Haruka wasn’t depressed. He was just wounded, he was fine. Everything was fine. Or so he wanted to believe.

After almost three years of the incident, Haru can’t seem to snap out of his state of numbness and Nagisa, tired of his best friend’s’ destructive behavior will take matters into his own hands, by taking him into a masquerade ball for single guys, trying to get his friend to get a night of hot and anonymous sex to make him forget, even if just for a while, the absolute sadness in which he lives in.

But what Haru didn’t expect was encountering with a pair of striking green eyes, soft hands and a voice as smooth and sensual that not even the most imaginative of authors could ever come up with, that set fire to his skin and made a tiny spark of hope blossom in his heart. Fate or simple coincidence? That is for Haru to decide.
Notes

So this is my first fic and I was actually a little nervous about posting it, but I just have had this idea of a masquerade ball going around in my head for quite some time, so this is the result. Hope you like it!

See the end of the work for more notes.
“Please don’t go…” He choked out, eyes filled with unshed tears, heart hammering on his rib cage.

He looked at him with such a great sadness in those emerald eyes he had come to love so much, eyes that now were boring into his own, “I’m sorry, but I can’t do this, I just… can’t.” He said, voice void of any emotion. He smiled back at him but without a trace of humor, it was more like a defeated expression.

It terrified him.

“Goodbye, mon saveur de liqueur.” He said turning his back and walking forward, and this time...

He didn’t look back.

A FEW MONTHS BEFORE

“A Vanilla Mocha with cinnamon and an order of chocolate cake coming right away!”

‘God, people can hear just fine, there’s no need to yell’ Haru thought for the millionth time after he heard Nagisa’s’ yell from behind the counter. He really wanted to tell his friends this and that they will probably get scolded by the manager (again) if he didn’t stop yelling like that, but he knew that he would just be dismissed with a wave of the hand and a, “You worry too much Haru-chan… and besides, Rei-chan loves me.” This followed by a wink and another ear wrenching yell.

Nagisa was Haru's’ best friend since he could remember, they had grown up in Iwatobi a little town by the coast of Japan. He was a short blond of magenta eyes, hyperactive, cheerful and playful. They had went to elementary school and highschool there in Iwatobi, it wouldn’t have been surprising if they had went to college there and live there until they died, a depressing thought for most people, but not for Haruka. In the end they had both wanted to go outside of their little town, it was more of Nagisa's’ dream, but Haru, who always ended up getting dragged into the blonde's’ plans had went along with him. He really wouldn’t have minded staying in Iwatobi living a quiet and tranquil life, eating mackerel, going to the local university and swimming in their local pool or at Coach Sasabe’s’ swimming school while helping with the kids. But he would have been lying if he said that he wasn’t even a little bit curious about how it was outside of his little hometown. So after applying at a university in Tokyo, they moved there 2 months after graduating highschool. A decision that would mark him for life, making his existence the living hell, he was currently in, and all because of a red passionate gaze, that… ‘Stop,” Haruka thought to himself, he wasn’t going to think of him today… that was reserved for tomorrow.

So anyway, here they were Haru on his third year of university with a mayor on Nutrition & Health, and a minor in art; while Nagisa was on his third year as well, but in a mayor on physics.
Interesting fact about Nagisa: He was a damn genius.

Seriously, people wouldn’t think so but the kid despite his childish attitude and distracted and cheerful nature, had a brilliant mind, he could remember all kinds of mixes and elements, he could tell you by memory all of the properties of all the substances discovered until today.

Haruka sighed for the thousand time this week. It wasn’t intentional, he just wasn’t feeling all that well today, it probably had to do with the fact that he hadn’t been able to take his morning bath due to him oversleeping, something that rarely happened, but with Nagisa's’ state last night it couldn’t had been helped.

Another relevant fact to Nagisa's’ personality: He loves liquor and parties.

So of course by “state” it meant downright and utterly drunk.

It had been a little past 1:30 AM, when Haru's’ phone started ringing, the annoying theme Nagisa had set on the device cutting through the peaceful silence of the night. Haru had seriously considered letting the phone ring, but having a feeling that it might be Nagisa (for the blond had mentioned that he was going to a party that night), he reached out a hand to the table next to his bed to get the phone.

“Hello?” He had asked in a sleepy tone, for it was almost 2:00 in the morning for god's’ sake!

“Ha-Ha-Haru-chaaaaan…” He could hear his best friend's’ voice, and it wouldn’t have taken a genius to see how far gone Nagisa was, if the hiccuping and the stumbling of words wasn’t a sign he didn’t know what could be one. “Wha-t a-re you doeng Haru-chaaaaan? Whe-e-re are y-iu? I can’t find youuuuu…”

“Where are you Nagisa?” Haruka asked, getting to the point already, Nagisa sounded wasted, more so than usual.

“You know where I am, Haru-chan.” He giggled.

Haruka sighed again.

“C’mon Nagisa, if I knew I would already be there. Now tell me where you are!” Haru exclaimed, raising his voice a little, this wasn’t all that new, Nagisa would always go on parties and then find himself in a state where he couldn’t even walk, and Haru would come to pick him up to wherever he was. It had been that way since highschool, but it was the third time that week and the lack of sleep was getting on Haru's’ nerves.

“Awwww… you’re no fun Haru-chan.” The blond whined into the speaker, “Fine, I’m at th-i-e new bar 3 blocks dou-wn the c-co-ffe shop.”

Haru exhaled in relief, that had been easy, it would’ve been a problem if Nagisa had decided to
play riddles until he had enough ‘clues’ to guess where his friend was at.

“Okay, don’t move I’m on my way.” Haru told him, for he knew that if he didn’t tell Nagisa to stay grounded, by the time he got there he wouldn’t be there anymore.

Nagisa snorted “I c-c-un barely speak, much less w-w-walk, Haru-chan.” And with that, the line went dead.

It had taken Haruka 15 minutes to get to where Nagisa had told him he was at, for he lived fairly close to the coffee shop where they both worked at. It didn’t take Haru to do that much of a search, when he spotted the shadow of a blond man passed out in the sidewalk. Haruka exhaled deeply and got out of the car.

“Nagisa, wake up! C’mon Nagisa, I can’t carry you, help me out a little…” He said while shaking his friend awake.

Nagisa's' eyes fluttered open slowly, “Ha-Haru-chan?” He asked, his gaze unfocused.

“Yeah, it’s me. Now come on.” He said while slouching so he could get a hold on Nagisa. “C’mon Nagisa, I can’t hold you up on my own, try standing and then walking a little.”

Nagisa did as Haru instructed and so they walked to Haru’s’ car, then he proceeded to buckle him up and with a little bit of luck they made it to Haru's’ apartment with no further problems. Just of course that by the time they got back it had been 3:18 AM and they had an early shift at the coffee shop at 7:00 AM, meaning they had to wake up at 5:30 AM if they wanted to be on time.

So yeah, here he was barely staying awake, trying to stand on his own and not yawn every two seconds, while preparing the orders Nagisa insisted on yelling. And of course while he was standing there looking like crap, Nagisa was there looking fresh and without a trace of the hangover that anyone would surely have after last night. It wasn’t that he was resenting his friend, but it really was beyond him how he could be so… cool, while he was here trying not to black out from the lack of sleep.

Well, he guess he couldn’t totally blame Nagisa for his mood, after all tomorrow was the day and…

No, he was going to stop that train of thought if he didn’t want to be reduced to a sentimental mess. He glanced back at Nagisa and noticed that his friend was looking at him with a look that said ‘Will you hurry up?’ Haruka looked back at him for a moment, before remembering that he was at work and he was supposed to be preparing an order.

Rapidly, focusing on the task at hand he took the coffee machine and set into “Mocha mode”, meanwhile he took the chocolate cake from the oven and cut a piece and put into a plastic plate. The coffee machine signaled that the coffee was done and so he went for a disposable cup with the name of the shop “Cinnamon Taste.

“Order ready.” He said.

“Right about time it was, Haru-chan.” Answered Nagisa while taking the coffee and cake. Haruka just sent his friend an irritated glare, that the other completely ignored.

Haru sighed again, it was going to be a long day.
“Okay good job today, you can go home now.” Rei said, as he put the last of the dishes on top of the kitchen table, while he pulled his red framed glasses up his nose.

“REIIIII-CHAAAAAN!” Nagisa yelled, yet again, Rei shoulders fell as if he had been holding his breath expecting something and had gotten the let down of a lifetime. “Come and have a drink with me tonight!” He said, in what Haruka could only guess was a flirty tone.

“Nagisa-kun, I think I’ve told you to refrain from calling me that. And second, I thought I left it clear last time we talked that we couldn’t go out for we are co-workers, and what’s even worse I’m your boss!” Rei said that in a tone of voice that left little to no room for discussion, but of course Nagisa would never get that.

“But Reeeei-chaaan, I know you like me, and I like you. So why don’t we have fun for just one night?” Nagisa shot back with a smirk on his face.

“No. And that’s final Nagisa-kun. Goodnight.” He then turned to Haruka and directed a curt nod in his direction. “Haruka-kun.” And with that he turned around and left, without any further comments.

Nagisa sighed, but obviously not in defeat, just resignation for the time being. “I will get him to date me, just you wait and see Haru-chan.” He said with a bright smile on his face.

Haruka that had been hearing the exchange between the two didn’t say anything, for by now he was more than used to the continous back and forth between his friend and his boss.

Rei Riuugazaki, taller than Haru, but not by much, blueish hair, enough muscle in his body, an intelectual personality which sought the logic out of everyone and everything, obsessed with ‘beautiful things’ and red framed glasses to complete the nerdy look that Nagisa seemed so attracted to, was Haru's and Nagisa's boss, two years older than both of them, he was a college student in his last year of medicine, planning on getting his speciality on neurosurgery.

He was someone Haru respected, not for his brains or something of the sort, but because he had been able to deny Nagisa for almost a year now, which was by a long shot the longest time Nagisa had been after someone and that someone hadn’t fallen into his little diabolic hands.

“By the way Haru-chan, tomorrow you’re coming with me to a party.” Nagisa said with a casual tone but with an evil glint on his eyes.

“No.” Was Haru's immediate response.

“I’m sorry Haru-chan, but I’m not letting you get out of this one.” He said with determined eyes. “After all, tomorrow’s the day, isn’t it? What were you going to do? Sulk in your aparment until two in the morning while you take a bath like you’ve been doing for the past two years, almost three now?” Nagisa said with sharpness that made Haruka wince.

He couldn’t deny that that’s exactly what he had been planning on doing, of course there was no way he was gonna tell Nagisa that he was right.

After all, tomorrow was the day he let himself crumble, the one day of the year he let all of his emotions tumble out, the day he dropped the facade that he was fine and just let himself hurt.

Yes, if he was honest with himself he knew that it was a pretty destructive behavior, but he couldn’t help himself, he had been the one person Haruka had loved the most, and now he was
Nagisa’s’ face softened and he looked a little guilty for his little outburst. ‘Good’ thought Haru ‘At least he knows when he’s messed up.’

“Just listen to me Haru-chan.” He said with a serious tone, one he almost never used, unless it was really important, and by that making Haru turn to look at him. “You know I love you like a brother, we’ve been together since I can remember, so seeing you like this is really painful for me as well…” He paused to collect his voice which had cracked in the last part. “I can’t continue seeing you auto-destroy yourself, as much for you as it is for me. It’s almost been three years since what happened with Rin-chan.” Haruka grimaced at the mention of his name. “But really, this is beyond ridiculous,” Haru made a face at his choice of words, “Well, maybe not ridiculous, but it’s been enough of this, whatever this is. It’s time for you to try again, I’m not saying that you have to go out there and fall in love with the first person you see, but maybe even if you just go and get laid,” Now Haru’s’ eyes were definitely open in surprise, “or just… anything. But because I know that you won’t be doing any of this things, I’ve decided to give you a little push,” Now Nagisa’s’ eyes were definitely glowing, “tomorrow you, Rei-chan and I will be going to a masquerade ball for single guys, and you’re going to have fun and find a nice, sexy guy, with whom you’re going to spend the night, and then tomorrow you’re going to call me first thing in the morning… no wait, better call me on the afternoon, to tell me everything of how hot and awesome was the sex, and to tell me I’m like, the best friend ever, and everyone will be happy, got it?”

Now Haru, was shocked, it wasn’t like this was the first time Nagisa had tried something to get him out of his ‘mood’, but still this, this was actually ridiculous.

“Okay Nagisa, first I appreciate you being concerned for me, but this is totally unnecessary.” Nagisa was going to interrupt at this, but Haruka beat him to it, “Second, I know it’s been almost three years, don’t you think I know?!” And at that Haru had to stop to try and swallow the lump on his throat. Dammit, he was losing his cool, he took another breath to try and calm himself down “I know this isn’t healthy, and that it’s self destructive, but I can’t help it, okay? This is just my way of dealing with things. Third, even if I agree to this insane plan of yours, I don’t have a mask or even something to wear to this b-”

Now it was Nagisa’s’ turn to interrupt “Ah, but I already took care of that, all you have to do is bath, put some cologne on, and look pretty. The mask and the suit are already in the closet of your apartament, new and ready to use.” He winked and smiled up at Haru.

Haruka sighed, how many times made it now? He had lost count.

Nagisa sighed as well, but looked up to him and said with an authoritarian tone, “Look Haru, you’re coming tomorrow like it or not, even if I have to drag you there myself, I will do it, okay? So you might as well accept this for what it is. I’m not taking no for an answer and that’s that, so now go on, have a nice night of sleep, for we have a big night tomorrow, okay?” And without waiting for an answer from Haru, he turned around and left.

Haruka runned his hands through his hair. He was so fucked… he really didn’t want to go, but he knew better than to underestimate Nagisa and try to bail on him.

Haruka grunted, he walked to the entrance of the coffe shop, changed the sign from ‘open’ to ‘closed’ and closed the door with the key.

It was a cold night in Tokyo, they were at the begining of winter after all. Haru entertained himself by looking up at the sky, to try and not think of what he was going to be doing tomorrow night at this time, not that you could see all that much with all of the neon lights and signs from
different establishments that were just coming to life. There wasn’t that many people on the streets anymore for it was really passed the time of closing of a normal store.

He glanced at his wrist watch, and saw that it read 9:33 PM, so by the looks of it he had been with Nagisa about an hour in the store, this fact surprised him a little for he felt like it had been no more than 20 minutes, but oh well.

Not before long he was unlocking the door to his apartament and filling in the bath. After seeing that it was almost full, he closed the faucet and was about to start stripping down when he remembered what Nagisa had told him about a suit and a mask being ready for him to use on his closet. With curiosity getting the best out of him, he went into his room and went straight to his closet. It wasn’t like if it was that big of a trip to his room, the apartament which he rented was small, but big enough for him to be comfortable. A little corridor connected the entrance to the little living room wich led to a small kitchen with a stove, an oven an a little dishwasher and a little but spacious cupboard. Then he had a room where he slept in, a bathroom next to it and a little study which was a bonus, for it was the most spacious room in the apartament, it had originally been the master bedroom, but Haruka hadn’t need that much space and so had inverted the rooms, making the master bedroom the study, and the study his room. It had been a good decision, for had he not done it, all of his paintings and paperwork from college wouldn’t have fit in and he would’ve ended up losing them.

Either way going back to the task at hand, Haru opened the door to his closet. At first he didn’t notice it, but then after really paying attention, he noticed a black bag and two boxes at the feet of it.

Taking the boxes out first and then the bag, he laid all three items on the bed. First he opened the bag, inside was a black tuxedo, complemented with a white shirt and a black tie. How Nagisa knew Haru’s size in shirt, jacket and pants, was still a mystery, and even more so how he had managed to snick in all of the items without him noticing.

Haru zipped the bag up again while shaking his head. Then, he opened the largest of the two boxes, this one contained a pair of shoes, plain black and very elegant, Haru assumed they were supposed to complement the whole look. Closing the box, he then turned his attention to the last box, one about half the size of the one where the shoes were.

His eyes shot opened in surprise as he saw what was in it.

Inside the third box, on the middle of it was a black mask, one meant to cover nothing more than half of his face, but this one was like any other Haru had seen (not like he had seen that many but still), it had delicate silver decorations all along the contour shaped like small waves that fused with other smaller decorations in a kind of brilliant black that made it stand out from the mask itself. If Rei had been there, he would have qualified it as beautiful, and for once Haruka would’ve agreed.

Tearing his gaze from the mask, not without effort, he glanced down at the bottom part of the box, where two identical cufflinks of sapphire lay, shinning on the dim light of the room, obviously meant to go along the wrist of the jacket.

Closing the box, he shoved all of the things on his closet once again.

He wasn’t going to go.

He was definitely not going to go.
He wasn’t getting excited.

He hadn’t liked that mask even the slightest bit.

He wasn’t getting interested.

Not at all.

.

.

.


He was so going to go.

And he was so going to regret it or so he wanted to believe.
Chapter 2

Chapter Summary

In which you get a sneak pick into Haru's' subconscious.

Chapter Notes

So, here's chapter two. Hope you enjoy ^^

See the end of the chapter for more notes

He’s leaving.

He’s leaving.

He’s leaving.

“Well, that was the last of my bags…” He didn’t turn. “If I left anything please call me and I’ll come to pick it up as soon as I can.” This time he did turn around to face him.

Oh no, he couldn’t see him straight in the eyes, if he did all of his resolve would crumble to pieces, and he would start begging him not to leave. After all, this was the correct choice, he knew it was, everyone knew it was, so… why did it feel so wrong? Why did he feel like if he couldn’t breath? Why did he feel so constricted, like if instead of the releaf he ought to be feeling, he was feeling more trapped than before?

All of this passed through his mind in an instant. He looked at him straight in the eyes, those eyes that seemed like a magnet that just wouldn't let him see anything but them, with a blank expression on his face… or at least what he hoped would be one.

“No, if I find anything I’ll just mail it to you, so you don’t have to come.” He said with hurt and venom in his voice. Shit. If his face wasn’t going to give him away, then his voice was definitely going to.

He closed his eyes as if he was very tired of discussing with a little child, who refused to acknowledge that he was wrong. “Haru…” He said, while rubbing his eyes and unconsciously reaching out a hand to stroke his face.

He backed off immediately. No. No. No. If he touched him, it was over, he wouldn’t be able to resist his touch, it was hard enough with his face and voice.
He sighed and opened his eyes. Ruby red piercing through clouded blue, but unable of deciphering what they were trying to communicate, not that he ever could or that he was really trying to.

“Well then, goodbye… I guess.” And so, he grabbed his bags and started opening the door.

He’s leaving.

Half of his body and bags already through the threshold.

He’s leaving.

He reached out a hand to try and stop him.

He’s leaving.

Hands grasping nothing but thin air.

He’s leaving.

And then, the door shut with a quiet click.

He left.

And he broke down.

Haruka woke up with a start and his heart on the throat. He sat on the bed trying to catch his breath again. It had been nearly a year since he had last had the dream. Not that it surprised him. Every year he dreamed the same, on the exact same day, without delay, it always came; and it always left Haru like if he had been choking on his sleep. But this time, it had been worse, undeniably worse. It was as if he had gone through it again, as if his heart was breaking into a thousand tiny pieces and he was desperate to cling to some of them to try and not lose everything he once was.

