, grabbing Armin’s extended cup and his own, standing to dump them
both in the sink.

More silence passed in which Eren cleaned the mugs, settling them in soap. It was a habit he picked up from Levi; Reiner and he usually let the dishes sit in the sink forever until they started smelling, which was when they would Febreze them and continue letting them sit until Armin or Bertolt lost it and eventually cleaned their entire room for them.

He washed out the suds the moment Armin asked, “Are you depressed?”

Eren almost dropped one of the mugs. “What?”

“You got a lot of the symptoms, so you should change your situation,” Armin suggested, and Eren’s stoic face probably expressed his rejection of that idea—this entire idea of depression—so his best friend sighed instead. “We should go out more often. We’ll join more clubs. We’ll go girl-scouting— Wait, that sounds weird.”

“You’ve been hanging around Jean too much,” Eren observed, squinting his eyes at this much more direct version of Armin with whom he wasn’t familiar.

Armin laughed. “We live together, but you’re changing the topic.” Eren could only stare, his heart slamming into his larynx at full force, and Armin met his gaze, concerned, smile fading as he questioned, “Did something happen this summer? Family stuff? Your parents? Mikasa? You came back, and it feels like you’re not here.”

“How poetic,” Eren joked, trying to lighten the mood, but Armin’s steady eyes and tightened lips told him it wasn’t appreciated, so he shrugged instead. “I don’t know what to tell you, honestly. But when I get it all figured—Armin, I swear,” he cut himself off when his best friend was about to speak up, “I really will tell you when I sort this all out.”

Armin bit his lip. Doubting. “You promise?”

Eren nodded, turning his head and gaze away from Armin as he answered, “Promise.”

He didn’t like lying to Armin, but thinking of the way Levi’s body curved into his, his parents stuffing Levi’s leftover clothes into a bag for charity, he didn’t know how to speak. How to even begin. Because, although Armin wasn’t a judgmental person, he didn’t know how to explain any of it without sounding awful or criminal. Not because Levi was a man just like him, but because of how they began and where they went.

How they may have ended.

He suddenly realized he didn’t want to explain it out loud—he didn’t want to hear the words to explain their relationship that had never needed explanation before. Addressing the memories meant addressing his relationship with Levi, and Eren wasn’t sure how to feel about that, about this standstill. If he ever wanted other people to know.

So, Levi would always be a secret burning in the back of his throat and deep within his chest, Eren concluded.

At this rate, maybe it was the only way he could exist.

Like any other guy at the dorms, Eren jerked off when his roommate was out, and as time went on, the sessions became more frequent and less satisfying.
Eren couldn’t stop himself, though. He was bored and unused to being celibate for this long after a summer full of sex of all sorts, from anal to handjobs to oral. So, when Reiner was out having lunch with Bertolt, Eren jerked off. When Reiner had an evening chemistry lab, Eren jerked off. When Reiner spent a night out with the guys, Eren stayed inside, jerking off multiple times.

It was a system he figured out sometime ago, but never put into practice this often until he returned from summer break. And the more he did it, the less gratifying the result became, his dick desensitized and the orgasm less of an excitement, more of an expectation.

One night, the dorms were quieter. It was near midterms, so most students stayed at the dorms or went to the library to study. Reiner was studying down the hall with Bertolt whereas Jean and Armin were studying together in their room—

Everyone was distracted by midterms, and the doors were locked.

Eren was alone—and in front of his computer, at that.

He unzipped his pants and went to work on finding something decent to watch.

Before that summer, he had always watched very typical, heterosexual porn, ranging from “Japanese schoolgirl fucked hard by teacher” to “big-tits housewife blows son’s friend.” When he became sexually interested in Levi, his taste in porn turned toward anything guy-on-guy, everything he watched happening to be doggy style. Once he started having sex with Levi, he stopped watching porn.

Period.

He never masturbated anymore because Levi was always there and willing to have sex with him, and he satisfied Eren in the same way he could himself, so he didn’t see the point in jerking off anymore. (Admittedly, before he started having sex with Levi, he already planned to masturbate often that summer with only one other person in the house, so either way, his summer would have been full of orgasms, looking back on it.)

Now, after having sex with Levi and no longer being able to have sex with Levi, his choice of porn became picky. He was fond of videos with shorter, muscular tops and taller bottoms who liked it hard and rough. He didn’t restrict himself to these standards in any way, but it quickly became obvious when he opened a video if it was enjoyable or not, if it was staged and professional or realistic and amateur, and finding an in-between of realism but excellent filming was difficult, especially if the video was guy-on-guy. Heterosexual porn no longer turned him on unless the girl had small boobs, so he mostly cut that out of his porn diet, focusing on the anal bits only.

That night especially, Eren had trouble finding anything able to get him off. He scrolled through website after website, searching different keywords and topics, but managed to only find the same shit over and over again—mostly videos he had already seen before and had bookmarked in his porn folder.

He started to get impatient. Reiner could come back at minute now, the clock ticking past eleven, and he hadn’t even begun to jerk off because he couldn’t find anything decent outside of his imagination—

Oh. Of course.

He had past experience he could easily put into play.

The fact he hadn’t considered this sooner embarrassed him.
Closing his laptop, Eren got on his bed and pulled off his pants entirely. The moment he touched his dick, he thought of Levi’s hands instead, stroking him in all the right ways and paying extra attention to the head, but after about five minutes of this, he still couldn’t cum. It frustrated him because he knew he was turned on, he knew that this did it for him, and yet—

He didn’t have lube, but he remembered Levi’s comment about spit and wondered if it still applied —

_No, wait_—Reiner had lube and condoms in his desk.

He rummaged through the fridge, finding a cucumber and deciding it would do.

He stole a condom from Reiner’s desk along with a bottle of lube and pinched the tip, rolling it down the length of the produce.

He was desperate.

He got back on the bed, his cock poking his own stomach as he coated his fingers with lube before trying to insert them into his ass. It was awkward and took longer than usual—for obvious reasons —but eventually, he was able to fit two fingers inside of him, occasionally brushing across his prostate, but not quite enough to feel as hot and heavy as when Levi did it.