He tasted salt on his lips and felt a dampness on his cheeks.
Damn it. He had been crying on his sleep. Of course he wasn’t surprised, everytime for the past three years, on this exact day, he would wake up with a start, covered in sweat and with the traces of tears on his face. It wasn’t new or surprising, but it certainly didn’t make him feel any less pathetic or frustrated. Frustrated because he didn’t like to show weakness to anyone, no even himself and pathetic, because well… who couldn’t get over a past love in a three years span?

“Well, obviously you can’t.” Retorted his subconscious.

Haru made a face and turned to look at his clock over the nightstand.

4:13 AM

Haruka sighed, at least it wasn’t so early he couldn’t get a bath and be sure to catch a cold. Taking a deep breath, he kicked the sheets a side and stood up to walk to the bathroom and start running the water to fill the bathtub.

Stripping on the his way to the bathroom, he didn’t even stop to put on his swimsuit, far too tired and wanting nothing more but to soak and let the water take his problems away, if only for a little while. Once in there, he quickly turned on the faucet and water started filling up the tub. While he waited he glanced at his reflection on the mirror.

Bad idea.

To put it nicely, he looked like crap. He was pale, more so than usual. His lips, were dry and pale as if he hadn’t drink a single drop of water in days. He had dark bags under his eyes, not only due to the nightmare but obviously having contributed. But the worst part were his eyes, the brilliant blue orbes that usually accompanied his delicate features, now were a dull blue, staring to something but really at nothing. Well, most people would’ve freak out if they had found themselves in such a state, but he wasn’t. He was used to it, by now waking up like this on this day was normal. As disturbing as that may sound. Turning back from the mirror and the miserable reflection it offer, he turned off the faucet and slipped in the tub, water softly enveloping him in an affectionate embrace, like a mother.

That’s right, the only constant in his life had been the water, everyone always left him, no matter how much they told him otherwise or how much they meant it at the moment, they always left in the end. Haruka couldn’t really blame them, he wasn’t someone who could offer much but demanded a lot. Honestly, not even him would pick himself, it may be a cold way of thinking about oneself, but it was the truth.

Of course he had open his heart once and let himself believe that it was going to work, that he had finally found someone who would be there with him no matter what, someone that could and would stand by his side, loyally and without a doubt, and so would he with that person. But he had been wrong.

Oh so terribly wrong.

At first everything had been fine, he had given everything he had, had done everything he could, and thought that would be enough, that he would receive the same in return, and at first he thought he was. But then, everything started to change. Calls, texts and dates started to be less and less frequent. A cold and uninterested atmosphere would form everytime they saw each other, but it didn’t matter if he tried to talk to him, for every time he asked, the other would just brush it off and say everything was fine, that he was over reacting, and for a while everything would be as before, but it would quickly turn cold and tense, even more so than last time. It got to the point where they couldn't even be in the same room for more than a couple of minutes before it turned so
uncomfortable both of them looked for excuses to leave. He would spend nights thinking and over thinking everything, trying to figure out what had gone wrong, all of course, without succes. And every time, every single time he saw him, everything became darker and darker, fight after fight would take place, spiteful and hurtful words were exchanged, with nothing more but the intention of scaring the other, and hadn’t both of them done a good job, what both of them said left a scar in Haru that ran so deep and had bled so much that even today the wound was still fresh, open and pulsing, that he really didn’t know how to live without it anymore, couldn’t even remember how he had lived without the constant pain on his chest. And so Haru had found himself in a hole that he had all but carved for himself and that at that point he was unable to get out of. He was broken, hurt and confused, and had wanted nothing more than to disappear. And he probably would have, if it hadn’t been for Nagisa.

Ah, Nagisa.

Yes, hadn’t it been because Nagisa had been there for him, he probably would’ve submitted himself to the darkness that had settled on his life. Of course at first he had been angry at him, but realizing that negative emotions wouldn’t have any effect on him (for he had plenty of them himself), he had helped him to get back on his feet once again, if maybe not as a complete version of himself, at least as something more than what he would’ve been hadn’t he been there.

Another interesting fact about Nagisa: He was the best friend everyone wished they had.

While it was true that he could be annoying and a little prick, Haruka still didn’t know what he would do or where he would be without him, he was the only person that had stayed by Haru’s side, independently of how Haru treated him or what he did to make him go away, of course at times it would be a pain, but most of the time Haruka was glad Nagisa could be so oblivious to people’s desires, for he knew that if Nagisa had listen to what he told him, he probably would’ve left a long time ago. So if there was anyone Haru was grateful to, it was Nagisa.

Haruka exhaled, making little bubbles pop on the surface of the water. Feeling like it was time to get out of the tub, but not really wanting to, he stood up from the it and got out while grabbing a towl from the little table beside the tub.

Letting the water run down the sewer and the tub empty, he quickly started drying his hair with the towel and then wrapping it around his waist he made his way down to his bedroom to start and get ready for work. While he directed himself to the closet he glanced back at his alarm clock.

6:51 AM

More than two hours he had been in the tub, not that it surprised him, as everything on that day it was normal, and today even more so that he had gone and had a reverie about everything that had happened. Shaking his head to try and clear it a little, he opened his closet and there he saw them again. The bag with the new suit and the two little boxes with the mask and the shoes Nagisa had gotten for him.

He had been so caught up on his thoughts that he had completely forgotten about Nagisa’s plan for him that night. Well, now that he was a little more alert he remembered that he had said that Rei was going to accompany them, how he was going to convince logical and sensible Rei to go was still a mystery, but knowing Nagisa he would probably manage to make up some kind of ‘reasonable’ excuse that would ultimately want to make him go. A little smile tugged at the corner of his lips. And how could he not smile? He really did love Nagisa, he was like a brother to him. That had probably been why he had agreed to go to the masquerade ball his friend had seem so eager about.
No. That was a lie, maybe not completely so, but it wasn’t the complete truth either. He had accepted because even if he said to himself that everything was alright, that he just needed a little bit more time to get over what had happened, deep down he knew that wasn’t the case. That if that was what was happening, he wouldn’t be still so affected by a simple memory. God, he couldn’t even hear his name, much less say it without stuttering all over it. If he were to say the truth, he too wanted to forget too, if even just for some hours, heck, even if just for a few seconds, the total darkness and solitude in which he constantly lived in. If by any chance someone could make him forget how deep he was buried, if only he could see a ray of light, he would be completely grateful to that person. And if what it took to forget was to abandon himself in the arms of a stranger, then he would gladly do so.

From the looks of it, at some point during his reverie, he had changed into a pair of jeans, his standard uniform shirt with the logo of the coffee shop over his heart and his pair of shoes. Once again glancing at the clock he saw that it was already late and if he wanted to make it just barely on time to avoid and get scolded by Rei and his obsession with punctuality, he needed to get going, like right now.

7:29 AM

That’s what the clock read when he last saw it, not even bothering to prepare even a simple snack, he grabbed his coat and ran to the closest train station barely remembering to lock the door of his apartment.

He was just setting a foot inside the train when doors started closing. Gasping for breath and trying not to sound as strangled as he knew he sounded he stumbled on a sit and thought of nothing the rest of the train ride. He felt like if just a couple of minutes had gone by, when the train doors opened again to let him know that it was time to get down and start running. Grumbling under his breath he started running again, twisting and turning in the streets of Tokyo to get to the coffee shop. Finally, fifty seconds before it was time to officially open for the day he opened the door to the shop, collapsing in one of the nearby stools, while fighting to catch his breath.

“Technically you’re not late, but I would very much like to suggest you wake up earlier so you don’t make such a scene in the near future, Nanase-kun.” Came the voice of Nagisa, on his best impersonation of Rei’s’ voice, making Haruka’s’ face to look up. “Oh my god, Haru-chan! You should have seen your face just now! Priceless!” He said, followed by a fit of laughter.

“St-o-stop it, Na-a-gisa. I’m no-t in th-e-e mood.” Haruka said, still trying to catch his breath.

“Awww… C’mon Haru-chan, it was funny and besides you hurried up for nothing.” Nagisa said in a calm voice.

“Wha-what are yo-u talking a-a-about?” Why couldn’t he catch his breath? This was getting irritating. Nagisa noticing the state in which he was in, disappeared into the kitchen just to reappear a few seconds later with a glass of water, which he offered to Haru, who took it and swallowed eagerly.

“Exactly that, today, the one who is late is Rei-chan.” He said with a smirk on his face.

Cleaning the few drops that had escaped his mouth with the sleeve of his coat, he said “Well, that is certainly a first.” Feeling relief wash through him and letting his breathing go back to normal. Haruka sighed, but then forgetting for a moment that he was supposed to be getting ready for work he asked Nagisa, “How are you going to get him to go tonight?” It was totally out of topic, but it had been something that had picked his curiosity.
Looking a little confused at first, but rapidly getting the meaning of his question, Nagisa's’ face lit up in a smile that spoke of nothing but trouble, “Oh, don’t worry about it Haru-chan. He’ll definitely come.” And he let out a giggle. “By the way, you better not think of ditching me or else…” He hadn’t finished the sentence, but the meaning had been caught loud and clear by Haru, who swallowed a little.

“Of course not, I was just curious… by the way, how are we going to get there?” Now that he think about it, he didn’t even know where the ball was going to take place, at what time it was or anything really.

“I told you Haru-chan, I already took care of everything. Just be ready by 8:30. Leave everything to me and don’t worry about a thing!” He said cheerfully.

“That’s exactly what worries me.’ Taking a deep breath and directing himself to the kitchen, he hung his coat on the little hooks behind the kitchen door and put on his apron instead. The sign had already been changed from closed to open, so costumers would start arriving soon enough.

“An expresso and a croissant coming right awaaaaay!” Came Nagisa’s’ yell from the counter taking Haruka out of his thoughts. He sighed, yet again and glanced at his wristwatch.

8:15 AM

It was going to be a long day.

Chapter End Notes

Again I apologise for any grammar mistakes that I may have overlooked. I swear it wasn't intentional.

So here's the second chapter, and I just wanted to say that I was so happy when I saw how many people had read the first chapter, like really I didn't expected so many people to read, so thank you soooo much! I love you <3

Now, I know this chapter may have been a little boring, but it's key to what I have planned in the future, so just bare with me for a little while, okay? Anyway, on the next chapter, my little precious boy Makoto will make his big appearance, so you can have something to look forward to ;)

Also, I'm looking for a beta reader who could help me with the grammar and all of that, because as mentioned before english is not my first language, so if you know of someone who might be interested or if you are, you can get back at me on my tumblr, that is: http://theotakureader.tumblr.com/
I basically just use it for reposting and posting some edits so don't expect something like really over the top xD or you can contact me on my twitter: ArtistiqueR21 ^^ or you can simply leave a comment on here and I'll get back at you. I would really appreciate anyone who would want to help, because I really want to make this as good as it can possibly be.

Well, I think that's it and until the next chapter and thank you again!
Chapter 3

Chapter Summary

No, there really wasn’t any use for silly fantasies; because in the end, a fantasy had been what had led him to where he was.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

“Tick tock, tick tock, tick tock…” This wasn’t working.

“One, two, three, four, five, six…” No, neither was this.

“…” And definitely not this.

Haruka closed his eyes trying to think of another way to make time move faster, to make the seconds last less than they ought to last, just simply trying to make everything seem less slow and a little bit better. Of course, luck wasn’t on his side as usual, (not that it was all that surprising), and every second seem to drag longer than the one before. Haruka just couldn’t take it any longer.

He needed to get out of here.

It had been one of those days where people just kept coming in from the front door of the coffee shop, and that meant he had had barely any time to try and think what the next order was about and what was he supposed to be doing at the moment, and it also meant that Nagisa hadn’t stopped yelling all day long the orders of every single person that came in and ordered the most simple thing they had to offer. So yes, this had been a terrible day so far, adding to the top that today was the day, and Haruka was starting to feel a little bit dizzy from the migraine that had been threatening to overcome him all day.

“Breath in, breath out, breath in, breath out, bre-”

“HAAAAARUUU-CHAAAN!” Nagisa's yell made Haru lose his train of thought, and at the same time sent a sharp pain through his skull, “Where’s that slice of chocolate cake? And also, is the hot chocolate done yet? Haru-chaaan!”

Now, he loved Nagisa, he really did, but at the time the only thing he wanted to do was shove a piece of cloth down his throat to see if he could muffle the sound of his yells a little. He really wasn’t in the mood to go and put up with Nagisa's lively personality at the moment.

“Order ready,” Haruka shoved a piece of chocolate cake on a plate and threw it across the counter.
He showed his most irritated face to the little blond at the other side of the work surface. “The chocolate will be ready in a minute.” And with that he turned around to go and pay attention to the hot chocolate machine.

God, he needed to seriously calm the hell down. Guilt was washing through him the next second. It wasn’t Nagisa's fault that he was in such a horrible mood. Well, that wasn’t entirely true, as the blonde had been yelling all morning. With the absence of Rei—who had called late in the morning to inform them that he didn’t feel all that well (but still claiming that he would be on time to meet them for the ball)—the atmosphere between Haruka and Nagisa was tense. Without Rei there to control Nagisa and keep his yelling and hyperactivity to a minimum it had been hell for Haruka all day long.

He just needed a break. Haruka had too many things to think about, too many things he wanted to sort out before he went out that night. Of course he knew that he wouldn't accomplish a thing by overthinking every little detail, but that was the way he had done things all of his life. There really wasn’t any other way he could deal with all of this (not that he had ever tried for another solution).

Haruka was so deep in thought that when he felt a light tap on the shoulder, he literally jumped. “Haruka-san, I’ll be taking care of things now. You can go home.” It was Tsubaki, a girl who worked at the shop as a part timer on the weekends, when he went to college.

“Tsubaki-chan? Wha-what are you doing here?” He really should feel relieved that someone was there to replace him, but he really couldn’t think of any excuse as to why she was there, “Don’t you have classes to attend to?”

She offered him a small polite smile, while she started putting on the extra apron that was hanging from the hooks at the backside of the kitchen door. “Classes were cancelled today, and I was just about to call to know if you guys needed any help when I got a call from Nagisa-kun asking me if I could come over because you weren’t feeling all that well.”

He stared at her with a dumbfounded expression and feeling guiltier than before. Haruka had treated Nagisa in an awful way, and what had his friend done? He had worried about him and called someone to replace him because he knew something had been wrong with him. Damn, he was such an idiot and such a terrible friend, he needed to apologize to Nagisa as soon as possible.

Noticing that he had been staring at Tsubaki, creating an uncomfortable atmosphere, he quickly glanced away and muttered a quiet ‘sorry and thanks’.

Glancing at his wrist watch, Haruka saw that if it hadn’t been for Tsubaki’s appearance he would’ve had to stay at the shop for two more hours. Thanking the heavens for this little bit of luck, he took off the apron and hung it up on the hooks of the door and dashed out. He stopped when he saw that Nagisa was taking the order of another costumer and waited until he had finished taking it to approach him.

“Umm… Nagisa, I…” That he had been ready to apologize didn’t mean that it made it any less difficult. He wasn’t good with words and every time he needed to use them, they seemed to get stuck in his throat, failing him again, and again. “Listen, I-”

Nagisa held up a hand in front of his face, “You don’t have to apologize, Haru-chan. Just go home, relax for a while, and be ready by the hour I told you.” He smiled up at him, and without any further comment he proceeded to yell the order to Tsubaki.

Sighing in defeat, he walked to entrance and into the busy streets of Tokyo, without looking back.
He really didn’t know what was wrong with him. Why couldn’t he just apologize? It wasn’t like he was going to go and apologize to a stranger or someone he didn’t like, it was Nagisa for crying out loud! But he couldn’t do it, he just couldn’t bring himself to, and he felt bad about it. Haruka sometimes asked himself why Nagisa was still by his side. If it had been him dealing with someone such as himself, he would’ve (most likely) left by now. It really was a mystery why Nagisa stuck with him, but he was grateful for it nonetheless.

Breathing in the cold air from the city, Haruka started walking faster. He was in a hurry to get home and start a warm bath and stay there until the absolute last minute, before he had to start getting ready for the ball.

The ball, that’s right, he was going to attend a masquerade ball that night. He really didn’t know what to expect from it. He wasn’t excited as much as he was curious. Haruka wanted to know if there was someone who would be able to drive the pain away, even if it was just for a little period of time. The dark haired man wanted to forget himself and just melt into an atmosphere which would make him think of nothing but his own pleasure and satisfaction. It had been so long since he had let himself enjoy something. Every time he was remotely close to enjoy even the most simple of things he felt like if he just needed to stop, Haruka felt the urge to suppress his emotions, but to be quite honest it was getting tiring. It had been three years, three years exactly, but it had felt like an eternity. Of course he knew that even if he did manage to find someone this night, without a doubt tomorrow would be the same old routine from the last couple of years, but maybe, just maybe he could take tonight as an example, as the ray of light he’s been desperately looking for, and then maybe, maybe he could… No, there really wasn’t any use for silly fantasies; because in the end, a fantasy had been what had led him to where he was.

He had been so lost in thought, thinking about all of this things, that he didn’t even noticed that he was already climbing the stairs to get to his apartment. Taking his keys out of his pocket, he opened the door and after taking off his shoes, he went directly to the bathroom and turning on the faucet, he didn’t wait for it to be even remotely warm, heck he didn’t even wait for it to be halfway full, to get in. He shivered a little as the water was mostly cold, but he relaxed after a moment.

‘Finally.’ He thought with delight.

Ah, that’s right. Water had been the only thing he allowed himself to enjoy. The only thing he hadn’t been able to quit. Turning off the faucet once the tub was on the verge of spilling, he settled more comfortably and rested his head on the edge of it. He sat there just thinking of nothing, letting the water relax his muscles and making the aching pain on his chest decrease a little. Falling into a state of complete relaxation, he fell asleep… later he would wish he hadn’t.

He was falling.

“Where am I?” Haruka shouted, terrified. He couldn’t see a thing in that overwhelming darkness that surrounded him, he could hear nothing, and he simply couldn’t feel.
He heard someone chuckle.

And then everything was covered in light. Haruka tried to cover his eyes with his arms, but the light was too bright, too warm.

And then it was over. He was sitting at his old apartment, he was resting on someone else’s shoulder and he w-

“Haru? Are you okay?” He didn’t dare move, this couldn’t be happening, this couldn’t be him, he wasn’t... he couldn’t be-, “Hey, seriously, you’re scaring me. Answer me.”

No, no, no, no. This, this, this... he felt a hand on his cheek and his face being turned up.

Haruka’s breath caught.

“Is something wrong?” How he had missed those eyes, those beautiful red eyes that haunted his every dream. And then it was all too much, just... too much.

He started to cry.

“Hey, hey, hey, what’s wrong? Was I not comfortable enough?” He smiled, that kind and confident smile that made Haruka’s knees go weak.

“No-nothing’s wrong.” He stammered, “I just had a nightmare.” He answered, burying his face on his chest. He was warm, oh so warm.

“Want to talk about it?” He asked while rubbing circles on his back.

Haruka detached himself from Rin and looked at him in the eyes. “I dreamed you left me... you said you n-n-never really loved me,” He swallowed, “You said everything was a lie from the start, but that’s not true, is it? That’s n-”

Rin was laughing.

Not a soft and amused laugh; no, he was laughing like Haruka had told him the best joke in the entire world, and then he abruptly stopped.

“Well, it was about time you realized it, wasn’t it?” He smirked and got up, “To be quite honest I was starting to get annoyed and tired of having to play the ‘caring’ boyfriend.”

Rin took the bag that was by the couch, one Haruka had been too distracted to notice at first as he was too busy trying not break down, “Well, I guess that’s it,” He smiled, “See you later.”

And then, Rin disappeared and Haruka was falling once again...

...and as he fell, there was only one thing that passed through his mind.
Water splashed everywhere as Haruka struggled to catch his breath. He seemed to be doing that more often than not. His chest was heaving badly and his head was spinning, so much he had to grab onto one of the corners of the tub.

Haruka could still feel the darkness taking him, those words he had said still echoed in his ears and his heart was still beating against his chest in an almost painful way. It had been so long since he had had such a vivid nightmare, or was it a memory? He couldn't distinguish anymore what was reality and what was a dream. Everything from the last three years was a blur, a swirl of emotions that were just too much to handle, and so he had learned to suppress them, in order to protect himself, or at least that had been his intention. Up to this date, Haruka had built such a tall and thick wall around his heart he really doubted anyone could climb or break it, but that had been his intention on the first place, so he should feel happy, right?

He sighed and reached out a hand to take his wrist watch that had been forgotten on the floor.

6:59 PM

Three hours, it had been three hours since he got home and had that horrible dream. Haruka felt like it had been a thousand years. Needless to say, the water had gone cold a long time ago. Deciding that it wasn't worth another bath that would probably end up like the last one, he got up and wrapped a towel around his waist. He walked through the little hall and into his bedroom, dropping like dead weight on top of the bed. Haruka was exhausted. He wanted to do nothing more than to prepare a little and quick dinner and then head for bed.

'Nagisa would proba-' He stopped mid-sentence. That's right, Haruka couldn't do that, he had agreed to go to this ball thing. Burying his face on the pillow beside him, he really considered ditching Nagisa, but he knew better than to do that, the little blond would probably get there and keep banging on the door until he opened it and then he would rant about Haruka not being ready and insist on helping him get ready, and that was an experience Haruka didn't want to repeat. He glanced back at the clock on his nightstand.
If he wanted to be ready by the time Nagisa had specified he needed to start getting ready now.

Haruka could say with certainty that Nagisa would be knocking on his door at exactly 8:30 PM, and that left a little less than an hour for him to get ready. An hour to prepare dinner, eat, bathe (to actually clean himself), get dressed and then wait for Nagisa’s arrival. Haruka could do it, he could if he actually took a bath in under five minutes, which wasn't going to happen. He decided to just bathe and he guessed he could get something to eat once they were at the ball.

After bathing and cleansing himself, Haruka went over to his closet and once again took out the boxes that lay at the foot of the bag containing his suit. Putting both boxes on top of his nightstand, he then proceeded to take the bag from his closet to lay it on top of the bed so he could get the suit out before putting the bag back in the closet. Looking at the suit on his bed, he felt intimidated by it, for he had never worn something so sophisticated. Haruka feared it would look ridiculous on him. ‘I'm acting like a girl’ Haruka thought with exasperation. ‘It's just a suit! Get over yourself Haruka.’

Irritated with himself, he picked the shirt up and slid on his shoulders, letting the soft piece of cloth settle over his upper body and then buttoning it up until he reached his neck and then proceeding with each of his wrists. Once that was done, Haruka unwrapped the towel that was hanging from his hips and went over to the little table where he kept his underwear, to be greeted only by a pair of black boxers and a note. Opening the note, but already knowing from whom it was from, he read:

>You'll thank me later,

Love Nagisa.

Of course Nagisa would do this. Shaking his head but resigning himself to his fate, he took the pair of boxers and slid them on. To his surprise, they material was incredibly soft, and it clung to him like a second skin. If Haruka hadn't believed Nagisa had done this at first, he now did, for he would never buy something like this. Going back to the bed he picked up the pants and put them on. He then proceeded to put on a pair of fresh socks (which hadn't mysteriously gone missing), and then headed to his nightstand to open the first and larger box, which contained the new pair of shoes. Sliding them on, Haruka walked with them on for a little while to soften them a bit. After that was done, he picked up the jacket and slipped it over his shoulders, adjusting it, but before buttoning it up, he took the tie and put it around his neck. Haruka proceeded to make a knot at the top of it. Having that out of his way, he finished buttoning the jacket to complete the outfit.

He glanced at his clock.

8:28 PM

Nagisa would be there any minute. Hurrying to his nightstand, Haruka opened the second and smaller box. In the midst of it, staring back at him, lay the stunning black mask and the sapphire cufflinks. Taking the sapphire cufflinks in the palm of his hand, Haruka adjusted them at the wrists of his jacket. Once he was done with that, he stared at the mask, unconsciously reaching out a hand to rub his fingertips on the surface of it. The delicate designs all along the contour of the mask were almost hypnotic. A loud knock on the door broke the spell he had found himself in.
"HARUUUU-CHAAAAAN! Are you still in the tub?" Another loud knock, "Haru-chaaan! C'mon open the door!" Sighing on defeat he got up, but not before glancing back at the clock.

8:30 PM

'Just in time' Haruka thought, making his way over to the door. Opening it up, he surprised Nagisa (who was in the middle of knocking again). His face lit up when he laid eyes on Haru.

"HARU-CHAN! You look amazing!" Nagisa said in an excited tone.

"Hmm..." Haruka mused.

"And the mask? Where's the mask? You didn't lose it, did you? Oh my god, you did!" Haruka blinked a few times before answering.

"No Nagisa, I did not lose it. It's in my room if you want to go check." He said, a little offended from the lack of trust his friend displayed.

"Oh no, that's fine. Just go get it, we're late already." Nagisa said in a relieved voice.

Rolling his eyes, Haruka went inside and into his room to get the mask. He saw it and felt a pang of confidence. He lifted it from the box and returned to where Nagisa was standing. Haruka locked the apartment door and then followed Nagisa down the stairs to a car that looked brand new. He glanced at Nagisa with doubt in his eyes.

"Before you say anything, I rented it for the night, so don't worry." Not believing Nagisa entirely, but not curious enough to ask, he let it go. He opened the door to the backseat and was greeted by Rei sitting in the driver's seat.

"Good evening, Haruka-kun." He said politely. Haruka just bowed his head and got in.

"Okay, Rei-chan. DRIVE!" Nagisa yelled. Rei made a face, didn't say a thing, and just started the car.

It was a silent drive, but it wasn't uncomfortable. Haruka was grateful for it, because even if he wanted to talk, he just wouldn't know what to talk about, so the silence was a welcomed presence.

Thirty minutes later they were driving through a part of Tokyo he had never set foot on. It was all so bright and lively (maybe more so than the center of the city), as neon lights covered almost every surface of the buildings they passed by, and love hotels and bars seemed to be the most common buildings, as Haruka saw one after another. He would most probably end up lost if he tried to find his way there... After a few more minutes of driving, the car stopped in front of what seemed like a hotel. It didn't look like any of the other buildings he had seen on his way here.

"Blue Surface Hotel"

That was the name of the hotel if the big blue and white sign on the front was anything to go by. Feeling Nagisa's gaze on him, he turned around to meet his best friend's pink eyes.

"Haru-chan, go on ahead. We'll meet you in a couple of minutes. We'll go and look for a place to park." Haruka wanted to argue, but Nagisa was giving him a look that left little room for
objections. "And don't forget to put the mask on before you enter the hotel."

Seeing as he had no say on the matter, he took the mask and opened the door of the car and got out.

"See you in a couple of minutes Haru-chan! And don't forget the mask!" Nagisa yelled as the car started up again and disappeared around the corner of the hotel.

"This was such a bad idea" Haruka thought.

"Well, it's too late to back out now, isn't it?" Said his subconscious.

Sighing, and not for the last time that night, he put on the mask.

"1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6..." This wasn't helping.

“Tick tock, tick tock, tick tock…” No, neither was this.

"..." And definitely not this.

He took one last calming breath and started walking towards the entrance.

Chapter End Notes

Soooo... here's the third chapter, I'm so sorry it took so long to upload but I had been busy this last 2 weeks as well as my beta reader so it got a little bit tricky, but I hope you enjoyed it nonetheless. I know I said Makoto would be making an appereance but after giving it a little thought, I decided it would be best if I left it for the next one. I'm sorry, but I promise that he WILL appear on the next, just you wait ;)

On another note, I have great news! First (and foremost): I now have a beta reader (for which I'm totally thrilled and which you probably already noticed since I mentined it above), and because of this I know things will be clearer for you (and sometimes for me as well lol).

Second: The next chapter is already finished, so I'm just waiting for the revised version and I should be uploading it sometime along next week, I hope.

And last (but not least), thank you to all of you who left kudos and/or commented on the previous chapter, I swear it makes my heart dance with joy everytime I see someone likes what I write, so again thank you very much, it means a lot <3

Well, that's it for now I guess, I'll read you guys next week and I hope you have an awesome weekend! :)
Chapter 4

Chapter Summary

Meanwhile Haruka was awe struck, he didn't know what to say, this person right beside him had just described what he had felt, thought and done for the past couple of years like if it was the most obvious thing in the entire world. He had seen right through Haruka and left him exposed in a way he had never felt before without being aware of it.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

'Shiny.'

That was the first thing that went through Haruka's head. Well, that wasn't exactly true, everything seemed shiny because of the angles in which the light struck the decorations that were all around the room. Long, thick pieces of black velvet covered by a gold like mesh were hanging in between the columns in which they encountered and then formed a ribbon of lace that then intertwined with strategically placed red roses in the center, making a really nice, simple and elegant composition. The lights, not so bright that you could see every single detail in the room, but strong enough to make out figures and things that were in your way, contributed to the sophisticated and mysterious atmosphere.

'Crowded.' Was the second thing Haruka thought. Even though he had the slight suspicion that Nagisa had arranged for them to get there over an hour late, there was a long line, of men and women, in front of two tables with four people handing everyone a piece of paper in which they wrote something and then attached it to their chests. He could only assume they were tags in which they all were supposed to write their names or alias. What surprised him a little was that there were women, if he recalled correctly what Nagisa had said it was supposed to be a ball for single guys. Well, if any girl approached him, and he doubted any would, he would just politely reject them and then walk away... but now that he paid close attention to them, they were all sticking really close together, but not as if they were shy, but mostly in a... flirty way, invading each other's personal spaces and...

'Ah...' Well then, he guessed he wouldn't have to worry about having to reject anybody. Now that only left one problem... he was not the most outgoing person you could find, in fact he was quite awkward when it came to socialize with a large number of people, or any person for that matter.

He started to feel anxious, he didn't really know what he was doing. What the hell had he been thinking when he had agreed to come? He felt so out of place standing there in the middle of the room all by himself, surrounded by people he didn’t know and couldn’t even identify by face for everyone was wearing a mask. He felt the palms of his hands start to sweat and he was almost sure that he was going to start hyperventilating if he wasn't already.

'Breath.' He thought to himself, if he started panicking right now he would accomplish nothing and would just make a fool out of himself. Counting to twenty until he got his breathing under control, he smoothed his hands over the jacket of his suit in an attempt to take his mind off the
sickening feeling that was gathering in his throat. Taking another calming breath he made his way over to the end of the line in front of the tables, while he waited still not totally out of his anxious state, he started looking around and taking notice of the hotel in which he found himself in.

The floor as well as the walls, were made of what looked like marble, not quite white but not beige either, the floor was a little bit darker than the columns attached to the walls but not by much, maybe a tone or two, he guessed that most people wouldn’t notice. The light came of little bulbs which were hidden in each of the arrangements of the walls, they were so well placed that it lit the room, but also contributed to the beautiful flower arrangement that made it seem like the roses were glowing, bringing out their striking red color and at the same time reflecting on the golden mesh making it look like if it was sparkling. He knew that the intensity of the bulbs could give off more, but he guessed that it was planned for it to be that way, he had seen enough movies to know that supposedly it contributed to the recreation of a ‘romantic’ atmosphere.

“.lease?” He had been so immersed in his thoughts he didn’t notice when he had reached the start of the line. Feeling his cheeks heat a little but trying to play it off he directed his attention to the woman in front of him.

“Could you repeat that?” He asked in a monotonous voice. She eyed him with a weird expression but answered him anyways.

“I said if I could see your ID, please?” She extended a hand out to him.

“I thought this was an anonymous event?” He said while raising an eyebrow.

“It is,” She said with her mouth twisted in a weird way, she was losing her patience with him after just thirty seconds, great “but we are giving alcoholic beverages so we need to know who is under age, none of your personal info will be taken we just want to check people’s age so we can give them an appropriate tag.” She probably noticed that he wasn’t going to accept a half assed answer so she went and explained all of that to him while she pointed at some little boxes with tags of different colors. Just nodding in understanding he took out his wallet and handed the, now exasperated, lady his driver’s license in which she read he was twenty two years old.

Giving him back his license, she picked up a tag with blue stripes on the frame and a blank space in the middle. Not really knowing what to write, but knew that his real name was out of the question, he decided on an alias. The only problem was… what could he write? Haruka thought about writing the name of the coffee shop, but “Cinnamon Taste” didn’t sound quite right.

’Hmmm… “Cinnamon Taste”… Cinnamon, Taste… Taste, but of what?” And then it hit him.

‘Taste of Liquor’

Rapidly scribbling it down, Haruka thought it was really appropriate for he was probably going to have something to drink and it wouldn’t properly be water. He felt quite satisfied with it, it wasn’t something too attractive or flashy, but then again, he had just thought of whatever he could. An exasperated huff made him come back and after mumbling a halfhearted apology he moved from the front the line.

‘Nagisa, where the hell are you?’ Haruka thought more than a little exasperated, his friend had told him they were just going to find somewhere to park, sure there was a lot of people, but not so much that he would spend over 20 minutes searching for a parking lot. Seriously, what could take them so lo-…

“Really? ‘Taste of Liquor’? Couldn’t you have thought of something more original, Haru-chan?”
Nagisa was standing there in front of him and looking up with a disapproving look on his face. Rei was just a few feet behind him looking uncomfortable and out of place.

‘Good’ Haruka thought, ‘At least I’m not the only one.’ Directing his attention back to Nagisa once again he grimaced and said, ‘Sorry, you didn’t really tell me we were going to need an alias or anything.’ Haruka said a little exasperated, ‘So I just wrote the first thing I could think of…” He shrugged and looked away.

“Well whatever, what’s done is done. So let’s get to the fun part,” Haruka looked back at his friend but noticed that he was at Rei’s side once again, “follow me, the entrance is this way.” Nagisa said with grin, and Haruka could have sworn the devil was standing there in front of him for all of the mischievousness he saw on Nagisa’s eyes.

Knowing that Nagisa wouldn’t wait for Haruka to follow, he rapidly started to walk so he could catch up to him because even though Nagisa was shorter than him, he walked strangely fast, which made it a little difficult for Haruka to catch up to, but once Nagisa noticed he was beside him, they settled into a steady and slow pace. They were walking on a narrow corridor which was decorated with some tables with red roses just like in the arrangements on the walls, Nagisa probably didn’t know where the ball was taking place, but if the decorations and the people dressed in the same way the three of them were anything to go by, then they were heading in the correct direction. Noticing that neither Nagisa nor Rei had gone and asked for a tag he glanced at both of their chests. “When did you two get your tags?” Haruka asked eyeing them from the corner of his eye. “And what does Rei’s even mean?” He said with a little frown, their tags as well as his own, had blue stripes on the frame.

“Well, while you were standing in the center of the room looking a little lost, Rei-chan and I decided to get ours,” Haruka was going to say something but Nagisa didn’t let him, “Don’t start Haru-chan, we had just gotten back and since the line was advancing pretty fast I thought it would be better so we could just get going.” He smiled brightly.

‘Cherry mouth’ could be seen on the tag attached to Nagisa’s chest. Why? He really didn’t want know and so he didn’t ask.

Now Rei’s… the tag on his chest said ‘Jamil’ it was definitely in another language, which? He didn’t have a clue, but it caught his attention. “Well, if you’re truly interested Haruka-kun, the word I chose for myself means ‘beautiful’ in Arabic, not only is it…” Haruka tuned out Rei’s voice once he started rambling about the origin and specifics of the word, he had just wanted to know the meaning not the complete history behind it. Within a few minutes they were standing at the entrance of a large hall with its double doors open for anyone who wanted to come in.

There were people already on the dance floor, others were talking all around, some were at the bar already looking unable to even lift their glasses to drink from them, and at the far corner of the room a band was playing what Haruka could only assume was some kind of jazz song. He wanted nothing more than to go back from where they had come from and make a run for it.

Feeling a pair of eyes on him, Haruka slowly turned around to face his friend. Nagisa was looking up at him with warning in his face, he didn’t have to say anything, his expression said everything, if he tried to run or leave, he would just probably end up being dragged in again by Nagisa, and not in a friendly way. He had made the mistake to underestimate Nagisa’s determination and the experience hadn’t been pretty, he wasn’t all that eager to repeat it.

“Okay, so now you’re going to go in there and find someone to talk to or try to socialize a little, I won’t be close enough for you to try and stick to me all night long, but close enough to see that you
don’t run away, got it?” Nagisa said while watching Haruka in the eyes. Suddenly he smiled, “Well then, let’s go and have fun tonight boys!” He exclaimed in a high pitch voice, while grabbing onto Rei’s arm and dragging him into the crowd, before Haruka could object or say anything.

Sighing in resignation, Haruka decided that he might as well move from the entrance where he was blocking everyone’s path but not really knowing where to go, he leaned against a wall not too far from the entrance but where he could still see most of the room and the people in it.

As he had previously observed people were dancing, some like if they were experts, moving delicately from side to side with their partners in a slow and elegant way in time with the music. Others who probably weren’t as experienced settle themselves by just swaying from side to side in a slow and steady rhythm. Haruka couldn’t imagine himself dancing, he would probably just keep stomping on the other person’s feet and embarrass himself more than he needed to.

Making a face and concentrating on something else, he decided to see how people were dressed, he never really paid attention to things like that, but he was bored and didn’t really wanted to go and talk to a stranger, so he settled for the first thing that came to his mind. Most of the men were wearing black suits just like himself, although some were slightly different, some had gray stripes all over the suit, some were a shade darker or had some kind of design on them, of course some of them wore blue or gray suits, and he even saw someone with a hideous yellow one. Ties varied from every single color to any pattern and design someone could think of. Green, white, yellow, pink, black… just name the color and you would find at least one person wearing it. The masks weren’t all that varied from the suits, most just settled themselves for a plain black mask, which in Haruka’s opinion was dull and boring.

Getting tired of looking at men, for they didn’t contribute too much variation, he decided to focus on women. Now, that was something entertaining to see. Every single woman wore a different dress from the one next to her, each had something different from the next and previous one and they were of every color imaginable. There were plain, really simple and elegant dresses, as well as big, ostentatious and flashy ones. Their masks were no different, unlike men, they wore masks of every size and color that was in existence, some were meant to cover all of their faces, some just like Haruka’s just covered half of them and others couldn’t even be called masks for they exposed almost all of their faces. Also, some wore ones with feathers or pearls, making them stand out from the rest.

‘Well, to each their own.’ Haruka thought. Growing tired of watching and not really knowing what to do, he decided he might as well get a drink to try and loosen up a little. Inspecting the area a little, he spotted the bar rather quickly, for a large number of people were gathering there and some looked like they had already passed out. Pushing himself from the wall, Haruka made his way over and once he was there a good looking bartender approached him.