He looked to the cucumber and exhaled.

It was time.

Spreading his cheeks apart with one hand was difficult enough, but managing to squeeze even the tip of the lubed cucumber was the true challenge.

_Oh, shit._

It was a tighter fit than he expected.

_So this is what Levi felt his first time,_ Eren thought, remembering how smoothly his own first time went and deciding it definitely wasn’t applicable to his current situation.

He slowly added it in, bit by bit, to ease the uncomfortable ache, but it was maddening, how slow the pace was.

Moments like these, he missed Levi’s magic touch.

But then he managed to brush his prostate, and he gasped, repeating the small movements, doing his best to maintain the quiet, which was actually difficult to do when he began imagining Levi behind him, shoving the cucumber inside of him, asking him if he liked it with the vegetable just as much as he did Levi’s cock.

There was a knock at the door, and before Eren could register it, Jean walked in with Reiner’s keys swinging around his finger, saying, “Hey, Eren, do you have those notes from accounting—”

He saw Eren on his bed, spread-eagle, cucumber halfway in his ass, hand wrapped around his dick, and mid-moan.

Eren paused like a lagging computer.

Jean froze like a crashed computer that couldn’t retrieve any of its data and fried its motherboard.
The door automatically clicked shut behind him, and in the surprise of the moment, the cucumber slipped inside of Eren, his asshole consuming it like a vacuum.

Then came the screaming.

Reiner broke down the door, shouting, “WHAT’S WRONG?” before assessing the scene, Armin right behind him, asking as well, “What was the screaming——”

Jean, Reiner, and Armin.

All in his room.

Silently staring at him, spread-eagle, cucumber entirely in his ass, his hand fingering urgently at the hole, mid-scream.

Armin was the first to act. “Eren,” he said, trying to get through to his best friend through his panic, “what’s wrong?”

Where do I even begin?

“There’s—thing—” Words. “In butt?”

Armin stared at him silently. Processing.

Finally saying, “There’s…a thing in your butt?”

Eren nodded urgently.

Since he didn’t have a cell phone, Armin calmly walked over and stole his roommate’s, the owner being too shocked and frozen to react. As he dialed the number for the emergency hotline, he directed instantly to Eren’s roommate, “Help him out.”

“Got it,” Reiner said just as Armin began speaking into the phone.

The moment Armin lost his cool, Eren lost hope.

“HELLO? Hello, yes— MY FRIEND HAS A THING UP HIS BUTT? UM—”

Jean stood still, silently screaming for an eternity as Reiner pried at Eren’s butthole casually, saying something along the lines of “If we had some tweezers lying around…” and Eren slowly but surely was dying of embarrassment.

Armin paid them no mind except—

“IS IT COMING OUT?”

“No,” Reiner responded coolly, twisting his lips in troubled thought while giving his roommate’s left butt cheek a slap that Eren didn’t think was called for, but at the moment, couldn’t give much thought to.

“IT’S NOT COMING OUT!” Armin repeated in his state of panic, looking worriedly at Eren before Jean finally snatched his own phone away from his roommate and screeched into the receiver, drawing the attention of their friend Connie outside, “WILL HE DIE?”

Eren wanted to cry.
Later on, in the car, he was sure he did with his rear-end near Reiner’s face—since he was the only person comfortable enough with asses to handle it—whereas his head occasionally collided with Armin’s, since he was the only person comfortable enough with Eren to handle it. Not only that, but when Armin suggested he drive and Jean be in the back, the stern look Armin received from his roommate spoke volumes not only on Armin’s driving capabilities, but also just how Jean felt about Eren’s face being a few inches away from his.

“Man, I’ve heard of dudes doing stupid shit in the dorms,” Connie said from the passenger seat as Eren balanced himself on all fours, his butt in the air to prevent anything worse from happening to the object already lodged inside his anus. Connie continued, “But this is some stupid shit, man.”

The entire car hummed in mutual agreement.

Eren sputtered some useless defense, but Armin only shushed him, saying, “There, there; there’s no need for excuses anymore. We understand without you saying.”

Eren wondered.

A few moments later, Reiner made an inappropriate comment about how Eren was “the butt of our joke” that only Connie found funny, Jean yelling for him to stop talking about Eren’s ass while he drove and Armin nearly missing Eren’s hard skull bashing into his collarbone.

Needless to say, it was a long drive for only three minutes of travel.

When they finally arrived at the nearest health center on campus, Reiner carried Eren over his shoulder so that he didn’t have to waddle to the entrance, in order to save whatever dignity Eren had left. Armin, Connie, and Jean ran ahead of them towards the receptionist, who did not look pleased to receive visitors in the middle of the night.

The only people present in the clinic were some older nurses and some graduate student who honestly looked like he regretted choosing this field of study when a bunch of teenagers burst through the front doors with Eren’s ass facing forward, cucumber long gone inside.

After much screaming and flailing, the staff finally realized the problem and took Eren to the operation room, where they did even more things to his asshole than Levi did, which Eren never thought possible. In the end, a woman removed the remains of the vegetable from his anus while he laid on his hands and knees, buttocks hanging in the air, regretting every life decision he ever made as embarrassment painted his face a bright red color.

Midway through the removal, the woman looked at him strangely—even more strangely than when they originally came into the building, screaming that there was a cucumber stuck up his butt—and then parted her lips, on the verge of saying something, but not quite.

Eren turned away, cheeks flushed and preparing for death.

“Well…at least you used a condom.”

He missed Levi, in case it wasn’t already apparent.

For the next few weeks following the “shouldn’t have put it in my butt, but did so anyway” incident, Eren received a flurry of emails. Word spread from Reiner and Connie—the only ones feeling pretty shameless about the whole situation—to the masses of students, and random classmates teased or checked up on Eren. Surprisingly, none of the attention was negative—curiosity, concern, and other “c” words Eren couldn’t think of coated their tones colorfully, asking
how large of a cucumber he used, if it hurt, and why he did such a thing. He missed Levi then, but decided the incident was a lesson from which there were morals to be learned, shoving the older man—much like the cucumber—into the furthest recesses of his body.

He was just glad that word of the incident stuck to the college campus rather than spreading back to his hometown.

Then a girl from his marketing class, Sasha, sent him a video of various things people put up their butts, labeling it as “educational” and “for future reference,” and for a brief moment, he thought, *This is something Levi would do.*

Then he missed Levi.

He missed the lingering scent of incense on the wooden porch, sometimes on his skin until Levi forced him to bathe. He missed the smell of soap on his bed sheets back home, the ones at his dorm reeking of nothing but summer sweat and distant dreams. He missed the shit jokes—both of quality and content—and the obstinate remarks in response to his persistent pushing. He missed the glint of his glasses in the sun, the way Levi’s eyes narrowed when he focused on what he wrote, but if Eren kept pushing, he’d ruffle his hair some in a lame attempt to pay attention to Eren. He missed the teeth carving self-hatred into his shoulders as he pounded into Levi, the burns he got on his hands when they did it outside on the scorching hot porch as Levi rammed into him, because even though it was pain, it was *feeling.* And just like the blazing pain, he missed the smaller warmth resting on his shoulder when he woke up, hair wild and Levi’s drool soaking his shirt, and wondered, disgusted, how in the world he somehow got used to this sort of nightly treatment.

Oh, god, how he missed him.

He missed Levi so badly.

He missed being intimate with another person, too, but even the thought of being intimate with anyone other than Levi just didn’t seem anywhere near satisfying.

He missed Levi, he concluded. He missed Levi *so much.*

Sometimes, he’d write him letters. And sometimes, he threw those letters away because his penmanship was god awful and that time Levi criticized him for it—*that one time*—still lingered, fresh in his mind. So other times, when the letter was deemed worthy enough, he’d pass by the mailbox on his way to class, pausing with the envelope, wanting to send it, hoping that the P.O. box would magically begin working, but ultimately tucking it into his pocket, realizing he’d never have the heart to do just this.

Levi, he realized, deserved much better.

Still, he sometimes caught himself checking his dorm room’s mailbox for any sign of life outside of the occasional pizza coupon or party invite because he remembered Levi’s words—that Eren wasn’t the only one who cared—and he held hope in them. No matter how small that hope was, Eren clung to it desperately and soon realized, as autumn leaves passed by and Armin flew airplanes in directions he could no longer follow, that maybe it was the only thing he could cling onto anymore.

He had his whole life ahead of him. He acknowledged this much.

He could easily live his years without Levi. He’d done so already.

It didn’t mean he wanted to, though.
The weeks bled into months.

Before he knew it, the northern hemisphere became winter, and Christmas tiptoed around the corner, his family tagging along behind it.

With the holidays came Mikasa.

And with Mikasa, Eren revisited memories of Levi, just like he always did, but this time, a sliver of warning escaped through the fortress of his desire, and he didn’t know how to feel.

With the lack of insulation in the summer home, his family migrated from the countryside to their city condo with the return of colder weather. His parents’ residence was halfway across the city from his university—yet, even though it was convenient, he rarely visited and opted to stay in the dorms—and also from Armin’s family’s home, where he chose to stay for the week and half following his final exams.

He liked Armin’s family—when they were home, that was. Their busy work schedules left Armin and himself in the flat by themselves the entire time, and though Eren knew their absence bothered Armin, this time around, he felt grateful for the one-on-one time with his best friend. In a pathetic attempt at sustaining life, they cooked various Italian dishes (courtesy of Eren, taught by Levi and stolen from the cookbook of his stepmother, now an Italophile) and burnt ramen (courtesy of Armin, who fucked up Eren’s comfort coffee, for god’s sake). Majority of their time was spent on Netflix—browsing classics of which Armin knew every detail and wanted to share every such detail with Eren—and the couch, where they ended up speaking of friends, college, and whatever came to mind.

Usually, they would avoid the house and discover the city together—Eren had the phone, Armin had the lack of direction that took them to new places—but with this winter break, Armin wanted to stay inside, waiting for Jean, who went on vacation to Thailand, to call his home’s landline. Some days, when they lied around the couch and Armin pondered the masochistic tendencies of human beings who inflict emotional pain on themselves and Eren heard him but didn’t listen entirely—he never could—the phone would ring, and Armin would fall off the couch in his hurry to answer. And while Armin excitedly buzzed into the phone to his roommate, Eren thought of Levi and Levi’s voice, and he wanted nothing more than to be Armin leaning against the wall, grinning into a telephone.

He never told his best friend of Levi, though he suspected Armin had his suspicions. But just like Eren kept his secrets, he could tell through that smile into the receiver that Armin kept his own.

That Christmas Eve, Eren said his farewell to Armin’s household and took the train, which was crowded and sweaty despite the biting cold, back to his own. He hugged his overnight bags to his chest as people sat by his sides and stood in front of him, turning the subway into a can of sardines. It was uncomfortable, an unwelcome intimacy, and when the intercoms buzzed with the announcement that the train would be temporarily delayed due to ice buildup on the tracks, he groaned, moving his gloved hand to his pocket to retrieve his phone and inform his parents.

Through the leather of his hobo gloves escaped his mobile, which oblivious passengers then
crushed and apologized for, meekly cleaning up the mess that was once the phone’s glass screen, and Eren froze, officially sensing some majorly bad mojo coming his way.

His mother greeted him when he finally arrived, taking off his shoes in the foyer, his bare feet meeting the carpeted flooring, making him pause. Though Eren didn’t mind the carpet, brick walls, or pinewood doors of their urban dwelling, he preferred the tatami, hardwood, and thin sheets of their Japanese home, and when he thought of that paper house, he thought of Levi and had to swallow down the memories rushing back to him.

“We were expecting you half an hour ago,” she scolded briefly before wrapping him in a warm hug, which he welcomed in contrast to the wind that lashed at his skin outside.

“She broke,” he offered as an explanation, and his mother gave him a dubious look until he pulled out the phone from his coat pocket.