“So, what can I get you…” He eyed his tag, “Taste of liquor?” He smiled as if his name was funny, and he supposed it was.

Not returning his smile and just looking him in the eye, he answered, “A shot of tequila.” He didn’t even bother to say ‘please’ for either way it wasn’t like he wanted to start a conversation with anyone, at least not yet.

Looking a little bit disappointed but otherwise fine, the bartender nodded and went to serve his drink. Turning his gaze back to the ball he noticed that the music had changed and was something more up to date, something kind of electronic but not quite as messy and noisy. Either way, the change in music seemed to make people gather some kind of courage and even more were now heading to the dance floor. Taking the opportunity at seeing that one of the nearby stools was free,
Haruka sat down and waited for the bartender to give him his drink.

“A shot of tequila for you.” Came a voice from behind, the bartender directed a flirty smile to Haru but seeing that it had no effect on him, resigned himself and sighed, “Well, if you need anything else just call.” Going to attend another person, he retired.

Taking the shot in one hand Haruka turned around again to observe the crowd dancing, he tried to spot Nagisa, for after all he had said he would be close by, but not finding him after several minutes he gave up. Looking at the neglected shot in his hand, Haruka lifted it to his lips and took a little sip. The clear liquid made its way into his mouth and down his throat, leaving a burning sensation on its way. He welcomed the feeling, it made him feel a little bit more alert and not so out of place.

He continued like that, taking small sips of his drink, for after all he didn't want to get drunk… not yet, anyways. Noting that he had already finished his shot, Haruka turned around to order another one and just as the bartender turned to get his drink, he heard the sound of something hitting the floor and shattering into pieces.

Turning around, curious as to who had made the noise Haruka spotted a man looking at the floor surrounded by broken pieces of what he could only assume was a glass and a brownish liquid covering his feet and the floor around him. The man had a broken expression on his face as if the glass had betrayed him and he still couldn’t believe what had happen.

“Wh-why?” He hiccupped and talked in a broken voice, tears running down his face, “Wh-why did y-y-you do t-t-to me? You were my o-o-on-l-y sal-va-a-tion and now you aband-on m-e-e too?” His face contorted into one of immense anger, the change was so fast and radical that if you hadn’t been watching since the begging you wouldn’t have believed he was sobbing just a moment ago, “Fine! I d-o-o-n’t nee-d you! I ne-e-ed nothing!” The man started kicking the shattered pieces of the glass sending them flying at every angle possible.

“Pitiful, isn’t he?” Haru had been so immersed on watching the man and what he would do next, that he didn’t notice that someone had taken the stool next to him and had leaned in to whisper into his ear.

Needless to say, Haruka jumped in surprise and almost fell from his stool. He tried rearranging himself and sat straight once again and directed a nasty look to the man who had scared him and almost made him fall, but he wasn't looking at Haruka. He had sat straight himself and had his eyes glued to man in front of them, who was still sputtering random things and kicking at the remaining pieces of glass sending them flying along with little droplets of the liquid at his feet, "He seeks refuge in alcohol, thinking that it will help him forget his problems, “ He smirked a little at that and then continued talking, "but what he doesn't realize is that it has the opposite effect of what he wants.” He chuckled.

"How so?” Haruka found himself asking. The man next to him had been ignoring him and had just kept talking as if Haruka wasn’t there. It wasn't as if Haruka wanted to start a conversation with this person, hell he had even thought about giving him a piece of his mind after the scare he had given him, but something had prevented him from doing so.

It was what he had said, the thing about 'having the opposite effect', as someone who had sought refuge in alcohol, not so much as to become an addict, but when he had found himself in a state of utter darkness and depression that it had been impossible for him to sleep without waking up covered in sweat and with his heart pounding, the only viable option he had found to have a little bit of peace had been alcohol. So at those times, he hadn't really thought twice before knocking himself out with a bottle of tequila or whisky, so he had actually sympathized with the guy in front
"Well, for starters if you look at it from the scientific point of view, alcohol does have a numbing effect, there's no denying that, but taking that into account, it just makes it easier for memories to resurface," he explained in a controlled and even voice, he hadn't turned to look at Haruka even once, and the mask that he was wearing concealed half of his face, but if his voice was anything to go by, Haruka knew that he could hear him talk all night. He had a deep voice, smooth like velvet and that had something that just made you want to keep listening, it wasn't like Rei's voice which was mechanical and recited everything by memory like a recording. No, the voice of this person was different, because even though he was saying something that was probably recited from memory, Haruka didn't feel the need to tune him out.

"For example, let's take our little protagonist here." He continued not noticing Haruka's stare, and even if he did, he decided to ignore it for the time being. "He probably just had an argument with his lover and came here to try and forget what happened with this person, so he started drinking. Thinking that it would help him 'loosen up' and so it would make it easier to interact with people. The only problem was that while the alcohol he consumed may have had the numbing effect he was looking for, his subconscious is still thinking of the problem which led him to this situation. So, instead of taking the problem 'out' of his head, he just made it 'stuck in' more." He made a pause at that as if to catch his breath. Haruka hadn't even been breathing, all of what this stranger had said had been true, that had been exactly what he had been thinking every time he had decided to drown his solitude in the depths of alcohol.

"So based on everything that I just said," he continued, "this person finds just two solutions to his current predicament. One, he can go home, sort things out with the person with whom he had a fight and try and make up for whatever happened. Or two, he can drown his misery and anger in alcohol instead of swallowing his pride and apologize for what happened. And of course, because the human being is a proud, narcissist and irrational race, and always looks for the easiest way out to avoid anything that might hurt its ego, our little friend here inclined himself for the second option, which of course led to disaster." As he finished saying this he signaled with his hand at the guy in front of them and at that Haruka teared his gaze from his profile and glanced back to the front.

The man who had been oblivious to the complete analysis he had just gone through was being hoisted by the arms by two people who even though were dressed as everyone else in the room, could be easily identified as security guards. The man wasn't putting up a fight as if he had resigned himself to his fate, which by the look on his face, wasn't the most brilliant of all.

Meanwhile Haruka was awe struck, he didn't know what to say, this person right beside him had just described what he had felt, thought and done for the past couple of years like if it was the most obvious thing in the entire world. He had seen right through Haruka and left him exposed in a way he had never felt before without being aware of it.

"Your shot." Came a voice from behind him, startling Haruka for the second time in ten minutes. Turning around on his stool, Haruka didn't even think twice before grabbing the little glass with tequila and downing it at once. Instantly Haruka felt a burning sensation in his mouth and throat making him want to gag but he, just like last time, welcomed the feeling of the liquid making its way down to his stomach. He felt like his mouth had gone dry after hearing the man next to him saying all of that stuff. Haruka heard a low chuckle beside him.

"Eager, aren't we?" He said with a smile on his voice while he turned around to face Haruka.

'Holly shit.' That was the first thing that came to his mind when he saw the face of the man in front
of him. Well part of his face because the mask he had on covered half of it. This person was all hard lines and smooth skin, obviously just recently shaved, his jaw as well as all of his other features was set in a strong line which was lost in the curve of his neck, but what called to him and made his breath catch in his throat was his eyes.

Those eyes that seemed to have a magnetic pull and that wouldn't let him, wouldn't allow him to look away. They were a startling green, but not your average green, it was more like the color the trees had on early spring, more precisely at dawn, when the last rays of sunlight would hit their leaves and make them look like they had light of their own. And those eyes were regarding him with an intensity that made color rise to his cheeks and made it a little bit difficult to breath. The stranger blinked, giving Haruka the opportunity to look away and try and calm down his racing heart.

"W-well, it's not like if it's any of your business." He cursed internally at his stutter, but he couldn't help it, this person was making him feel anxious, and not in a good way. He glanced sideways at him.

'Bad idea.'

The smile on the man's face had only gotten wider, making his face glow with amusement, "Ah, but what if I did want to make it mine?" He asked while putting one arm on the edge of the bar and supporting his head on his hand while watching sideways at Haruka to see his reaction.

Haruka gulped and of course the gesture wasn't lost to the other, whose smile only got wider and brighter if that was even possible.

"Well, you would have to become a substitute of this," Haruka said while lifting the little empty shot glass with his hand and waving it in front of his face, "but I warn you, I have a lot of problems and I really don't want to think tonight."

There, maybe that way he would go away and let him drown himself in tequila, even if he had just realized that it wasn't going to help at all. Haruka glanced at the person next to him and realized what a big mistake he had made by saying that. The eyes that just moments ago had captured him in their green depths were now of a dark green shade, the smile on his face wasn't so much of a smile as it was a smirk with a feral touch to it. A goose bump ran down Haruka's spine and if last time had been difficult, now it was impossible to look away. He had him trapped with that look in his eyes that seemed hungry, like if he had been starving and Haruka was the most delicious thing he had laid his eyes on.

He hated it.

He was loving it.

"Well..." he said in a deep and raspy whisper, leaning towards Haruka and making the hairs on his neck stand on end, "I've always liked to take on a challenge." And without any warning he closed
the space between them and kissed him. It was short and quick, but in that simple contact Haruka was able to feel yearning and lust, and not only that, but the promise of something bigger and better.

'Trouble.' That's the first thing that went through Haruka’s mind.

'Never talk to strangers.' The warning Haruka had heard a million times over his childhood and part of his teenage years, resonating like an echo on his head was the second thing he thought, but he was so far gone he didn't pay much attention to it.

Shit, if he was like this by just a little kiss, what would happen if he actually went all the way with this guy? And then Haruka glanced at his eyes again and all the doubts and concerns he could've had dissipated into thin air. He didn't know what would happen, he didn't know if this was a good idea... scratch that, he knew it wasn't a good idea, but he would be damned if he went and said no to him.

Haruka looked down at the tag on the guy's jacket and read 'Green Eyes'. Well, it wasn't all that creative but, who was he to talk? Haruka had written the first thing that had come to his mind; not even a second had passed while all of this went through his head.

One again Haruka looked at "Green's" face and was caught by a movement near his mouth, and in fact something was moving, a pink tongue was picking out of Green's mouth to lick at his lower lip as if he could still taste Haruka there.

Haruka’s throat went dry... again.

"So, should we go..." He trailed off as he glanced down at the tag on Haruka's chest, "Mon Saveur de Liqueur?" He said as he offered his hand out to Haruka and spoke as something that could only be described as a fluent French.

'Idiotic.' Was the last thing Haruka thought before taking the hand that was being offered to him, feeling electricity run from the tips of his fingers all the way down to his toes.

The last coherent and reasonable thing anyways, because indeed he didn't think for the rest of the night or at least nothing worth mentioning at the moment.

Chapter End Notes

So here's chapter 4 ^^ I must say I really liked how this turned out and I hope you enjoyed it as well.

I should also mention that this isn't beta read, for I'm still waiting for my beta to sent me the revised draft but I just really wanted to update and of course, once I have the cleaned version I will change it. And I'm also sorry for any typos and/or grammatical mistakes, I promise I will correct them.

Now I think I must point some things out so you don't get confused:

1) Talking to my beta reader, we agreed that it would be better if I changed the name of the coffee shop to something more realistic. So, I changed it to "Cinnamon Taste" and add it by saying that that's from where Haruka got the inspiration for his alias.
2) I already changed the name on the previous chapters just so it won't create any confusion if someone new starts reading it. So rest assured.

Well, I guess that's pretty much it. If any of you have a question just write down below and I'll get back to you ASAP.

I'm also really sorry that this gets so long to update but my beta has been kind of busy this last couple of weeks so that's why I hadn't been able to update.

In other news I already have the next two chapters done so I really hope I can update sooner rather than later, but I guess I'll just have to talk to my beta.

Next chapter will be full smut so you have something to look forward to all of you kinky readers ;)

As always, thank you all for giving this story a shot it makes me really happy to see that people like what I write and kudos and comments are always appreciated.

Well, until next time! ^^
Chapter 5

Chapter Summary

But just then, Haruka realized he wanted it. That dark something those green eyes were hiding but that was now about to break lose, he wanted it. He wanted Green to break him and then to put him back together in any way he desired.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

“Hnn…” Haruka gulped and heard a low chuckle in response. A warm, big hand was outlining his side making him shiver and to want nothing more but a firmer and closer contact with the hot body in front of him, but Green seemed to have different plans because he kept a firm grip on both of his wrists which were above his head, rendering them useless and leaving Haruka at his mercy.

“Eager, aren’t we?” Green asked, smiling against Haruka’s neck. They were still both clothed, except for their jackets which were neglected in the floor. “Patience, it’s all about expectation,” He made a pause and lifted his head from Haruka’s neck to look at his face, when he saw Haruka’s expression he broke into a grin. A grin that made Haruka tremble, “the more you crave it, the better it tastes when you are finally allowed to have it, wouldn’t you agree?”

Haruka couldn’t move his body, couldn’t make his lips move and now this guy expected him to answer? Now that was funny, the only thing Haruka could do was answer him by letting a half-whimper escape his mouth and nod a little. They still had their masks on, so he could feel the soft material of Green’s sliding against his skin.

That’s right, before they started doing… whatever it was that they were doing, he had made two things perfectly clear. First, he wasn’t looking for anything serious, he just wanted to ‘release stress’ to which Green had had no problems agreeing to, saying Haruka had stolen the words from him. And second, the masks were to be kept on all the time. Haruka knew himself so if he was to see the rest of Green’s face he was going to have it engraved it in his mind, and he wanted to avoid that at all costs. Green didn’t have a problem with that either.

So here they were in a hotel room, Haruka pinned to the door they had come through barely 5 minutes ago with his face flushed and trying to catch his breath, while Green stood there in front of him looking as fresh as the morning sun.

Haruka couldn’t remember much about the journey from the ballroom to the room he currently found himself in, because all the time Green had made sure Haruka’s thoughts never really finished forming entirely.

And how, you may ask? The answer is quite simple actually. Brief touches alongside Haruka’s sides as well as short but heated glances did the trick just fine, and even Haruka had been a person that had no problem using words, he was quite sure they would’ve stuck in his throat no matter how much of a talkative person he might’ve been, which thankfully, he wasn’t.

‘So unfair.’ Haruka thought, but that had just crossed his mind when he felt the hand that had been on his side making its way south, plucking his shirt out of his pants and caressing his low abdomen
with a feather light touch. Goosebumps were traveling throughout Haruka’s body, leaving an
electrifying sensation all over his skin.

Haruka was going crazy. He wanted more, more heat, more touch, more sensation.

And more is what he got as Green’s warm hand started making its way up once again, but this time
unbuttoning Haruka’s shirt and caressing every inch of skin that was exposed as he dragged his
hand up, making Haruka’s breath catch in his throat.

Reaching his tie, Green undid it with one fluid movement, but instead of discarding it as Haruka
thought he would, he observed it and run it over his index finger and thumb, feeling the fabric of
the black tie, “This is a really nice tie…” Green said, eyes still on the tie, “I wonder… Would it
look just as good if I were to tie you with it?” He then turned to look at Haruka, a smirk on his face
and amusement dancing in his eyes, as well as something darker but magnetic. Haruka couldn’t
look away, he felt trapped by that green gaze that regarded him with interest and hunger, and he felt
his throat go dry as he realized Green was actually awaiting his response.

“W-well, we will never know i-if we don’t try, will we?” He stuttered, but taking into account the
situation he found himself, Haruka considered it a victory that he hadn’t messed up that bad. Green
didn't seem to notice it, or decided to politely ignore it. Whatever the case, Green's eyes seemed to
grow darker and his smirk turn into something more feral the second those words left Haruka’s
mouth, and if his internal alarm hadn't been warning him before, now it was flaring bright and red
lights inside his head, for everything in the man before him screamed 'predator', and even if Haruka
wasn't an expert on the field he knew that made him the prey.

So caught up had Haruka been examining Green's gaze, that when he felt a light pinch on his
nipple he almost jumped, a gasp leaving his open mouth. Haruka looked up, searching for Green's
eyes, which were now paying close attention to his open mouth, and then he felt Green rubbing his
nipple between his index and thumb, making Haruka throw his head back as a ray of electricity ran
through his spine and settled on his lower belly. "You taste so good," He said while leveling with
Haruka so he could look at Haruka in the eyes, and by that making him crane his neck, "I can't wait
to taste other parts of you." He finished with a whisper.

"Then hurry up already." Haruka answered and was very proud to notice that he didn't stuttered this
time. Of course he knew that if Green was true to his word it would still be a while before he got
what he wanted, even if he still wasn’t sure of what that was exactly.

Haruka too, didn’t know if he would be able to wait, for he was already desperate for more, they
hadn't even properly kiss yet and all Haruka was certain of was that he would give anything to be
kissed by him. He also wanted to know if Green liked to use his tongue or if he liked to bite, he
wanted to know in just how many ways this guy could make him scream.

Green chuckled. "Patience, I said foreplay is everything, didn't I?" And at that, he dipped his head
onto the crook of Haruka’s neck and started a trail of hot, wet kisses all the way down his chest,
using his tongue at some parts or just lightly brushing his lips against his skin. Once he reached a
nipple, Green licked it lightly and then blew on it to make it harden, so then he could pull the little
pink bud with his teeth, not so much as of to hurt but just enough to peel a moan out of Haruka and
make him blush once he noticed the noise he was making.

Haruka wasn’t usually this loud, at least not that he remembered of, and so he tried to muffle the
sounds by biting his lip. At that, a hand came up and applied a little pressure on Haruka’s lip,
effectively making him let go of it. "Don't do that." He said with a serious tone, making Haruka
look up to him through half lidded eyelids. "I want to hear you. Remember that this is all about senses, which means: touch, smell and listening." And then he did the same to the other nipple, making Haruka moan a little more.

"Wh-what about sight?" It wasn't as if he was speaking coherently, but he wasn't too far gone as not to know his own senses... at least not yet. The answer came rather quickly.

"Oh, sight is important too, but tonight ‘sight’ will be something we won't be using, or to be more accurate, you won't be using it." And then he smiled, that dark smile that made Haruka's heartbeat pick up and his blood run faster in his veins, or at least that's how it made him feel. “Or at least, not at first.”

Suddenly Green let go of his wrists, which up until that point had been above his head, just to push his leg in between Haruka's making him spread his own, which was a little bit uncomfortable. Noticing his discomfort almost immediately, Green reached a hand down to take a hold on Haruka's thigh and by that lifting his leg. Giving a little jump, Haruka wrapped his legs around Green's torso to then make a show of putting his hands around his shoulders by slowly raising them from his sides and making his way up Green's arms, to then settle them comfortably around his neck to caress the hair at the nape. It wasn't a big secret that Haruka wasn't an expert in the seduction game but there were some things he knew or guessed most people liked, so he did them. It seemed to have the desired effect, for Green half closed his eyes and leaned into his touch.

"Hmmm... That feels nice." He said in a contented sigh. Feeling a little bold and taking advantage of the momentary distraction, Haruka leaned in and kissed him. Green gasped at being caught off guard, but decided to indulge Haruka a little and returned the kiss a second later. Haruka smiled a little, Green's lips were rougher than what he originally thought but it wasn't unpleasant, for the way he was able to use them made up for any roughness Haruka could feel.