She hummed sympathy then ushered him inside, shutting the front door behind him and saying, “Well, go take a seat by your father. Mikasa’s bus got stuck in the snow, so we’re behind on making dinner, too.”

He’d honestly expected dinner to be done at this rate, but upon seeing Mikasa, who looked at him blankly through the steam of what he assumed to be a pot of mashed potatoes, he supposed everyone was running late today.

His father rested on the couch in front of the muted television, reading through files Eren never understood. His mother scurried back to the kitchen, where Mikasa continued stirring the contents of the pot. Next to the stove, his mother multitasked, chopping vegetables—

*Levi chopped the carrots at the speed of light—*

—and making their usual dessert, a caramel pie.

Eren paused.

Usually this was the moment where he retreated to his room or followed her suggestion and made awkward conversation with his father, but instead, he laid down his bags by the entrance. Rolled up his sleeves. Walked on over to his mother and asked, “Is there anything I can do to help?”

She nearly dropped her knife out of shock, but when Eren smiled at her, she returned it. She handed him the wooden spoon for the pie mix, beginning to give instructions. “You can mix the pie filling for a bit. If you keep stirring—”

“The sugar will caramelize, and I’ll take it off the burner and turn off the stove,” Eren finished, spotting the cream mix already set off to the side, picking up on the step where she left off and sliding into the cooking role naturally. “I know.”

She gazed at him, wide-eyed, then laughed, unbelieving as the boy who could not make even a grilled cheese one year ago proceeded to stir the caramel sauce to perfection, scooping it out into the cream mix and stirring those together as well. A few moments later, he poured the final concoction onto the premade pie crust, his mother hovering over him, amused but amazed, asking, “Where did you learn to cook all of a sudden?”

The question caught him off-guard, sending his gaze into the finished pie purposely to avoid seeing the suspicious expression that she wouldn’t have granted him anyway. Some part of him considered fibbing, the name feeling tainted, losing its shine on the tip of his tongue, but then it floated through the air, left him for good, and Eren decided he didn’t regret it.
“Levi taught me.”

His mother paused her work for a moment, eyes widening, but then she nodded in understanding and continued where her chopping left off—no more questions asked—while Mikasa stared at Eren, seemingly interested. Usually, Eren felt trapped by her silent inquiries, but right then, he only felt liberation as he grabbed a blade and went to help cut vegetables, leaving the pie to sit.

It felt great mentioning Levi.

He missed saying his name.

Then he heard his father comment from his seat on the couch, perhaps on the edge of a joke, “At least the man has some idea of family values.”

His skin went cold.

His mother smiled awkwardly, like she found him humorous but couldn’t bring herself to laugh, and Mikasa stared at the window with rigid eyes.

Eren’s hand turned into a fist, clenching around the knife he held, and he wanted to say so much, but the right words escaped him. Instead, he tightened his jaw, snapping back, “I spent more time with him this summer than I have with you in years, so I’d say he has a greater idea of family values than you ever will.”

The moment the words left him, he should’ve probably regretted them.

But he didn’t, heaving a sigh of relief instead, as if the thought had been weighing on him for years now.

His mother turned to chide him, expression aghast at his disrespect; Mikasa gaped, her jaw dropped in shock; and his father’s glare burned into his spine, finally granting Eren the suspicious expression he’d been expecting for months.

He didn’t mind.

He didn’t regret defending—

No. More appropriately:

He just didn’t regret Levi.

Their dinner was quiet with idle chitchat of winter break thus far. Upon being prompted, Eren mentioned Armin introducing him to Humphrey Bogart and Lauren Bacall, but didn’t see anything else worthy of bringing up—not when his father was obviously still displeased with his son’s earlier comment.

His mother tried for conversation—she really did—but when her prodding did not produce any new fruit, she shifted the topic towards Mikasa, who informed them of her most recent irrigation project in Kenya as well as her work with a “Professor Leonhardt” to tackle issues of rape in the countryside in eastern African countries. His father finally opened his mouth in order to voice his approval of Mikasa’s achievements whereas his mother nodded and actively asked questions, Mikasa replying as politely and briefly as possible.

Eren stared into the caramel pie on his plate, feeling very far away from it all.
The conversation went static after the buzz of Mikasa’s latest news. Only the scraping of silverware on their plates echoed through the room, the usual festivity of a Christmas household slumbering under the table. Then his father’s phone rang, and the owner excused himself from the room to take the call, abandoning his food and dismissing the family from their stations at the table.

Eren couldn’t remember the last time a holiday dinner had felt so stifling, and he wasn’t sure if he was the cause of it, either.

Their mother entrusted the dirty dishes to Mikasa and Eren, who said goodbye to their father as he left for a work emergency. His mother seemed used to his sudden disappearances from the way she only waved goodbye to him—even though it was Christmas Eve.

Annoyance bristled within Eren at his father’s blatant show of hypocrisy.

“Family values” my ass.

Mikasa and Eren were quiet as they did dishes together, Mikasa probably being preoccupied with the chore whereas Eren silently seethed to himself, but eventually, Mikasa broke the quiet lingering in the room.

“I was surprised you mentioned my uncle Levi earlier.”

Eren froze, his muscles tensing, pondering her purpose and wanting to say he was just as surprised that she would mention him at all.

He wondered if she knew, and when her gaze drifted from the dishes to his face, he then questioned if she could hear his thoughts at all. But when their eyes met, an understanding settled between them, and Eren’s posture went slack, the edge slipping off of him like the leftover potatoes off his father’s plate.

Though he resented her excellence sometimes, Mikasa wasn’t her mother, and she especially wasn’t Eren’s father. He could trust her—not with all of the details, but enough that the existence of Levi was a safe topic.

“He taught me how to cook when Dad and Mom went to Italy,” he explained. Upon seeing her blank expression, he added, “He stayed at the summer house with me, if you didn’t know.”

“I didn’t,” she stated, her brows furrowed, her eyes troubled. “I didn’t know that you knew him at all.”