The kiss started to turn more passionate and heated as the seconds ticked by, Green separated them a little and licked Haruka's lower lip, asking for entrance which he gladly granted and then their tongues laced themselves in a fight in which neither was up to give up control and at that Haruka felt his back being completely pressed to the door.

Haruka wrapped his legs more tightly around Green and by doing so, he rubbed against Green's hips. Haruka guessed the action felt rather good because a second later Green let out a noise from deep within his throat against Haruka's lips, which only encouraged Haruka to do it again so he could hear that sound that heated his blood in more than one place.

Green broke them apart, a string of saliva still connecting their mouths while they struggled to catch their breaths. Green smiled a little but it was not a friendly smile, it was more like a warning. "Now, while that was really enjoyable, you won’t be doing any of it unless I say so, okay?" Haruka just looked at him with big, blue eyes opened in surprise, at which Green's eyes danced with dark humor, "If you disobey me, I'll have to punish you, and you wouldn't like that, would you?"

Haruka felt a tremor go down his spine, but this time it wasn’t the good kind. His fear must have shown in his eyes, because a second later Green started talking again.

“Don’t be scared, the reward will be beyond your imagination but I need to know that you agree to do things my way, because if you don’t then what we’re about to do won’t work." Green said with a tone full of meaning, he then sought Haruka’s gaze, “So… are you up for it?" Haruka's hands slowly disentangled themselves from Green’s hair while he stared at him, making sure he was serious.

And he was serious, all amusement gone from his green eyes which now contained something dark and dangerous but not like the previous times, this was something different, something that made
his heart skip a beat and his blood run cold rather than hot and he had to take a moment to really consider what he was doing.

But just then, Haruka realized he wanted it. That dark something those green eyes were hiding but that was now about to break lose, he wanted it. He wanted Green to break him and then to put him back together in any way he desired. He also realized that this is what he had been seeking since the very beginning, what he needed even.

He didn’t want the fairytale, shining armor prince and happy ever after bullshit every person seemed to fantasize about these days, at least not right now; he wanted the one night, dark lord nightmare everyone dreaded, he wanted to know that as much as he could break into a thousand pieces, he could also become one whole piece again. Life was too short to spend it wondering what could have been or not, what could have come out of something but because you were too scared to try, didn’t happen. Those ‘what ifs’ were what killed a person in the end, a life spent in constant regret killed you every day, slowly and in an agonizing manner, driving you insane with just your imagination to try and act as a sedative to the constant ache you felt, and so Haruka was done with that… at least for tonight.

Having this in mind and noticing that Green was still awaiting his answer, he did something he hadn’t done in three years… he dived in head first in the swirl of emotions he felt inside.

Leaning back against the wall in a way that left his back arched, Haruka craned his neck and looked up at Green, who had to lean in a little to have a good hold on him so he wouldn’t fall, Haruka took hold of Green’s tie and met him halfway to give him a long and sensual kiss, to then break away slowly and say, “Do as you please with me,” Green’s eyes were open and now, thanks to the words Haruka had said, contained surprise that was quickly being replaced by lust and excitement which made the green orbs look almost black, “I’m yours tonight.” He whispered breathlessly.

Green didn’t lose any time, and as soon as Haruka was done talking he bit and licked Haruka’s neck to then rub their hips together, making Haruka’s head go blank for a few seconds. He then inched closer to Haruka’s ear, “I’m going to make you scream so loud that tomorrow you won’t even be able to talk properly.” Green said in a whisper that sent little shots of electricity down his spine while he brushed his slips against Haruka’s ear and then captured his earlobe between his teeth.

The seriousness was gone and was now replaced by heat, a heat that was everywhere and that was radiating from all over his and Green’s body, piling up in between his thighs making the front of his pants tent in an almost embarrassing way that made his face light up with a bright red color but considering the circumstances, he realized that his embarrassment will only get in the way and he also noted that he wasn’t going to see this person ever again, they were just two strangers who happened to want the same thing and were both available at the time, which led them to the clash of their desires. Nothing more, nothing less.

Plus, the masks hid both of their identities and when everything was done, they would go their different ways and continue as if nothing had happen, they would never know what the other person was really like or if what they had said and done would’ve actually happened if they had actually known each other.

“We’ll see about that, won’t we?” Haruka said while he separated himself a little bit so he could look at Green directly in the eyes.

Green lifted an eyebrow, but this time his eyes were dancing with amusement, “Is that a challenge I hear?” Haruka turned his head and shrugged as if to say that he could take it in any way he wanted.
Soon after Haruka did that, he felt a hand squeezing between his thighs which resulted in a harsh intake of breath and his eyes shooting to meet the gaze he felt burning in the side of his face. “I am now going to put you down and kiss you until your lungs feel like they are going to burst, and while I’m at it, I will take away this pretty suit you got for yourself so I can take a look and a taste of that cream like skin of yours.” Green’s eyes didn’t falter and Haruka’s heart skipped a beat as the sound of blood rushing in his ears increased tenfold, while he tried to grasp at the bit of composure he knew he had left.

Slowly Green unhooked Haruka’s legs from around his waist and slid him down until Haruka’s feet touched the ground. Not even a second later, Green’s lips were on his and Haruka couldn’t think anymore.

Green’s lips moved with the agility and confidence of someone who knew what he was doing. Twisting, licking, brushing, biting… they left little to no space for Haruka to try and catch his breath which was starting to make him feel a little bit dizzy, but not in a bad way.

Haruka could also feel hands working their way over his body, taking his shirt out of his pants completely and then discarding it on the floor, to then continue their way down and start working on his belt. Not wanting to be left behind, at least not in this and noting that Green was still fully clothed except for his jacket, Haruka directed his hands to Green’s chest snaking them up until he reached the neck and working to undo his tie and then quickly throwing it somewhere behind himself. All of this was done without neither of them breaking apart.

Still resolved not to let Green do all the work, Haruka quickly started to undo the buttons at the top of the other’s shirt but it wasn’t an easy task. The buttons were set in rows of two with little space between them, which made it all the more difficult to undo. Growing impatient Haruka decide to just yank at the shirt sending the remaining white buttons flying all over the room. He could feel the tall man’s smile against his lips but decided not to acknowledge it by taking the shirt off completely from him.

Finally finishing undoing Haruka’s belt, Green spoke up “Wait a second… take off your shoes.” And then he completely broke away from Haruka. Not wanting to waste any time, or to be separated from the heat he felt for too long, Haruka quickly took off his shoes without even bothering to undo the laces first. “Good boy.” Green said, Haruka’s head snapped up at the use of the pet name, he could actually feel his pupils dilating and his breath becoming shallower. It wasn’t as if he had a kink for being called names, or maybe he did and hadn’t realized it until now, but whatever the case it turned him on even more, making the pressure in his pants almost unbearable.

Green seemed to realize this at the same time Haruka did, and as understanding slowly settle in his features he took a step forward and traced a finger down from behind Haruka’s left ear, slowly caressing his jaw while he opened his hand and used it to touch his neck and then, go steadily over his abs, to arrive at the waist of his pants and giving it a little push down, leaving it pooling around his ankles, a clear sign for Haruka to step out of it. Not once had his eyes left Haruka’s face, stepping out of his pants and kicking them so they wouldn’t be in the way, Haruka raised a hand to start undoing Green’s belt but then stopped in midair. What if Green didn’t want him to do it and ended up ‘punishing’ Haruka? Whatever he meant by that.

Deciding that it wasn’t too big of a gamble, Haruka reached out and started undoing his belt. When he was met with no complaint he pushed the pants down in the same way Green had done to him, only then did he noticed that Green had been faster than him and was barefoot and that very much like Haruka, he was using a pair of black boxers. Haruka smiled a little and cocked his head.
“What?” Green asked a little taken back by the shorter man’s reaction.

“We match.” Was all he said, amusement painting his tone. Green looked down at himself and then at Haruka. He let out a huff and now it was Haruka's turn to frown.

"What?" He copied Green's previous question.

A genuinely amused smile was plastered on his face, "Of all the things you could've noticed or paid attention to," and if Haruka hadn't thought he was mocking him before, now he did "like for example," He extended a hand and signaled at Haruka's tented boxers, "that." Haruka could feel his cheeks heating up by the second, he was pretty sure he had never blushed so much in his life, he hastily looked away.

"W-well sorry for not being your average person.” Haruka slumped his shoulders and refused to look at Green's face.

As he considered locking himself in the bathroom and taking care of his 'problem' to then leave, he felt a light tug on his wrist and the next thing he knew he had a hand under his chin and was being forced to look up.

"Hey, I'm not saying it's a bad thing." Green eyes were piercing through blue ones, looking at him with raw sincerity "I just thought it was unusual, not in bad way though.” He smiled and this time it was comforting, as if to assure Haruka it was all right.

Haruka wanted to roll his eyes, but not at Green but at himself. Here he thought they were just going to get it over and done with and now this guy was consoling him. Being done with all of the talking and wanting nothing more than to continue were they had left off, Haruka stood up on his tiptoes and pulled Green down by the neck so he could give him a heated kiss. Green let out a startled breath for the second time that night but nonetheless kissed Haruka back. Haruka's hands found their way up and tangled themselves in the sandy brown locks while Green hands dedicated themselves to exploring Haruka's body. Haruka could feel them outlining his body, going from his upper arms, to the sides and then over his abs. He wasn't as fit as he was two years ago, but he still preserved a little bit of muscle thanks to his constant expeditions to the local swimming pool two times a week.

Haruka's breath caught, Green's hands had reached his back side and were now giving his ass a little squeeze, making Haruka break away to inhale through his nose. Green didn't stop though, he trailed his mouth over the side of Haruka's face and when he got to the part were his neck met his chest, just above his collarbone, he gave a hard suck to then lick at it. Haruka could practically feel the red spot blooming on his skin.

And then his knees buckled and he was falling backwards, only to land in a soft set of sheets and a comfortable bed. How had they ended up in the bedroom? He didn't remember walking, but that might have been understandable since he had been trying not to make a fool out of himself. Leaning on his elbows, Haruka settled himself on his back and looked up to Green.

Again he felt as if the air had been stolen from him. Green was gorgeous. He obviously spent a lot of time in the gym and god if it didn't pay off. Haruka had known Green was strong, but those arms looked like he could lift anything and make it look like if it was nothing. And his chest... Haruka wanted to lick his way down his neck and every creak and split of his abs. Haruka wasn't someone who was a fan of sweets, but had Green been a popsicle he would gladly lick and suck him all over until there was nothing left.

"Like what you see?" Came Green's amused tone, Haruka didn't even bother to look up nor did he
try to hide his interest and answered directly.

"Very much, actually." He still didn't look up and instead concentrated his attention at the front part of Green's boxers.

"Well now, should we get this show started?" Ever so slowly, Green hooked his thumbs in the elastic of his underwear and dragged it down. As inch per inch of skin was revealed, Haruka got more and more eager. The wait was excruciating, he wanted nothing more but to reach out a hand and yank the underwear from Green, but then he made the mistake of looking up.

Green's gaze held him in place, keeping him grounded where he was and leaving no room for complaints or any type of plan he could have thought about.

Haruka heard a dull thump and teared his gaze away, not without problem, and glanced down. There he found Green's cock, big and hard. It made Haruka's mouth water, he wanted to take into his mouth and trail his tongue along the vein he saw was pulsing there. His thoughts were everywhere and nowhere all at once, and he had to remind himself how to breathe when he felt like not enough air was going to his brain.

He sat on the edge of the bed and reached a hand out but stopped in midair, yet again, to look up at Green. Haruka wanted to touch him, so having that in mind he extended his hand while doing eye contact with Green and leaving his eyes open for him to read. Haruka was sure there was no way Green could mistake the message hidden in his eyes, but just in case he did everything he could so he would get it. After all he had tried doing this same thing, to speak with his eyes and body, with another person but that had just ended up in disaster...

No. No. Absolutely NO.

He was not going to think of that right now. The only thing that matter was the person standing in front of him and what Haruka was about to do with him. He could go back to his dark hole tomorrow, but not tonight, not now.

"Go ahead, I'm not stopping you if that's what you're thinking." Green's voice cut through Haruka's thoughts, bringing him back to the present.

Forgetting about his current predicament and focusing once again, Haruka closed all the space between his hand and the thing that was making his fingertips tingle. He closed his hand around Green's cock and moved his hand up and down experimentally. Haruka could hear Green's intake of breath and smirked to himself. Gathering a little bit of confidence that was scattered all around his being, Haruka brushed his thumb over the slit at the top while he reached his other hand out and used it massage his balls, he started to pick up his pace and squeezed Green harder. Now the one with the ragged breathing wasn't Haruka. When he looked up, Green was squeezing his eyes shut and had his jaw was clenched. As if sensing Haruka's gaze on him, Green opened his eyes.

Haruka almost stopped completely, but managed not to at the last second. Green's eyes were coal black, the pupil blown so wide he could hardly see any trace of that wonderful green that concealed a thousand things in its depths, and in that moment Haruka knew he wanted to see more of that expression, not because he knew Green was feeling good, but because it filled him with something that was almost like a sedative to the aching that, even now, was present at the back of his mind.

With nothing more but the urge to soak himself in the feel of this, Haruka leaned in again but not before looking up at Green and making sure he understood what he was about to do. Giving a stiff nod, Green just looked down at him and said in a husky voice, "L-like I said, I'm... Mmm... I'm not
stopping you." And that was all Haruka needed before he leaned all the way in and took Green in his mouth. Haruka swirled his tongue at the tip and then licked the underside along the thick vein. Green's hand came down and tangled itself in Haruka's hair, pulling a little bit at the dark strands, encouraging him to keep going. Haruka didn't miss a bit and took all of Green into his mouth until he could feel the tip at the back of his throat.

It had been a while since the last time he had done this, but he was enjoying it more than what he remembered he did, and he guessed he was doing all right by the noises that were leaving Green's mouth, "Shit... like that, keep going, don't stop." And so Haruka didn't. He started pumping his head up and down Green's length, sucking on it with all of his might. "Fuck, ahh... ahh... wait, wait... shit!" Haruka had started to use his hands again too, caressing behind Green's thighs and then sliding up until he reached the base of his cock. Not surprisingly, Haruka couldn't take all of Green into his mouth so what he couldn't fit in he used his hands to take care of. "Ha-ah fuck... wait... stop, seriously... stop!" Haruka let go of Green and was suddenly pushed down on the bed, Green towering him. Green, clouded eyes were blazing in a dark and dangerous way. Haruka's breath was ragged as well as Green's, they both just laid there for a couple of seconds trying to catch their breaths once again.

"Remember what I said?" What had he said? Wha- Oh... Shit... shit, shit, shit. Green smiled and Haruka shivered. "That's right, you just ignored what I told you, and so you know what that means, right?" Green was regarding him with such a fiery look that Haruka was sure he was going to actually attack him. Instead Green stood up from the bed and just half turn to send Haruka a glance that said that he should better stay put if he didn't want suffer the consequences, and then he walked out of the room.

Snorting slightly, Haruka dropped his head back down on the bed. Great, just what he had wanted to avoid and now he was lying in this bed waiting for the other man to come back again and give him his 'punishment'. Haruka started rolling his eyes, but stopped halfway through.

"Wait. He wouldn't leave, would he? Panic started to gather all over his body, making his muscles tense and his thoughts to become a jumbled mess. No, he couldn't panic, not here, not now. And either way, Green had said he would be back.

"Actually," His conscience spoke, Haruka was starting to hate it more and more every time. "He just implied it. You can't be sure that he will come back." There, he despised it; and just as he was trying to stand up, even though he had considered just to lay there, Green appeared on the door and stopped dead in his tracks when he saw Haruka standing up.

A frown found its way to his face. "And just where do you think you're going?" Haruka felt a surge of relief wash over him. Relaxing once again and laying down once again on the bed, he answered in the most bored voice he could master at the moment.

"I got bored of waiting. I thought I might go look for you to see if you hadn't gotten lost in your way back." Green's eyes opened a little in surprise and then turned into slits, studying him with earnest. Haruka felt taken aback, and he suddenly felt the urge to bolt out of the room and hide away somewhere. Noticing Haruka's growing panic, Green sighed and let it slide. Deciding to focus his attention on something else so he could forget just how vulnerable he felt a moment ago, Haruka noticed that something was occupying one of Green's hands.

"What's that?" Haruka asked, signaling to his hand. Green squared his shoulders and Haruka could tell his was back on the game.

"Lay down on your back and put your hands over your head." Green didn't bother to answer his question and just dedicated himself to watch Haruka do as he was told. Not wanting to go back to
what had just happened, Haruka decided to just do what he was being asked to. Laying back down, Haruka pushed himself a little bit further into the bed and then raised his arms above his head.

"Now what?" Haruka asked standing up just a little to see Green at the foot of the bed. Green was looking at Haruka with hunger once again, and that's all it took for Haruka to forget about what happened and be turned on fully again. Breaking out of his state of hypnosis, Green blinked once and then looked at Haruka's expecting face.

"Now stay still." Green climbed up the bed and crept over to Haruka. Now he could see clearly what was on Green's hand. It was his tie, remembering what Green had said earlier, Haruka's head snapped up in realization just as two big hands grabbed his wrists. Green was smiling at Haruka's surprised expression, "I told you I would do this, don't look so surprised." But even as he was saying that, Haruka could see he was pleased.

No sooner had he thought of this when he felt the fabric of his tie being wrapped around his wrist, securing them together and over his head. "How's that? Isn't that too tight?" Haruka heard a gentle voice asking him. Bewildered, Haruka looked up to find a pair of gentle eyes looking down on him.

Haruka almost whimpered, almost, but decided instead that he wouldn't let Green toy with him and so he tried to suppress his moans, but just then Green grazed his teeth below his lower abdomen and above the elastic of his boxers and his minds went blank.

"Don't try to play tough," Green said, and this time he looked up to Haruka, his eyes were as hard as stone. "Because you will lose." And then he yanked Haruka's boxers from his hips, exposing his erection and making him gasp as the cold air connected with his heated skin. "Nice. Now, where did I put it? Ah, there it is." Haruka saw as Green stretched backwards and then came back with a little bottle of some kind that contained a clear liquid on it.
"Oh." Was all Haruka could say when he realized what the little bottle was.

"I'm glad you're familiar with it." Green smiled, a smile that was all white teeth and innocence. Haruka didn't believe it for a second. "And by the way, I know I said we wouldn't be using sight, but I changed my mind. I want to see as much of you as humanly possible." Haruka could only stare at him, this guy contradicted himself as word after word left his mouth. Even so, as they spoke Green had coated three of his fingers with the lube and was now directing one of his fingers to Haruka's entrance.

Ever so slowly, he inserted one finger. Haruka's breath caught, and not for the last time, in his throat as he felt the uncomfortable feeling creeping its way over his body. He had forgotten how it felt, it had never been painful but at first it certainly felt weird. "Relax, if you don't then this is going to hurt." Haruka tried his best to do as he was told and started counting in his head. Slowly he relaxed and with that the finger started to move in an attempt to start stretching him out. Haruka could slowly feel his muscles relaxing and his body accepting the new found pressure.

"I can do two." He said and with that another finger came. This time the pace was a little bit faster, and he noticed with satisfaction that the uncomfortable feeling was disappearing.

"Okay, now... where is it? Maybe here?" Green started mumbling under his breath and then he twisted his fingers a little. "Nope, guess not. Maybe... here?" And at that he angled his wrist just a little differently and a surge of white, hot pleasure shot through Haruka’s spine making his back arch. “Ah, so there it is.” Haruka could actually picture the smug smile that was now plastered on his face. So that’s what he had been doing.

“You…” Another finger joined the other two and now the three of them were hitting that spot inside of Haruka that was making him see stars on the ceiling. “Yo-u… hahh… ahh…. Yo-ah!” He couldn’t get past that one word, his body was trembling and he couldn’t even remember what he wanted to say to Green.

“I… what?” Now he was definitely mocking him, but he couldn’t bring himself to care. He just knew that he wanted Green to continue harder, faster, deeper.

“M-more… I-I-ahh… Mmm…” He couldn’t even articulate two words together and make them sound half coherent. Shit. He could feel precum leaking from his neglected cock and wanted to just reach a hand down and be done with it, but he knew better than to try and underestimate Green again.

Now that he thought about it, this didn’t feel like a punishment. It felt like a reward, whatever the case, Haruka wasn’t going to tell him to stop.

At that moment a particular hard thrust sent him almost over the edge and his vision went white. “I-I’m ss-so c-close.” Haruka managed to stammered, and just as those words left his mouth the fingers that just a second ago were making him see the universe, were gone. “NO!” Haruka whined, he knew he probably looked pathetic while he whined like a little kid but he couldn’t care less. He had been so damn close it was frustrating.

“Now you understand?” Green started speaking in a measured tone, “This is your punishment. I will make you go all the way and when you’re almost there I will stop. You will come when I tell you that you can. Understood?” Haruka wanted to scream that no, he didn’t understand and that it was downright cruel. He was just about to tell him when he felt Green’s fingers going inside of him again, beginning their torturous rhythm.

And again, and again it happened. Green would torture him, sometimes he would get up and leave
another mark in Haruka while still working him open and just when Haruka was about to break into a thousand pieces, he would stop. This happened about five times, and by then Haruka felt like he didn’t care about any of his previous ideals, he just wanted to come and then curl up into a ball and forget about this whole situation.

“Please, oh please…” Haruka was begging now, he didn’t care if he looked pitiful or pathetic, he just couldn’t take it anymore. “Let me come, please… please!” He was mad with the need of feeling that release, he felt like he would burst if he didn’t do it in the next couple of seconds. Tears were pricking his eyes, both from how turned on he was and from the frustration he was feeling, drool was falling from the corner of his mouth as he fist the sheets he could get a hold of with his hands above his head. Haruka could already feel how Green was going to leave him panting and begging yet again, but he tried anyway. “Please… I’m begging you… please…” Dignity be damned.

“For god’s sake, you’re probably the most erotic sight I’ve ever laid my eyes on.” Green grunted and then spoke near his ear, “I had planned to tease you a little more, but after this I just… can’t.” Hope blossomed in Haruka’s chest and at that exact moment Green flicked his fingers hitting him just where he needed them to then he stroke his neglected erection one last time. “C’mon, Mon saveur de liqueur…” He spoke in a language Haruka didn’t know. “Come for me.” And that was it. He couldn’t have hold it even if he had wanted to.

His orgasm hit him full force, wave after wave of pleasure cursed through his body, making his body arch and his toes curl, electricity pricked his skin and his mouth was wide open in a silent cry. For a few seconds he couldn’t see anything but white as his body felt as light as a feather and for once, in a very long time, he felt as if he didn’t have anything to worry about. Slowly, he came down from the dreamy state he had found himself in. His bones felt like mush and all he wanted to do was sleep, and so he turned around and lowered his hands from above his head.

He was just starting to drift off when he felt a hand wrapping around his cock and a tongue coming down on his neck, startling him out of his sleepy state and making his eyes shot open in alarm.

“Oh did I wake you up? I’m sorry.” He didn’t look sorry at all. “But I feel really obliged to tell you that we are not done yet.” Not done yet? What was he referring to? He had come, it had been amazing and now all Haruka wanted was to sleep. “You may have had your chance, but I must remind you that I haven’t had my share, and my problem is starting to be a little bit painful.” Green gestured down at himself and Haruka could see his erection, leaking and looking painfully hard.

Haruka looked up at him once again, green eyes darker than ever before and Haruka could feel himself harden against Green’s palm. “So…” He pushed Haruka’s hands above his head once more, “Let’s start with the final act, shall we?”

Chapter End Notes

New update! This wad actually my first time writing smut, well... at least with and explicit rating. I know it’s really long but before I realized it, I had written +7000 words, so bear with me? /(\ So! Did you like it? Did you hate? Was it good or did I make you lose all faith in humanity by writing this? Any feedback is apprectiated, so be sure to leave a comment (because they give me life and help me to keep writing) or reach out to me on twitter:
@ArtistiqueR12 ; Kudos are also much appreciated.

Also, I apologise for any mistakes you may have found in this. I still haven't heard from my beta and so this chapter as well as the last haven't been revised so any flaws you may have spotted are completely my fault, but of course as soon as I get the cleaned version I will replace it. But if you go out of your way and point them out I will be more than happy to correct them myself ^^

So anyways, I hope you all have a merry, merry christmas and until next time!
Chapter 6

Chapter Summary

It was quite an interesting thing, it seemed like if a snake had crawled its way up and down Haruka’s body and left marks that undulated all over him to let everyone know that it had been there, claiming him as his own.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

“Fucker.”

“We wouldn’t be here if I wasn’t, would we?” Green eyes were shining with dark amusement. An electrifying tingling cursed through Haruka’s body as he felt the millionth mark being left upon his skin, just below his belly button.

A warm hand was slowly working Haruka’s length while the other was busy keeping his hips grounded to the bed, effectively pinning him to it and leaving Haruka without options but to try and stay put.

It wasn’t working, every gram of self-control Haruka had once possessed was long gone, and he let out cry after cry and moan and pant as they crawled their way out of his throat.

He wasn’t embarrassed anymore either, every flick of Green’s hand and every movement of his tongue against Haruka’s skin drove him mad with lust and left him like a quivering mess of pleas and whimpers demanding more.

Haruka had thought that after he had come, he wouldn’t be able to take anymore but Green had proven him wrong. It had been ridiculous how fast he had become hard again, just a little bit of pressure in all the right places, a heated kiss while skilled hands worked his cock and look at that, an erection in under forty seconds.

A tongue making its way from the finely defined ‘v’ of his hips to the beginning of his abs made Haruka’s train of thought be lost into oblivion. His hands were still tied and above his head, and to be honest they were already kind of cramped from the constant pulling at the fabric and Haruka’s intents at trying to lower his arms. A finger entering him sent Haruka’s vision into a white screen of nothingness.

“P-ahh.. Pl-Nng…” Fuck. This was going nowhere, at least not as long as Green kept touching him like that.

“Hmm?” Sensing that there was something Haruka wanted to say, Green slowed down his movements and looked up from Haruka’s lower body. “What was that, again?”

Finally being able to catch some of his breath, Haruka opened his eyes and looked at Green with a pleading stare. “P-leaase, my arms… I swear I will be good, just please… please, untie me… I can’t feel them any more… Please, I’ll be good…” He guessed the tears that were adorning his eyes gave a nice and convincing effect because the next thing Haruka felt was Green’s fingers
working to untie his wrists.

“One chance.” Green said into Haruka’s ear while the tie fell on the bed with a thud. “One chance is all I’m giving you. Try to touch yourself in any kind of way and the consequences will be worse than last time.” Haruka slowly brought his hands to his sides, all the while looking at Green’s intense gaze framed by the black mask that accompanied his features and then swallowed audibly, at that Green smirked and then trailed his tongue from his earlobe down his throat and collarbone, over the slight lines of his abs until he got to his hipbones and then blew a little over the glistening trail he had left, making a shiver run all over Haruka’s body and leaving a trail of goose bumps all over his skin. Haruka threw his head back against the bed and fisted his hands into the bed sheets while a strangled moan made its way up his throat, but he closed his mouth so it wouldn’t go past his lips.

Suddenly he felt warmth at tip of his cock and that only made a cry break out from his sealed lips. “I told you not to do that… Am I going to have to repeat myself a third time?” Green’s voice held a dark warning within it. A hand started caressing Haruka’s inner thighs and he could do nothing but let the stream of moans out of his throat. He shook his head enthusiastically. “Hmm… that’s better.” He heard Green humming from in between his thighs. “Now, less talk and more action.” A smirk appeared on his face and Haruka could’ve sworn he was the personification of lust. “I want to hear you scream.”

Not a moment later the finger that had been teasing him came out just to enter him again half a second later, hitting his sweet spot and effectively making Haruka scream and his back arch in a graceful manner. “Ahh… ahh! Nng…!”

“Now, that’s what I wanted to hear from you.” Another skilled finger joined the first and Green started scissoring him, he could no longer think, and Haruka just let every wave of pleasure wash through him and as time went by his fists just clung harder at the bed sheets until his knuckles were white from the strength he was using.

Suddenly, Green’s magical fingers were gone and Haruka could do nothing but cry out loud for the loss. “NO! Not again!” He started thrashing around in the bed until a warm hand came down to caress his face, at that Haruka stopped at once and looked up at green eyes from blue eyes clouded with tears of bitterness and frustration.

“I’m not leaving you like this.” Green regarded him with a serious expression that let Haruka know that he wasn’t joking. “I just thought you were ready and wanted to reach out for this.” At that, he showed Haruka his palm in which the little bottle of lube was resting. The fingers that had cupped his face made their way up to his forehead to move Haruka’s bangs from his eyes in almost loving manner.

What the hell? This was the second time this had happened. It was the second time this man had seen through him and was treating him like if he was made of glass. He would have none of it, he couldn’t… he needed to break this moment, he just knew he had to if he didn’t want to start crying but for other reasons that were far from lust and pleasure.

Taking action once more, Haruka brought his hips up making contact with Green’s hard on and by that obtaining a moan from him as Green’s eyes to fluttered close. The next time Green opened his eyes, they were black and clouded again, no trace of the tenderness he had witnessed before was left and instead all he could see in those green depths were lust, hunger and desire, even more than last time if that was possible, and Haruka couldn’t have been more grateful.

“You want it that bad?” Green opened the cap of the little bottle and poured a fair amount of the transparent liquid into the palm of his hand. Haruka’s body trembled in anticipation, all of his
worries evaporated once again and his mind became clouded once again. Green licked his lower lip while he started applying the lube upon himself. “You moved without me telling you to… you know what that means, right?” Fuck. Just fucking great. Haruka couldn’t believe himself. He had done it again, but he couldn’t really bring himself to care or regret it. He had done what he needed to. “Don’t look so panicked. I won’t stop this time,” Haruka looked up at him with gleaming eyes. “But…” Why was there always a ‘but’? Haruka swore it was one of the words he despised the most. “I’m going to fuck you harder than I originally planned. Okay?” A tiny smile appeared on Green’s face, it was the tiniest gesture Haruka had ever seen on someone’s face that he wasn’t even sure if you could classify it as a smile but, it was so feral and revealed such a profound and raw desire that Haruka thought that he might be able to come from just looking at him.

“Now, let’s get started.” Green separated Haruka’s legs even more and positioned himself right in the middle of them. Once that was done he aligned himself with Haruka’s entrance and then slowly pushed himself in, just the tip at first. “Relax.” Easier said than done, Haruka thought but tried to loosen himself a little. “Fuck, you’re so tight.” Green hissed through gritted teeth while he pushed himself even deeper, stretching Haruka bit by bit. Once Green was fully inside of him, he gave Haruka a moment so he could get used to the feel of him inside.

Haruka was now gripping the bed sheets tighter than before, if that was even possible, and his breathing was coming out ragged. He could feel his muscles flexing at the intruder inside of him, he had a vague memory of how this used to feel but now that he was experiencing it again, it was painful and uncomfortable. He knew he needed to try and calm himself down because if he didn’t it really would hurt, so he started by taking deep breaths and then letting them out through his nose until the ache between his legs subsided and the only thing that was left was a slight discomfort.

Sensing the change in his slightly less stiff posture, Green spoke. “I’m going to start moving.” Haruka didn’t bother opening his eyes and just nodded a little even though he knew Green wasn’t really asking for permission. He felt as Green pulled out just to re enter him again a heartbeat later, Haruka sucked in a breath and squeezed his eyes shut, it was painful so much he saw red dots at the corner of his vision and tears pricking the back of his eyes.

Feather light kisses being pressed against the skin of his neck made his train of thought deviate a little and his eyes slowly started to open. Green was looking at him and before he could say anything, Haruka kissed him. He needed to distract himself, Haruka could still feel Green slowly thrusting into him and while it was getting better he still felt more pain than pleasure, so he forced himself to be lost in the kiss.

It wasn’t that difficult, Green was a great kisser and knowing what Haruka was trying to do, and Green let himself be kissed. Once again, their tongues collided and that was more than enough to let Haruka’s thoughts scatter everywhere.

Taking advantage of Haruka’s momentary distraction, Green pulled out just to thrust back in and leave Haruka seeing stars while his back arched and his mouth fell open in a silent scream. He could feel Green’s smile against his lips. “Now that’s more like it.” And then all chatter was left aside as Green started picking up his pace until he settled for one that wasn’t too fast but not to slow either, just enough to drive Haruka half-crazy while he hit that spot deep inside of him.

“M-more… M-ng, More!” Without thinking, Haruka lifted his hips to meet Green’s next thrust halfway through. Almost instantly, hot pleasure surged throughout his nervous system as he let out a strangled cry, tears were now spilling down his cheeks but this time they were from the unbearable and utmost ecstasy he was feeling.

Green seemed to be enjoying himself too, because just then he let out a deep groan from deep
within his chest. “I really wanted to tease you, but now that you did that I’m afraid you shattered my plans.” He took hold of one of Haruka’s legs and bend it over until it almost touched Haruka’s chest, meanwhile his other hand took hold of one side of his hips. “Let’s hear you scream, Mon Saveur de Liqueur.” And with that he buried himself deep and hard into Haruka.

“Ung.. gah-ah!” Random noises were coming out of Haruka’s mouth and there was nothing he could do stop them. The angle in which Green was directing his thrusts were connecting directly with his prostate eliciting wave after wave of pleasure, his bended knee contributed a sense of pain that just made Haruka feel lightheaded and also as if Green’s cock reached deeper and deeper into him with each powerful thrust of his hips.

Haruka could feel Green’s fingers grabbing his hips hard enough to leave marks and had Haruka been in a more lucid state he would’ve probably complained, but right now he couldn’t think about anything. All he knew is that he wanted it harder, faster and deeper.

With that in mind, Haruka lifted his other leg and grabbed both of his ankles while he pushed them back until his knees were bended all the way towards his chest. Green had let go of his leg to grab at both sides of his hips and the next thrust sent Haruka flying into stratosphere. It was amazing how much of a difference the position made, Green was able to hit his sweet spot dead on every single time making Haruka feel dizzy with all of what he was feeling and oh, so close to the edge. Green didn’t seem to be too far off either, his eyes were closed and his jaw was set into a firm line while he concentrated solely into keep his hips moving.

The image was too much for Haruka and he knew he wouldn’t last too much more either. He threw his head against the bed once again and concentrated in the heat that was all around him, his erection was so painfully hard it was leaking pre-cum and dripping into his abdomen. He wanted to reach out and jack himself off, but instead decided it would be much better if Green did it.

“I-I’m close… God, I-I’m so close!” Haruka screamed and looked up to see if Green was looking, and indeed he was. Letting go of the right side of his hips Green started pumping his hand up and down Haruka’s stiff cock, smearing it with pre-cum.

Green’s thrust were starting to get more erratic and frenzied. Haruka let go of his legs and wrapped them around Green, neither of them was thinking anymore of making it fancy or teasingly or whatever, they were just two hot bodies seeking friction and a much more desired release.

Haruka’s screams couldn’t be muffled or hidden now; he could already feel his throat growing sore and dry, but he would worry about that later. Right now, he just wanted to come already, angling his hips up he met every single thrust from Green, eliciting more raw screams from himself and groans from the other.

“I-I can’t-ahg!-ake it anymore! I-I’m going to-” A pair of lips pressing hard against his own stopped him from finishing his sentence. When he was able to pull back, his breathing was just as labored and erratic like his heartbeat. Green leaned in and whispered low in his ear.

“Come for me.” And that was it. Green’s voice was the trigger than sent him flying over his orgasm, faintly he felt how Green gave a few final thrust until he came too.

Haruka had never experienced something like this, his body spasm while his back arched and his vision cleared. It wasn’t like last time when his vision had gone completely white, this time as he rode the peak of his climax he could see every single detail in the room, everything was clear and bright and every movement, sensation and noise would amplify tenfold and that only made everything seem all the more powerful.
Colors were sharper, the lights seem brighter and the moan that pierced through his and Green’s throat at the same time bounced and echoed all around the room. As he came down from his high for the second time that night, he could feel all of his limbs become completely flaccid, his muscles were relaxed and not even a trace of stress was left on his body.

Fatigue started to set in and his eyelids felt like they weighed a ton, he could faintly feel his cum drying on top of him and suddenly he felt cold but if he didn’t have energy to do something as simple as move, he wouldn’t be able to clean himself.

Feeling how his mask clung to his face due to all the sweat he tried taking it off, but he couldn’t move his arms. Deciding that it wasn’t worth to even think about trying, he was about to drift off when he felt something that was grazing against the skin of his abdomen.

Looking down through half-lidded eyelids, Haruka saw that Green was cleaning him with one of the bed sheets. Surprise cursed through his brain, what was this guy thinking? And more importantly, why was he doing this? But he was way too tired, he could already feel himself being pulled under the blissful cover of sleep, or maybe it was Green the one who was actually covering him with a blanket? He didn’t know anymore and the last thing he registered was Green whispering softly in his ear.

“Good night, Mon Saveur de Liqueur.” And with that Haruka submerged himself in a dreamless sleep.

The hideous ringtone Nagisa had set on his phone woke Haruka up and reaching out a hand from underneath the blankets he found his phone resting on top of the little table beside the bed. Sliding his finger against the screen, Haruka put his ear against the phone and answered.

“H-hello?” What? His voice sounded raspy and hoarse, he reached a hand to touch his throat but quickly took it away when he made contact with a particular part just below his jaw. At the same time he noticed that he still had his mask on and so decided to take it off since it felt like was stuck to his face.

“Haru-chan? Wow, you had a busy night, didn’t you?” Nagisa’s chirpy voice was heard through the speaker.

“Shut up.” Damn that hurt. The only thing he wanted to do was curl up into a ball and drift off once again. Nagisa giggled.

“Haru-chan, do you have any idea of what time it is?” Haruka didn’t bother answering, he guessed it was still early morning, he knew he had to get up and catch a taxi down to his apartment if he
wanted to soak in his tub before heading to his afternoon class at the university. “Haru-chan, it’s already 2:43 in the afternoon.” Nagisa said. Haruka sat bolt upright.

“What?!” He regretted it instantly, a sharp pang ran from the top of his spine until it settled on his butt and his throat clenched in itself. Haruka’s intake of breath was heard by Nagisa at the end of the line.

“I already called the University and said you weren’t feeling well, Rei-chan said that you don’t have to come to work either and that you can make up for it next Saturday!” Haruka slumped back down into the pillows of the bed, he grimaced but was able to bite back a pained moan.

“Thanks.” Haruka said in a small voice, and he meant it because even if he stood up and made his way directly to the University he had already missed his first and second periods.