Eren was tempted to make a comment about how he certainly knew Levi more than she would have ever guessed, but of course, he didn’t.

Mikasa shook her head. “He stayed at the house? They went to Italy?” At Eren’s nods of confirmation, she stared into the running water on the sink—Eren had to refrain from turning it off—muttering, “Why didn’t I hear anything?”

Quickly, Eren realized he wasn’t the only one left out of the loop.

With this recognition, Mikasa was no longer his enemy. She never had been, her presence in a conversation usually existing to crush his own, but moments like these—when he realized they were in the same boat, just drifting in different waters—brought them together. Then the space between them didn’t feel as large as everyone made it out to be.
These times were the ones that brought him back to their adolescence, when they were nothing but stepsiblings—equals in a young world.

“I didn’t know, either, until I got to the house,” Eren told her, grabbing the last plate Mikasa cleaned and then, upon being glared at, swiftly returning it to the drying rack. “Levi was a surprise. Their trip was a surprise. I didn’t even remember who he was until after they left.”

Mikasa thinned her lips and exhaled noisily from her nose—one of her common signs of frustration—washing her hands after she set the final piece of tableware on the drying rack. She flicked off the water from her fingers before turning to Eren. “You want to make hot chocolate?”

Eren shook his head. “Don’t know how.”

At that, his stepsister smirked. “What? Levi didn’t teach you?”

Eren recognized the joke, but didn’t find it funny, mostly because he and Levi had spent the summer together—the hottest in years—and under those circumstances, why in the world would they have made scorching hot beverages to match?

Instead, he just stared at her.

She sighed and went to go turn on the stove.

Ten minutes later, she handed him a mug then sat across from him at the dining table, the dialogue from _It’s a Wonderful Life_ drifting in from the living room, where their mother had fallen asleep sometime ago. They continued their silence, sipping their respective drinks, burning their tongues in unison, when Mikasa suddenly said, “Thank you.”

Eren already knew what she meant, nodding. “I couldn’t let him say it.”

“I understand,” she continued. “I mean, sure, who he loves isn’t society’s top choice for a romantic partner, but it’s none of society’s business who he loves, either.”

Eren’s heart skipped a beat when he wondered if he should include himself in that statement, but he only nodded again, that knowing look Levi always gave him still fresh in his mind.

A stillness settled between them, and though Mikasa continued sipping her hot chocolate, unbothered, Eren felt on edge.

He needed more.

So much more.

“How is he?” he asked because the entourage of questions battering his brain—does he have a job? How’s his most recent research coming along? Have the bags under his eyes gotten worse?—was too sudden for him to verbalize properly.

“How is he?” was all he could say, but it didn’t feel like enough.

“He’s doing well,” Mikasa informed him, smiling, almost as if thanking him for asking. “He’d had trouble finding a job some time ago, but last we spoke, he was teaching at Maria Community College.”

“Anywhere but community college,” Levi grumbled, fingers hammering away on the keys—“You settle for the reality you’re given. And you know what? Reality’s not half-bad.”
The student blinked.

“Eren?”

“That’s right down the road from here,” he said slowly, staring off into the wall behind his stepsister.

She tilted her head in confusion. “Yeah…?”

Eren couldn’t believe it.

All those moments he stood in front of the mailbox box, terrified of his own choices’ possible consequences, and facing the eventual disappointment that his worries were always for naught with the fact a P.O. box didn’t work—when he could’ve simply visited his parents more often and possibly chanced meeting Levi on the streets.

He felt like a fool.

“He never mentioned that he stayed at the house this summer,” Mikasa mused, her features thoughtful as she tilted her head, focusing on her stepbrother’s face. “Why—?”

“House-sitting,” Eren filled in, having been around her long enough to know her train of thought. “They didn’t know I was—”

“I understand,” Mikasa said, and Eren realized the telepathy went both ways, his brain becoming conscious of his thoughts of Levi out of paranoia that Mikasa would somehow read it on his face. “And judging by Mom and Dad’s reactions, it didn’t go well?”

That was an understatement.

“They accused him of bringing men home,” Eren explained, the hickey on Levi’s neck a crystal clear image in his mind, “and he left the next morning—”

“Involuntarily,” Mikasa finished, seeming to already know.

He nodded.

She sighed, setting down her mug to cover her face with her hands. “Leave it up to Mom to abandon him all over again.”

Eren couldn’t say anything in response to that. Outside of the obvious, he didn’t know the details, and right now, he only remembered a younger Mikasa bothering to wave goodbye.

“Do you want his number?” she asked, and the spontaneous question skidded past him, making him wonder if he heard her right. And maybe his dumb look was obvious because she asked again, “Would you like to contact him?”

“Yes.” His nerves twisted, his tongue dry. His fingers twitched to do something with this opportunity. “I’d love to stay in touch.”

*More than anything—*

She smiled, grabbing a pen.

Not one bit of judgment in her actions.
Right then, he realized his newfound respect for his stepsister.

“I’m glad there are people like you, Eren,” she hummed, scribbling down Levi’s phone number from her phone, which Eren didn’t completely understand, since it was right there in her phone, they both had cell phones, how could she have forgotten this—

But then he remembered he no longer had a cell phone—he was a dumbass and dropped it on the fucking subway just a few hours ago. Still, it was Levi’s number, and nothing else really mattered.

“Sure, people are more open-minded nowadays,” she continued, clueless to the increase in Eren’s heartbeat as she wrote the last digit, “but finding someone who really doesn’t care—who looks past that and still connects so personally? I’m glad you’re like that.”

Eren stared at her, not sure what to say.

“He’s always had trouble with people, from what I can tell,” she confessed, handing her stepbrother the piece of paper, unaware of the true weight it held for him. “He never talks about his friends, and not a lot of people care—I don’t think anyone outside of me bothered to look up his contact info once my grandpa disowned him—so I’m glad you do.

“I’m really glad Levi met you.”

Eren’s breath caught in his throat, his fingers tightening around Levi’s number uncontrollably.

He felt so conflicted right now. No words could have left his mouth and still made sense.

Mikasa interpreted his silence how she wanted. Eren didn’t quite understand why she interpreted this way, but she added, “He was lonely some months ago. Now? Not so much.”

So, he’s happy without me.

That first thought cut through his skull, and he sat still and muted, unsure of how to feel.

She turned around to wash her mug in the sink and encouraged, “You should call him when you have time. He’d appreciate it.”

Eren nodded, but bit his lip.

He highly doubted that.

New Year’s rolled around the corner, and Eren still hadn’t gotten in touch with Levi.

Sometimes, he just imagined they would run into each other on the street now that he knew they were in the same city after all, the P.O. box’s address having been located in a city hours away. He imagined that he would exit the convenience store a few blocks away from his university and there would be Levi, on his daily jog, and they would chat about stupid, meaningful but unimportant things like usual. Other times, he stared at payphones in what probably seemed like a perverse manner, his attention hardened on the possibilities of punching in his number and beginning a conversation at random before he would continue walking, deciding right now wasn’t the best time, that he had chores to do and Levi had research to write.

He always came up with excuses; he knew it, recognized it fairly quickly, and yet did nothing to stop himself from putting it off.

The opportunities were there. They always were. He would think of the perfect thing to say—a
witty opening line to a conversation that could eventually lead to him asking the man out for tea sometime—*that man and his damn tea*—or even dinner somewhere—but then he would hesitate because, well, his cell phone was long gone. Conveniently forgetting the concept of a landline, Eren resigned himself to a winter break without any Levi contact, pouring himself the hot chocolate his sister had made earlier while newscasters reported the New Year’s Eve scene further into the city.

“Eren!” his stepmother called from the living room, Mikasa and his father talking about Mikasa’s upcoming “healthcare for the homeless” or anti-FGM or whatever project abroad. She seemed to have a million going on at once, and how she managed to write up a senior thesis in the midst of the chaos, Eren would never know.

He followed his mother’s voice, stepping inside to see everyone surrounding the coffee table, not watching the TV, where a famous singer had already been muted by someone, presumably his mother, who held a wrapped present.

“Um…” It was past Christmas. It wasn’t anyone’s birthday.

She beckoned him to the couch, patting the cushion beside her, and Eren hesitantly walked over, noticing how Mikasa and his father went quiet the moment he sat down.

He had no idea what was going on.

“Open it,” his mother said, handing him the box, and he stared at it for a moment before untangling the bow. He paused as he tore away the wrapping paper, the brand name becoming evident fairly quickly.

It was a cell phone.

*Phone.*

He looked up at his mother’s smile, father’s expectant expression, and Mikasa’s critical gaze, and inside, a part of him screamed soundlessly.

He had no excuses now, and that thought terrified him.

“How do you like it?” his mother asked, patting his knee, and he could only keep staring. Thinking of his lack of excuses from that moment onward. “Your dad and I thought we’d buy you a new one and just wait to give it to you on New Year’s rather than making you save up for one. It’s nice, right? It has all these new features—”

He had a *phone* now. Holy shit. “Thank you,” he cut her off, smiling as he turned it on and went through the activation steps.

She seemed taken aback, but grinned all the same. “You’re welcome,” she told him, pulling up the nearby laptop almost immediately. “I think our company has that one feature where you can see missed messages— Ah! Yep.” She handed him the computer, then stood up, grabbing his father’s and Mikasa’s empty wine glasses. “Just in case you missed anything important.”

Eren nodded and voiced his thanks, scrolling through “Merry Christmas” and “Happy New Year” messages, reading some drunken texts from Reiner and seeing some missed calls from Armin before his eyes settled on a number he didn’t recognize, but looked familiar.

He dug around in his pocket for the note that Mikasa wrote for him—Levi’s number.
He compared the two, almost jumping up in shock when he realized they were one and the same.

Levi had contacted him.

*Levi had contacted him.*

His hands shook, but he managed to scroll and click the number, waiting for the first few messages to load.

[12/25 10:48 AM]: *Eren, this is Levi. Mikasa gave me your number. Wasn’t sure if she gave you mine.*

[12/25 10:50 AM]: *Merry Christmas, btw.*

Eren scrolled.

There were more.

Ones asking how he was doing, if his family was better. Ones asking if he enjoyed the holidays thus far. Ones asking if he wanted to meet up and talk things through.

It had only been a few days, but Levi thought of him this much.

His heart swelled.

Levi gave him hope.

He grabbed his phone and went to the kitchen, where his mother was pouring his father and sister more wine.

He didn’t know what to expect from reconnecting with Levi. A continuation of their summer tryst? Apologies for what they’d done, excuses for why it happened, explanations for why it shouldn’t have? Spacy catching up stories, a friendly rendezvous turned awkward acquaintanceship? Eren hoped it was none of the latter options, but didn’t know what Levi wanted, which led to weights of worry resting in the pits of his stomach.

“Eren?” He could hear his mother shuffling as she went to exit the kitchen, peering at his back while he stared at his phone, willing himself to not turn around and leave any hints to his thoughts. “Anything up?”

“No,” he answered. “Just replying to a text from Reiner.”

He didn’t turn to see her nod, only focusing on her footsteps as she left and he was free to breathe.

He’d lied to her, but he couldn’t bring himself to care past the blood in his ears as he stared at Levi’s contact information—and the call button.

His finger lingered in the air because what if Levi’s feelings had changed? What if, among all of the chaos with Eren’s phone, he’d gotten sick and tired of waiting?

What if Eren wasn’t worth it?

*Oh—*

*“ACHOO!”*
He sneezed, and his finger had shaken just enough to hit the call button and give him a heart attack. He cursed internally as the call went on, and he had to fight his urge to hit the end button because he realized it wouldn’t do him any good. This was a sign from the gods, he decided, gathering his courage and turning it into resolve. Tonight, he would be brave and tell Levi how he truly felt. Tonight, he would be a man.

At least, that was what he thought until he heard Levi’s voice on the other line. “Hello?”

Click.

Eren hung up.

Oh, shit.