“Oh and by the way, you should take some painkillers and drink some lemon tea with honey.” Once again, Haruka found himself thanking whatever entity existed for having an amazing friend such as Nagisa, he had probably done something incredibly right in his past life to have someone like him by his side. “I was going to squeeze out of you every single detail from your interesting night, but even if I can’t see you I know you’re in no condition to do that.” Once again, Haruka was thankful but knew there was a ‘but’ coming, “But,” there it was. “Next time I see you, you won’t get away. I want every single detail of what happened last night, and I won’t settle for anything less.” Sighing internally but not really in the mood for arguing he settled for just humming in response. “Okay, that was all I wanted to say. See you later, Haru-chan!” And with that the line went dead.

Haruka sighed and rolled on his side, he was just about to drift off again when something caught his attention. He didn’t remember putting his phone on the bed side table, what was more he didn’t even remember taking it out at all because at the time there had been… well, more important matters taking place.

Slowly, Haruka rose from his place on the bed and turn his body so he was sitting at the edge of it. He stood up.

Bad idea.

As soon as his feet made contact with the ground and he was standing, he fell down landing in all fours. “Now, that hurt.” Taking the edge of the bed for support Haruka was able to kneel beside the bed, and that’s when he saw himself.

In front of the bed was a large mirror attached to the door that presumably led to the bathroom, but that wasn’t important right now nor was it what caught his attention.

All the way from just below his jaw, down to the inner and back part of his thighs was a trail of marks that varied from a deep angry red to a purplish blue and a fading yellow. It was amazing how all of those colors blended with his skin, Haruka lift up a hand with which he followed the trail while he examined each and every one of them.

It was quite an interesting thing, it seemed like if a snake had crawled its way up and down Haruka’s body and left marks that undulated all over him to let everyone know that it had been there, claiming him as his own.

Haruka could feel color rising to his cheeks and making it feel like his face was on fire. Still following the marks, that now undulated all over his abdomen, he came to a stop when he got to his hips. Haruka could feel the heat rising to his face once again, but was now sure that even his
ears were pink.

There, in both side of his hips were the marks of fingers, and very much like the rest of the bruises on his body, they were a deep blue color but with a faint trace of black. He figured that all purple marks were going disappear in 2 or 3 days, the red and yellow ones would fade between the afternoon and night of the next day and for the bruises along his hips... well, he wasn’t sure how much time they would stay there, but it would probably better if he refrained from going to the pool this week.

Haruka groaned, he didn’t really care what people thought but he really wasn’t looking forward to answering questions and having weird looks directed his way.

Looking away from the mirror, Haruka tried to stand up again and was proud to see that now he could stand, but then his knees wobbled and he almost fell to the ground again.

‘Stupid Green.’ Haruka thought, he had fulfilled his promise and now Haruka couldn’t walk or talk properly. Rolling his eyes in exasperation, he started to prepare himself mentally to the trip he was about to do in order to collect his clothes so he could take a bath and then head home.

Just as he was giving some really unstable steps towards the door he looked to the side and saw that on top of a chair that was near the corner of the room, were his clothes. They were neatly folded and his jacket was resting at the back of the chair. Slowly making his way towards it, while using the wall for support, Haruka asked himself the same question of last night: Why? He really couldn’t think of a single reason why that person would go out of his way to do that. Realizing there really wasn’t any case in trying to find an answer, as he wouldn’t be seeing the guy ever again, Haruka let it slide and instead picked up his clothes and made his way towards the bathroom.

Once in there, he filled the tub and sat on top of the toilet while he waited for the tub to fill. When he noticed the water had reached almost the top, he turned off the faucet and slide in and as his skin made contact with the water he sighed in contentment.

He thought of nothing and concentrated all of his thoughts into relaxing into the warm embrace of the water that enveloping him. After 10 minutes of just soaking there, he took the soap and started cleaning himself. He felt sticky and that was something he really didn’t like.

After washing his hair, Haruka was done and so he reached out for a towel and starting drying himself. He noticed with great satisfaction that the water had made miracles to his sore muscles and now all that was left was a little ache that came from in between his thighs, that even though was uncomfortable it was bearable.

Sliding his clothes back on, he was just about to put on his jacket when his tie fell from it. He bend down to pick it up, not without some effort, and just stared at it for a moment or two. When Haruka remembered for what he had used it last night he could feel his stomach churning and his heart skipping a beat. Deciding that it wasn’t worth the trouble, he quickly stuffed it on his pockets and made his way out of the bathroom.

He collected his keys, the mask and his wallet, which were on the bedside table, while he slid his shoes back on and put them into the pocket were his tie was.

Just wanting to get out of there and wanting nothing more but to get home and prepare himself some food, preferably mackerel, he walked down the hall to the elevator and pressed the button to go down. The elevator arrived with a soft ‘cling’ and Haruka proceeded to enter it while he pressed the button down to the lobby. A soft jazz music was playing in the background and within 10
seconds he was walking down the lobby and up to the main desk.

“Good morning, Sir. Is there anything I can help you with?” A man, probably in his late twenties, saluted and asked Haruka. Fidgeting slightly, Haruka answered in a small voice because of his sore throat.

“Umm… well, I wanted to know how much it was for the uh… the room we… umm… I used.” He really was bad a talking, but either way he knew he ought to pay for the room.

“What was the number of your room?” The man asked.

“425.” Haruka answered immediately, when he had walked out of the room, he had checked out the number so he could pay for it.

“All right. Wait a moment, please.” Haruka fished his wallet out of his pocket and was just about to take out his credit card when the man spoke up.

“The room has already been covered, you were supposed to return the room today at 6:00 pm.” Haruka stared at the man dumbfounded. The room was already cover? He had expected Green to cover half of it, but not all! Seriously, what was wrong with the guy?

“Is there anything else I can do for you, Sir?” The man spoke once again and interrupted his train of thought.

“Umm… no. Thank you.” Haruka said and turned to leave, but he just couldn’t stop thinking about it. This person, whoever he was, was really puzzling. He made no sense and Haruka had half expected to have to cover the price of the room all by himself.

Suddenly and unexpectedly, Haruka remembered Green’s expression those two times when he had looked at Haruka with such concern that he had wanted to run away. He had looked at Haruka with such a tender expression on his face, that he had left Haruka speechless and… well, if he was honest with himself, terrified. Because if a stranger such as that person could see so easily through him, why wouldn’t others be able to? Haruka shudder at the thought.

Pushing aside all thoughts of striking green eyes, transparent thoughts and everything in between, Haruka started walking towards the glass door of the entrance and promised himself he would forget everything about last night. He had gone because of one thing and one thing only and now that he had done it and it was over, he just wanted to forget and continue on with his life as if nothing had happened, and at least he felt a little bit lighter now. It must have been the bath, yeah that was it.

Taking one last calming breath, much like the one he had taken last night before he entered this same place, Haruka went out into the busy street and promised himself he wouldn’t think about it anymore and that instead he should focus on the nice and delicious piece of mackerel that was awaiting him home.

Sunlight hit him on the face as he started walking towards the edge of the sidewalk so he could catch a taxi and while he was at it, he imagined himself walking forward because that’s what he was going to do now. ‘Keep walking forward,’ Haruka thought to himself. ‘Run if you need to, but don’t stop. Don’t even think of stopping.’

A taxi paid attention to him and parked itself in front of him, Haruka opened the door and hopped on while he said his address to the driver.

The taxi started moving.
And he didn’t dare to look back.

Chapter End Notes

Merry day-after Christmas everybody! And even if you didn't celebrate it, I hope you had an amazing day! :)

Well, as I said before, this is my first time writing smut so bare with me? I promise I'll get better at this. /).

As with the last chapters this isn't corrected, therefore any mistakes are completely my fault and if you go out of your way to point out any mistakes I'll be sure to correct them as soon as possible.

Sooo... did you like it, did you hate it? Was it good or should I go hide in my emo corner? Any feedback is appreciated, so be sure to leave a comment or reach out to me on twitter: @ArtistiqueR12. I would love to talk to you ^^

I think this will be the last update of the year, so Happy New Year in advance. I hope everything you wish for comes true and that this year is better than this that is coming to an end.

Love and my most sincere good luck and wishes,
ArtistiqueReader12.
Chapter 7

Chapter Summary

He lived in a constant state of contradiction and his own beliefs tore him apart from the inside out, every second of every hour of every day.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

This was beyond ridiculous and Haruka was starting to feel more than a little irritated with himself.

It had already been ten days and even though Haruka had been trying his best to forget about everything, he just couldn’t stop the thoughts from forming in his head and leaving him like a confused mess.

After that night, Haruka had gone straight home. He had prepared mackerel, changed his underwear (which he made sure were at the bottom of the laundry basket) and clothes, to then head straight to bed.

He had hoped to get some much needed rest, even though he had slept for at least 10 hours back at the hotel, and start shoving his memories from the night before into a deep and dark corner of his mind.

Everything had been fine, until he had closed his eyes.

Images of a unique green, a tan skin and a smooth, deep voice kept flashing behind his closed eyelids. Seeming as the images wouldn’t go away no matter how hard he tried, Haruka decided to go out for a jog, after almost 1 hour of laying in bed trying to get the sleep that kept avoiding him.

Rapidly changing his attire to a plain white t-shirt, a blue hoodie, sweatpants, his running shoes, iPod and earphones, Haruka made his way towards the entrance of his apartment and went out while he shuffled through the songs on the little device.

He ended up just pressing the ‘random’ button as he closed the door, and putting on the earphones, he made his way towards the streets.

It was 6:30 in the afternoon, the trip home had taken longer than expected because of a traffic incident even though it had been relatively early in the afternoon, and so the ride that would’ve probably taken 1 hour from the hotel to where he lived ended up being of 2 and a half hours.

So in order to avoid all of the people who were surely just leaving work and heading home, Haruka decided to take and alternate route from the one he usually took.

He didn’t usually go this way because it had a lot of twists and turns, which if you didn’t know well enough will get you lost in the blink of an eye (which clearly, wasn’t what had happened to him.) Of course this was also the route he used to take with…

Shaking his head to try and avoid directing his train of thought down a dark alley, Haruka decided to pay attention to the song that was now playing while he tried not getting lost in between the
maze that were Tokyo’s streets.

It seemed as the song was just ending as he heard the last strings of a guitar being played but couldn’t really identify the song. Not too long after, a new song started playing. It was some kind of electronic thing mixed in with alternative rock, or something of the sort.

Haruka didn’t usually listen to this type of music, but when he was in need of some kind of exit and swimming couldn’t completely fill the void he felt (as unusual as that was), he used it to blast his ears while he went to the local gym and worked himself out or went running to the point of almost passing out from sheer exhaustion.

Either way, this kind of heavy music was what he needed, and so he let himself be totally absorbed in the song while he let his feet speed up until he was pushing himself further and twisting and turning just by placing all of his faith on his memory, concentration focused and utterly centered on the lyrics and the rhythm.

‘Don’t wanna be sly and defile you.
Desecrate my mind and rely on you.’

Huh? Funny, that’s exactly what Haruka had been trying to do for the past three years. He wanted to let go and yet he didn’t.

He knew he had to but at the same time he denied this fact. He lived in a constant state of contradiction and his own beliefs tore him apart from the inside out, every second of every hour of every day. Without fail, always present and never leaving the oppressing feeling off of his chest.

‘I just wanna break this crown.
But it’s so hard when I’m so run down.’

It’s true, because if he hadn’t tried before, then why would he be so damn tired? He had tried time and time again, without any kind of result.

A never-ending cycle that just left him more and more tired every time, the weight on his shoulder seeming heavier and heavier as time went on. But wasn’t it like that for everyone else too? Clearly he couldn’t be the only one feeling this way, so broken, lost and left behind by a world that only ever rewarded and congratulated those who made their way by stepping on everyone and everything in their path.

He wasn’t alone right? That thought was just too much to bear if it ever was to be proven true.

‘And you’re so cynical, Narcissistic Cannibal.
Got to bring myself back from the dead.’
Again, very true. Why couldn’t the shadow of the memory just fade once and for all? Why did it have to continue hunting him? Did it get some kind of sadistic satisfaction from seeing Haruka so completely and utterly broken?

Every single day, Haruka had to push himself to get up from bed and start a new day. Some days he felt as if he was a living corpse. Was life supposed to be this way? It certainly couldn’t be, because if it was… well, he guessed there really wasn’t any point in answering that question, was it?

‘Sometimes, I hate, the life, I made.

Everything’s wrong, every time.

Pushing on I can’t escape.

Everything that comes my way.

It’s hunting me, taking its sweet time.’

Memories, were what were destroying him. The remembering of a better time when he felt fine and when dark words such as ‘depression’ or even ‘suicide’, didn’t even cross his mind.

But those are the funny ways of life, if it’s being way too nice you know it’s bound to end in disaster.

The music too seemed to be reaching some kind of climax.

‘Holding on I’m lost in a haze.

Fighting down to the end of my days.’

Weren’t all people around the world doing just that every single day of this fleeting thing we dared call ‘existence’?

We fight to keep breathing every second, we fight to fit in but still be ourselves, we fight to find a place we can call home, we fight to be able to study and be someone in life… long story short, we fight to survive.

Even when we think we’re not fighting, we are. And we only ever stop once we die.

How tiresome… and Haruka was tired, oh so tired.

‘Don’t wanna be rude but I have to.'
Nothing’s good about the hell you put me through.

I just need to look around.

That life that had come unbound.’

Rudeness, coldness, sarcasms, jokes, smiles. Use the adjective you like the best, they are all in the end masks and charades.

Facets, all humans are made of them and having them doesn’t mean we’re hypocrites. That’s just what makes us humans, we search for a safe heaven or an anchor that can make us feel secure. We seek desperately, if Haruka may say so, for comfort in any way we can.

That’s how people fall into addictions, even if it’s a false sense of comfort human beings will take it even if they’re conscious it’s an illusion. Because we humans are really fragile things, even if we try and deny it by using tough words and expensive clothes.

We’re are all the same in the end, as fragile and helpless as a new born. A blade will cut your flesh just a sharply and easily as a word will shatter your heart.

Just like it had happened to him.

At this point the notes were just a jumbled mess of sounds and words, or at least that’s what it felt like to Haruka.

‘And you’re so cynical, Narcissistic Cannibal.’

‘Aren’t we all? Trying to avoid a fate that will ultimately come and happen?’ Haruka thought darkly.

At that Haruka had to stop to fill his lungs with some needed, precious oxygen. Bending down on his knees and breathing rapidly through his mouth and nose in succession, he lifted his hands to touch his cheeks.

Not surprisingly they were cold and wet, but not from cold or sweat.

At some point during his rather depressing reverie he had started to cry, and now chocked sobs were making their way out from deep within his chest. He felt as if all of his emotions were trying to break free by breaking him.

Where was the stoic and serene person he usually was? Where was the Haruka that didn’t let anything affect him? Where was he?

Furiously and almost wildly, he yanked the earphones from his ears and stuffed them into his pocket where his iPod was and started sprinting.

Quickly cleaning his face with the sleeve of his hoodie, Haruka cursed himself for being so weak. It didn’t matter how much time had gone by, he still couldn’t break the chains that tied him to the
past. He had pushed and trashed and clawed and tried every single thing he could think of, but all had been in vain. He hadn’t been able to move forward since that day three years ago and the guilt, frustration and anger kept piling up.

After that, Haruka ran and ran until he could no longer feel his legs and by consequence no longer think about anything. He had made his way towards his apartment and once inside he didn’t even bother to change out of his clothes, which were drenched in sweat, and just collapsed onto his bed with and exhausted sigh.

He had woken up hours later from a dream he could just remember vague flashes of green and because of his alarm clock, and for once had been grateful because he had work and studies to keep his mind occupied.

That had been Saturday, today was Tuesday – of the next week- and there just wasn’t a way in which he could keep his memories from messing up with his head and getting into his way while he worked or studied.

While he was walking down the streets, he swore he could see flashes of sandy brown hair or a striking green, even of a smooth and deep voice.

It got to the point where without even noticing he would start comparing every single person with ‘that person’. Unauthorized thoughts would crept their way into his mind, and while he was in class he would imagine his professor taller, his voice smoother and before long, Haruka was staring at a makeshift version of Green.

Not just that, but when he was at work he would see every person that entered the little coffee shop and start making comparisons.

That person was just as tall, that shade of brown was almost like his hair, that other had green eyes… and every time he was left with a bigger sense of embarrassment and an uncomfortable feeling between his legs.

As Haruka had previously stated, it was ridiculous and he was trying his very best to stop and not think about him, but the thing is that even if he exhausted himself mentally and physically, it was no use.

As soon as he landed on his bed and fell asleep, he would have dreams, or maybe ‘flashbacks’ would be a more appropriate term, of that night. He would dream of feather light touches that made his skin feel like if it was burning, of big and strong hands touching and discovering every single part of his body, he would dream of electrifying green eyes that saw into the core of his very soul…

Needless to say, he had woken up countless times now because he had to change his underwear as well as his bed sheets due to his dreams reaching a climax or because he had to make a quick trip to the bathroom to take care of his ‘little’ problem.

Haruka didn’t feel angry, he felt more than anything frustrated. After all, he wasn’t some teenage boy that couldn’t get a hang on his hormones. It really irritated him to no end not having total control of his body or mind, and it wasn’t like he didn’t know who the guilty one for this was.

Either way, maybe what irritated Haruka more than anything was that while he couldn’t shake off the memory of Green, that person probably hadn’t even wasted a thought in him since what had
happened that night.

It was so unfair. Green probably had just dismissed it as soon as they had been done and hadn’t thought of Haruka again. Why couldn’t he do the same?

Haruka rolled his eyes in annoyance and decided to try and concentrate on the task at hand which consisted in making an Expresso and serving a piece of chocolate cake. He was just about to serve the coffee when someone interrupted him mid action.

“Haruka-kun, may I speak with you for a second, please?” Rei called out to him.

“One minute please.” Serving the cake and putting the coffee together as fast as he could, Haruka placed them on the counter and touched the little bell indicating the order was ready and that Nagisa could take it. “Order ready.”

“Thanks Haru-chan!” Nagisa yelled, and took both things before turning around and taking the things to whoever had ordered them.

“What is it that you wanted to talk to me about, Rei-san?” Haruka said as he wiped his hands with his apron and then directed his gaze towards Rei.

“Well Haruka-kun, I wanted to ask you for a favor.” Rei said, and Haruka could already hear him rambling.

“A favor?” Haruka asked with a frown. Rei had never asked anything from him, the most he had done was telling him to take out the garbage. Most things Rei did them himself, so for him to come and ask Haruka for something... well, it was unusual to say the least.

“Yes, you see Haruka-kun, a company just contacted me because of our new option of catering.” Rei said and now he had an excited glint in his eyes. “They want us to provide little desserts and appetizers for an upcoming event they are having, and I was supposed to go today and meet with the person who’s in charge of the event, but I forgot that today I have some personal matters to take care of.” Rei frowned at that as if he couldn’t believe he had forgotten. “And even though I tried to change the date, I was unable to.” At that he looked at Haruka and cleared his throat. “Anyways... That’s where the favor I mentioned before comes in. I need you, Haruka-kun, to go and talk to the manager of the event in my instead.”

Haruka was frowning even harder now. “But why me? Surely you could’ve talked to someone else in here to go.”