Why in the fuck did he do that, why in the—

He attempted to calm his heartbeat, but it didn’t work. His hands trembled, so he tried shaking the nervousness out to no avail. When the phone rang, he tried to gather his calm again, answering the cell in a somewhat weak voice, “Hello?”

“What the fuck is wrong with you?”

“Ah—”

Levi.

“You know, I—” Eren cut himself off, walking further down the hall to the balcony, where this conversation would have more privacy. “I honestly don’t know?”

A sigh on the other end. “Course.”

His heart beat in his ears.

Eren was certain he was going to lose it at this rate, if only because he was hearing Levi’s voice for the first time in months, like he had been every time he closed his eyes and—

He felt very romantic and gushy. It was more embarrassing than anything else, so he quickly squashed it, clearing his throat as he murmured, “Sorry for hanging up.”

“It’s fine,” Levi insisted, then quickly added, “No, actually. It’s not fine, but I assume you just panicked and hung up on accident.”

This man really knew him too well, Eren thought with a smile.

“Did you see my texts?” Levi asked, drawing Eren back down from the clouds, and he nodded before realizing phones didn’t work that way, vocalizing a “yes” instead. “Good, good. When are you—”

“FUCK!”

Eren knocked into a desk as he walked, cursing and cutting off Levi as he grabbed at his leg, hissing in air like it would relieve the sudden pain and gathering his strength to reassure his panicked mother in the other room that he was alright.

“What happened?” Levi asked, concerned, and though his tone of voice was appreciated, Eren
couldn’t fully bask in it because *ow*.

 Fuck. “I ran into the table out in the hallway,” he explained weakly, his shin aching as he finally reached the balcony. *Probably going to bruise,* he thought with a grimace.

Levi laughed wholeheartedly—such a foreign sound after so long; it surprised Eren every time he heard it. “You’re so fucking stupid,” he sighed.

Eren resented that.

Then Levi hummed contently, reminding Eren of when they first cleaned together.

The memories flooded back to him so easily all of the time, and he wondered—

“Why did you wake me up at three in the morning with a feather duster?” Eren asked, eyes wandering to the traffic below, regretting it instantly.

He didn’t like looking down. Too many floors he could fall from.

He looked up instead to the dark, empty sky.

“You and these random, personal questions,” Levi criticized, voice not necessarily annoyed—maybe even entertained? “God, I missed them. I missed you.”

Eren couldn’t breathe. Just like that, Levi managed to knock the wind out of him all over again, turning his thoughts into scrambled eggs.

And while having this effect on Eren, he continued speaking like normal. Eren wouldn’t have expected anything less of the man, to be honest.

“I wanted to clean early because I thought it’d make your mom happy,” Levi admitted, and from that information, Eren already knew the rest, remembering when Levi had been careful and considerate of him and his words their first night—

“Are you sure you want this?”

A pause, maybe interpreted as a comfortable silence by Levi, passed.

Eren’s family counted down in unison with the television. It must’ve been closer to midnight than he’d expected, but his pulse thudded in his temples from more than just the excitement of the new year ringing throughout the streets down below, drowning out his own thoughts.

“Eren?”

He almost dropped his new phone in surprise. “Yes?”

“I’ve been wanting to know—just in case, you don’t—did you ever want to meet again?”

The sky of the city had no stars, but under it, Eren suddenly felt infinite again. A bit more bigger and hopeful—a bit less smaller and hopeless.

“I made this decision myself.”

“Levi—” He forced a mouthful of air down his dry throat. “Where are you now?”
He raced around the house, putting on his winter coat and leather gloves, hoping he would be able to ride the train across town at this hour, knowing the number of people who rode the train around the city at midnight on New Year’s was about the same number of people who stayed inside with their families. He was tying his shoelaces when he finally heard his mother question the commotion for his movements, and he only grunted back in response, “I’m gonna go see a friend.”

“At this hour?” his father questioned skeptically, and Eren almost—scratch that, did roll his eyes. “You seem awfully excited to go meet a friend right with the turn of the new year.”

Eren turned to give him a piece of his mind, but on cue, his mother drew away his attention, suggesting, “Probably a girl, Grisha. No need to be hostile.” Her husband grimaced at her, to which she clucked, shaking her head. “Eren’s young. Let him live how he wants while he can.”

Eren scrutinized his old man’s expression—solemner than Eren had expected, its meaning indefinable—but wound up meeting Mikasa’s gaze instead, which read discreetly:

*Go.*

He didn’t hesitate.

“It’d be nice if he really has found someone who makes him happy, though,” he heard his mother muse aloud as he stood, shoes tied, winter gear secure.

He could feel Mikasa’s eyes on his back as she spoke, as he opened the front door, as loud cheers echoed through the bustling streets, celebrating the start of the new year.

“Yes, it would.”

When he finally managed to board a train, the subway having been full of people coming and going, he found himself surrounded by partygoers, most of them drunk with no concept of personal space. Eren crammed himself into the space by the door, not wanting to miss his opportunity to leave the train, but then a rambling person knocked down a young girl, sending her purse contents all over the floor, and when Eren decided to help, he managed to miss his stop.

While waiting for the next one—luckily not too far away—he cursed his luck and checked his watch. Ten minutes after the meeting time already, and he felt the urge to scream, the fear of Levi abandoning him imminent.

But Levi wouldn’t turn him away just because he hadn’t arrived on time—Eren knew this from the way Levi had ruffled his hair, sipping from a coffee mug and readjusting his glasses.

He was patient, even if he didn’t look it.

*Oh, god,* Levi.

The moment the train rumbled to a stop, Eren jolted out of it, through the station platform, and onto the streets. Ice coated every step of the way, the streetlamps burning with something festive and jolly, and when he turned corners, he watched his feet, balancing his heels to make sure he didn’t slide into traffic.

He ended up tripping into snow the moment he turned onto the desired street, and he cursed, wiping away the remnants as he paid closer attention to the numbers lining apartment awnings, looking for the one Levi listed—
—and finding it almost instantly.

At the assigned address, a man stood at the entrance, turning a key to lock the door as he readjusted his coat and mittens, twisting his body around to skip down the iron staircase.

In the glow of the streetlights, Eren could see that snowflakes had stuck to his hair, his earmuffs, and his scarf, and it warmed his heart, the thought that Levi was all bundled up for the cold—and now, probably going to look for him.

It was just as he had imagined.

That moment, Levi turned his head left down the road, then to the right, where he saw Eren for a short moment and his eyes widened. “Ah,” Levi said just as he stumbled through the piles of snow on the stairwell, falling face first into a mound on the sidewalk below.

Eren stood and stared, breathing hard, unsure of how to react.

He’d never seen Levi have a clumsy moment before.

Like a gopher from the ground, Levi’s head popped up from the snow, and when he realized Eren had made no move to assist him, he fought with the winter’s ice to stand upright and shouted, “You asswipe; you couldn’t at least ask if I was alright?”

“My ass missed you,” Eren interjected, as if it were his explanation, thinking about the cucumber incident and the long nights he spent only comfortably warm under his bed’s covers instead of disgustingly hot without them, walking towards Levi, who scooted through the ice, meeting him halfway.

As Levi drew closer, Eren could see his lips tighten in amusement. “Were you trying to be romantic just now?”

They were close, ridiculously close now. Eren wasn’t sure how much contact was allowed, if any was allowed, but then their chests brushed for the first time in months.

Though they were both wearing coats, Eren melted at the comforting contact, his hesitation disappearing with it. “Yes,” Eren confessed lamely, arms drifting lazily around Levi’s sides.

Levi laughed again, that full-on laugh that caught Eren off-guard every time, and this time, Eren could feel its vibrations along his arms and chest. He dumbly noted this was the first time he felt Levi laugh, and then Levi brushed his forehead against Eren’s, his bangs wet with winter.

From the hands gripping his coat’s front or the lips rapidly approaching his own—Eren didn’t know, but he couldn’t breathe.

He didn’t fall immediately into it like it was natural, but when his cold mouth met Levi’s warm lips, the feeling was natural, carved into nerves, and Levi bit his bottom lip, sending blood there, restarting Eren’s circulation, and suddenly, they were so close. Eren’s breath flew away with his insecurities about their time apart, his mouth reuniting with Levi’s. For once, the summer was not what defined their kiss, making their spit feel steamy and desperate; for once, when their wet mouths met the air, the skin froze, and Eren shivered.

Levi’s gloved fingers drifted from the front of Eren’s coat to the back of his neck, brushing the small hairs there, and their kiss slowed its pace, contentment falling around them like the calm snow above.
There were so many things he wanted to say. So many things he wanted to do. So many things he wanted to do to Levi. So many things he wanted to be done to him by Levi. And yet, the only thing that managed to fall from his lips:

“So, then,” Eren started against Levi’s lips, which hummed under his touch, “it’s ‘next time,’ right?”

Levi looked surprised for a moment, then snorted, a burst of air hitting Eren’s face that he didn’t particularly mind. “Remembering that stupid shit,” he muttered, lips quickly pecking Eren’s chin. “You’re that desperate to fuck—”

“I like you,” Eren interrupted him, eyes trained on Levi’s expression, and he felt the fingers on the back of his neck freeze from more than just the cold of winter as Levi stared up at his nose, not quite meeting his eyes.

It felt like Levi never quite met his eyes when they weren’t screwing, and Eren wasn’t sure how to feel about this, so he allowed his thumb to trace the edge of Levi’s jaw instead. He kissed the cheekbone on the other side, feeling a reply to his confession wasn’t necessary, but then Levi gripped some of his hair and pulled down his head so that their tongues could meet and tango.

In the midst of the snow, ice below, and wind blowing above, Eren started to pop a boner.

“Fucking ridiculous, as always,” Levi duly noted, and Eren smiled sheepishly, to which Levi rolled his eyes, his glasses fogging up from Eren’s breath. “C’mon,” he encouraged, his hand intertwining with Eren’s naturally as he led him into his apartment building. “It’s warmer inside.”

From behind Levi, Eren saw his ears glow red.

It reminded him of when he complimented Levi, how he couldn’t tell if it was embarrassment or the summer overheating his features, and now, he wasn’t sure if the red signified embarrassment or the extreme winter cold biting his skin.

But he hoped he could, one day, figure it out.

Chapter End Notes

I left the story here because it felt right. Tried to make this as realistic as I possibly could, but here, without any solid conclusion, seemed most like real life to me. Where we don’t know if Eren ever tells Mikasa or Armin or anyone about Levi. Where not every question is answered and some things are left unresolved. Where Eren never gets a full confirmation of Levi’s feelings for him, but there’s still hope.

There may be an one-shot sequel or two or three to this. Not sure. Maybe one to wrap up questions left by this story concerning Eren and Levi’s relationship. Maybe a Jearmin one-shot centered around this universe. Maybe an implied Mikani one-shot about her humanitarian projects abroad. That one should be interesting.

Also, I’m a really big fan of blowjobs, in case none of you noticed. I’m not even sorry.

Another note: I have the feeling some people will want to mention “Thanksgiving comes before Christmas” in their reviews, and I’m just gonna say I tried to make the
fic universal so that it could take place in any non-American, Westernized country out
there (except Australia because Northern Hemisphere, LOL; those silly willy
nincompoops down under).

In thanks: Want to thank all of the BigBang chat for dealing with my shit. My artist
Cissy for dealing with my shit. The BigBang coordinator Nana for dealing with my
shit. My friends Ashely, Lulu, Tori, Nizhoni, and Rena for dealing with my shit. Even
Kirran, Cat, and Crunchy, the Aussies, for dealing with my shit. Oh god, where would
I be without you people constantly dealing with my shit.

With all this said, thank you, everyone, for taking the time to read my first Ereri fic
ever. It's been a blast, guys, and I gobble up reviews like Eren and Levi do dicks,
apparently, so if you ever feel like leaving feedback, it's always welcome. I sincerely
hope you enjoyed this fic.

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