Haruka didn’t want to go and talk to some stranger, it didn’t matter if it was business like, and he didn’t like interacting with people he didn’t know. His distaste must have shown in his face, because Rei started talking again.

“I’m very aware that you are a person of few words, Haruka-kun.” Rei said and Haruka could already feel the ‘but’ coming even before Rei said anything. “But,” There, he really hated that word. Rei, in the other hand, didn’t seem to share Haruka’s animosity for the monosyllable and continued talking excitedly. “Because I knew this, I made sure to make three detailed options of what we can offer them.” Now, Rei was talking with sparkling eyes. “You see Haruka-kun, I had already talked to them. This was supposed to be a quick meeting just to have some minor details done. I just need you to go, show them the folder with the options and let them choose.” Rei locked his gaze with Haruka. “Please Haruka-kun. You’re the only one available right now, and it’s not like I can send Nagisa-kun.” He then directed his gaze towards the other side of the counter where Nagisa was chatting excitedly with some costumer.
Haruka really didn’t want to go. It seemed something that required more effort than what was strictly necessary.

“Listen Haruka-kun, I’m asking you this because you’re the most responsible person, after me of course, that works here, but I will also remind you that I’m your boss and if I have to I will order you to go.” Rei looked at Haruka once again, and Haruka was reminded that Rei was older than him. “I would much rather have you go willingly, but if you won’t do it then…”

Haruka sighed, he didn’t want to lose his job over a stupid little argument. He could just go and instead of returning to the coffee, go straight home and work on an essay that was due next week.

“Fine,” Haruka said. “But I’ll be going home after it’s done.” He didn’t want to make Rei angry, but after walking out of the shop he wouldn’t be all too eager to come back.

Rei grimaced but nodded either way. “Okay, that seems reasonable.” Reaching out towards a little table filled with cups and dishes, Rei picked up a folder and handed it out to Haruka. “Here are the options and all of the details enlisted and organized. Any question they may have should be answered at the final page and if anything comes up that I didn’t put in here, my number is on the front page so you don’t have to answer anything.”

Haruka nodded a little and took the folder. “The address?” He started taking off his apron, but then paused. “Who’s going to take over for me?”

Rei looked a little bewildered but soon recovered. “Oh, we’re going to close early today. I’ll help Nagisa-kun with some orders and we’ll probably close in an hour or so. After all you and I are leaving, and the other workers have studies to attend to.”

Haruka just arched an eye-brow but didn’t say anything. It seemed as if Rei had had everything planned from the begging so he didn’t understand why he had looked displeased when he had said he was going home after his ‘meeting’.

Letting it go, Haruka asked again. “Address?”

“The address is on the front page. You’re meeting with the organizer at the hotel in which the event is taking place.” Rei explained. “Once you’re there just say you’re there to talk to ‘Mikoshiba Seijuurou’ and they should tell where to go so you can talk to him.”

“Hmm.” He had taken off his apron and was now putting on his coat. “I’ll be going then.”

“Right. Very well Haruka-kun, the meeting is supposed to take place at 3:30, so if you hurry up you can still catch the train that’s due to the center at 1:15 and make it there by 3:15 if you take a Taxi from the station to the hotel.” Rei gave him a proud glance that Haruka answered with a huff.

Rei frowned, yet again, but decide once again no to comment on it. “Either way, you should get going if you want to be there on time. I don’t want them to have a bad impression, that wouldn’t be beautiful.”

Taking a deep breath he nodded once again and headed for the door of the little kitchen. He was just passing in front of the counter when he heard Nagisa’s voice calling out to him.

“Haru-chaaan! Where are you going? I need three cappuccinos, two orders of carrot cake and one cookie! Hey! Haru-chaaan! Where are you going?” Not even stopping to look at the little blond that was probably regarding him with a frown upon being ignored, Haruka quickly made his way towards the entrance of the little shop and exited without even missing a beat.
Once outside, he sprinted a little and didn’t stop until he was at a safe distance from the shop and was sure Nagisa hadn’t followed him. It wouldn’t be the first time Nagisa had pulled a stunt like that, but he was confident Rei had made sure to keep Nagisa grounded.

Either way it was never a bad thing to always be a little cautious when it came to matters regarding Nagisa.

Slowing down and reminding himself to walk at a normal pace, Haruka decided to check the address of the hotel where he was to meet this ‘Mikoshiba’ person.

Unclenching his hands from the plastic folder, Haruka made sure to straighten it up before opening it, and then his eyes scanned the page searching for the address. It didn’t take him long to find it, because just as Rei had told him, it was written at the low part of the page on the right corner.

Ana Intercontinental Tokyo

1-12-33 AKASAKA

MINATO-KU

Tokyo, 107 0052

Japan

Haruka’s eyes widen in surprise as he recognized the Hotel’s name. It wasn’t as if he went regularly to this type of places but he was able to get identify it because Nagisa would always talk about the fanciest places there were in the city, including: hotels, bars, restaurants, etc… and this hotel was by far one of the most elegant and fancy there were.

Nagisa had shown Haruka photos, and just spending a night in there would probably cost all of his life savings plus his inheritance. He guessed they were upon a big opportunity because if he couldn’t even imagine spending half a minute there, the people who were hiring them must be some really well known and wealthy company.

With this in mind, Haruka started looking for the name of the company they were offering the catering service. It was easy enough because in big, black letter at the center of the page was written:

CLARITY FREEDOM SC & AQUAMARINE

JOINT EVENT

CATERING OPTIONS AND DETAILS

Haruka stopped walking and just then he noticed he was at the entrance of the train station, he
thought he had been walking aimlessly but without him noticing he had been walking to where he
needed to go, but that wasn’t important right now.

‘Clarity Freedom’, that was the name of the most exclusive, popular and prestigious swim club in
all Japan. Most of, if not all, the Olympic swimmers were part of it. The only way to get in was if
you were a prodigy or someone with a ridiculously amount of money and that assuming that you
could have someone that was already a part of the club recommend you.

And then there was ‘Aquamarine’. It was a company that was specialized on multivitamin
supplements and sports clothes and accessories. They had stores all over Asia, Europe and
America. If you were someone or aspired to be someone in the sports world, you had to know
about it.

Absentmindedly, Haruka walked to the train booth and paid for his ticket. All the while trying to
figure out how in the world did Rei was able to stumble their little shop onto something as big as
this. Did Rei know someone within the club? Did he stalk someone until he got them to agree
about hiring them? Did he bribe someone?

His train of thought was suddenly redirected when he heard the mechanical voice of a woman
talking through the speakers that were all over the platform:

‘Passengers with destination to Minato please start boarding.’

‘The train will depart in 5 minutes.’

‘I repeat, passengers with destination to Minato please start boarding.’

‘The train will depart in 5 minutes.’

Deciding that he could continue his rambling while on the train, Haruka hurried and made his way
over to it.

It was easy enough as the station was mostly empty due to most people still being at work and
students still being at school.

He entered the train and quickly took a seat near the sliding doors so when it came to his stop he
could rapidly take off and be on his way once again.

Once he was seated and was just waiting for the train to start moving, he started thinking again
about how Rei managed to snick them a deal with such large and important companies. Of course
Haruka knew Rei was persistent and once he set his mind into something he didn’t stop until he
made it happen, but this was just surreal.

This was mind blowing to say the least to someone like Haruka.

He had always loved swimming and when he had been in high school people said that he could’ve
gone pro and made a life out of swimming, but he swam because it made him feel free. It gave him
a feeling like if he tried hard enough he would be able to melt and disappear into the pristine liquid.

He had been pressured by teachers, his parents and even classmates to take the path down
competitive swimming, but even if he had considered it, Haruka knew that it would only taint his
love for the sport.

He had joined the swim club at his school because Nagisa just wouldn’t shut up about it, of course he had been secretly glad that Nagisa had insisted on it because in the end those years at the swim club had been one of the best during his teenage years. He had done it for fun and the liberating and fleeting feeling of having nothing to worry about.

Once Haruka was in the water, all problems seemed to dissolve and disappear into nothingness and he was as light as a feather. Water was his comfort, his escape, his sedative.

Even then Haruka had had a void in his chest he couldn’t quite fully fill. He had seen lots of people immersing themselves in different activities or hobbies, whatever you want to call them. He guessed that at some point they understood how he felt, well at least he knew how they felt.

You drown everything by using something as a distraction.

Some people used books, running away into a world where in the end evil always loses and good prevails, a fantasy world that no matter what, it always has a good ending. Some used painting and with all of the emotions they constantly suppressed, they made works of art that ended up in masterpieces. Others wrote, pouring their souls into their words, making and creating works that will prevail until the end of times. Others, such as himself, used sports.

He exerted his body until the breaking point, and just when he was about to collapse he would pull away from the edge totally exhausted, both physically and mentally, and he would be glad he could no longer hear or make sense of the voices in his head.

That’s what everyone had reduced Haruka to, to seek comfort in something that wasn’t alive but that at least made him feel as if he wasn’t as broken or empty.

So when everyone had said to go competitive, he had closed his mind and rejected the idea at the first opportunity. Everyone had been disappointed, but he hadn’t been able to bring himself to care because swimming was the only thing he had and he refused to let anyone take away the feeling it gave him.

Of course that had caused another whole lot of trouble more, but Haruka didn’t regret it. Of all the things he regretted, and they were a lot, that was one of the few he didn’t.

‘We’re about to arrive at Minato’s main station, please remain seated and wait until the doors are fully open to exit the train.’

‘I repeat, we’re about to arrive at Minato’s main station, please remain seated and wait until the doors are fully open to exit the train.’

‘Thank you for using the public train service and have a good day.’

The voice of the captain snapped Haruka out of his little, dark bubble and he subtly stood up. Once the doors slid open, he exited the train and started walking towards the entrance of the station.

He pushed aside every single thought he had harbored over the train ride and started making signs so he would call the attention of a Taxi.
Luck seemed to smile a little at him because rather quickly a Taxi parked itself in front of him and he was hoping on while telling the driver the address of the hotel. The driver eyed him rather warily but in the end just shrugged and started driving.

Not really caring about the checkout he had just gone through, Haruka immersed himself into counting how many white cars he could spot before they got there.

It was a rather short trip given that traffic wasn’t as dense at this hour and soon enough Haruka was paying the driver and stepping out of the cab and walking towards the entrance of the hotel.

**ANA INTERCONTINENTAL TOKYO**

The name of the hotel could be seen from the feet of the electric stairway which you had to take to get to the main lobby.

The building was at least 25 floors tall and had a modern and sophisticated air to it. The lobby was adorned with little tables with elegant and beautiful compositions.

The floors were of what Haruka could only think was marble, it was of sandy color with pieces of black and darker brown that contrasted perfectly with the wooden decorations and carvings. The light came from countless little bulbs that were attached to the ceiling in intricate design. It was all dark and cream color that while it made everything look beautiful also gave an intimidating feeling.

Haruka suddenly became self-conscious and looked down at himself. He was wearing some black jeans, a blue V-neck shirt was underneath his winter coat which was a black button down, that while it wasn’t totally casual surely wasn’t appropriate for this kind of situation, and then he was wearing his black and white converse.

Yup, this definitely wasn’t what a person should use when going to a meeting for a big event at an incredibly famous and exclusive place such as that one.

Rapidly dismissing this and using his poker face, Haruka made his way towards the main desk clutching the folder with unnecessary force.

“Um… excuse me?” The woman didn’t even looked up from whatever she was doing. Damn, of all time to be socially awkward he had to choose now. Haruka cleared his throat in another attempt to get the woman’s attention.

At this the woman looked up and stared right at him. “Yes? Is there anything I can help you with?” She arched a brow as if to tell him to hurry up and just get to the point.

Really? What had he ever done to get this reaction out of every person he ever talked with?

Ignoring the pang to his ego, Haruka answered her.

“Yes, umm… I’m here to… uhh..” Shit, this was bad. If he didn’t start talking, and fast, this woman would surely call security with the excuse of some random person walking in. “I am here to… uhh… meet someone.”

Sighing in exasperation the woman asked. “And would you have a name?” She looked reluctant but seemed to take pity on him and soften her tone.
“Mikoshiba Seijuurou.” Haruka answered quickly.

Typing something on the keyboard, she said. “Wait a moment please.” She then proceeded to do something on her computer Haruka couldn’t see.

Haruka just stood there feeling uncomfortable and out of please. Funny, not too long ago he was feeling just the same and had gotten quite a reward at the end of the night.

He could feel heat rising to his cheeks, as he often did when he thought about that night, and decided to focus his attention elsewhere before his thoughts got carried away.

He noticed that there was almost no one in there, the few people that were there looked as if they worked there and the only ones that looked like they were actually staying there were a couple that was by a little living room that was farther away.

“Mikoshiba-sama isn’t here yet, but you’re welcome to wait for him at the conference room he reserved.” Haruka’s head snapped right back at the woman’s words and he just stared at her while he tried to process her words. “I’ll have someone escort you to it.”

Haruka just nodded and then watched as the woman made a brief phone call.

Not even 30 seconds later a girl about his age, dressed in a black skirt, black jacket and a white shirt, was making her way towards him.

“Good afternoon, my name is Erika and I will be your escort.” She gave Haruka a brilliant smile and Haruka just made a slight inclination of the head.

Erika seemed a little deflated by his lack of response but soon her bright smile was back and she was guiding him. “This way please.”

They started walking down one of the hallways that connected to the lobby and then they were directing themselves towards the elevators. They stepped in and Erika pushed the button up to the 6th floor and the elevator started moving. Some typical elevator music was playing and it just made Haruka feel nervous. About what he didn’t know, he just had a feeling that this might not end well.

Once the elevator hit their floor Erika signaled him to follow her once again. Haruka was quick to follow and within a couple of minutes she was placing her card on the pad that was beside a big door with opaque glass.

“Here we are.” Erika’s cheery voice interrupted his appreciation of the room. “It was a pleasure helping you. If you need anything just press #2 on the phone and someone will come here to serve you.” She smiled, she seemed to smile a lot.

Haruka just stared blankly at her. “I don’t have money.” Great, of all the stupid things he could’ve said he had to say that.

Erika didn’t seem to notice his internal bickering and instead smiled well naturally at him. “Oh, don’t worry about it. Everything will be charged to Mikoshiba-sama’s account.”

Haruka grimaced at this but didn’t say anything. “Well, then I’ll leave. Have a good afternoon…” She trailed off as if to wait for Haruka to supply a name, when he didn’t she just shrugged and watched him take a sit. “Oh, and don’t be so tense. Mikoshiba-sama isn’t as bad as people make him seem.” Haruka looked at her with shock but she just winked at him and turned around to leave.

Just then Haruka noticed how tense his shoulders were and how stiff his posture was, he left the
folder on top of the desk and decided to scan the room to try and relax himself a little.

The room wasn’t big, it was more like a normal size but was business like. The table in the middle of it was made of wood and the top was of some kind of thick glass. The 6 chairs surrounding the table were leather like and were of a really dark brown, almost black. In the middle was a little arrangement of white flowers. The walls were the color of cream with wooden borderlines. A white telephone was placed just beside the glass doors he went through just minutes ago.

This room just like the rest of the hotel was elegant and pristine.

Just then Haruka heard footsteps and he tensed again, not so much as before, but anyone who saw him could tell he wasn’t comfortable with the situation. Reminding himself to breath, Haruka sat up straight and checked his phone for the first time that day.

3:32 PM

And just as he looked up, he was met with a broad back and sandy brown hair that Haruka remembered all too well, and he sucked in a breath.

No, no, no, no, no! This couldn’t be happening, could it?

“I’m sorry I’m late, I got a call and I just couldn’t ignore it.” He knew that voice, he had heard it no more than 2 weeks ago but back then it had been husky and seductive, this couldn’t be the same person, right? His memory had to playing tricks on him, right? Right?!

But no matter how much he tried to delude himself Haruka knew, and when the person before him turned around Haruka confirmed his suspicion.

His eyes roamed free through a broad and firm chest, then they followed the lines of a firm jaw and the symmetric features of the face, and just then ocean blue met forest green and Haruka’s breath hitched as his heart skipped a beat.

Haruka knew that green, he had stared into it while he was laid bare before it, but back then it had been clouded with lust and dark desire. Haruka had been shaking and pleading underneath that intense and electric green gaze that was now clear and alert.

Haruka felt as if he couldn’t breathe, much less think and so, when that one word escaped his lips, it came out breathless:

“Green.”

Chapter End Notes

Happy New Year everyone! I hope every single one of you had an excellent holiday :) 

Important note, I’m the search of a beta so if you're interested or you know someone who might be, please contact me in the comment section below or at my twitter: @ArtistiqueR12. My ex-beta had some personal problems and couldn't help me
anymore, so if you want to join me in this little project I would be more than happy to have you along in the creative process. Of course because of this, any mistakes or typos are completely my fault and if you point them out, I'll be sure to correct them ASAP.

In another note: first chapter of the year. This chapter flowed rather easily out of me, I don't know if it was the melancholy I always get at the end of the year or just some unusual moment of inspiration, but whatever the case I think I did good with this chapter.

If anyone wishes to listen to the song Haruka was listening to, its name is: Narcissistic Cannibal by Korn ft. Skrillex & Kill the Noise. Of course, I twisted the meaning of the lyrics so it would fit the point I wanted to convey. It was my first time doing something like that, so I hope I did okay?

So, did you like it? Did you hate it? Was it good or did I just messed up your start of the year? Kudos are much appreciated and if you comment I will love you forever because they give me life. Also if you want to talk to me just reach out to me on twitter, I would love talking to you ;)

I guess that's all and until next time!
Chapter 8

Chapter Summary

Why was Haruka allowing this? He could just break away and push the man away. That was the most sensible thing to do, Haruka knew that, he just couldn’t bring himself to do it.

Chapter Notes
See the end of the chapter for notes

Chapter 8

“Excuse me?” Green eyes regarded Haruka with confusion written all over them, the small polite smile he had slowly being replaced by a little frown.

Haruka wanted to smack himself across the face. What the hell was wrong with him?

Clearing his throat, he decided that changing the subject as soon as possible was the best strategy to cover up his slip (and his lightly heated cheeks).

“Mikoshiba-san.” Haruka stood up and bowed politely. “My name is Haruka Nanase. I’m here to go over the details of the catering service.” He straighten up and prayed to whatever god that might be listening that his blush was gone and that this person had taken the bait and forgotten about before.

“Oh no, I’m not Seij- Mikoshiba-san. My name is Makoto Tachibana, I’m his PA.” Tachibana was looking at Haruka with an amused smile as if he found it extremely funny that he had been mistaken for this Mikoshiba person.

Either way, Haruka was grateful that apparently he had forgotten about what he had just said.

“Mikoshiba-san had some things come up before this meeting and couldn’t make it, I’m here in his stead.” Tachibana then eyed Haruka, and once again he couldn’t help but feel self-conscious. However, he didn’t squirm or make any nervous movements, his poker face perfectly in place. “I’m sorry, but if I remember correctly the person I was supposed to talk with was someone called ‘Rei Ryugazaki’?” He arched a brow as if to tell Haruka to start explaining why he was here instead.

Annoying.

Regarding the man with a bored expression he answered curtly. “Ryugazaki-san had some important matters to take care of.” He wasn’t going to tell the whole story; he wanted to end this as quickly as possible. His mind was definitely playing a trick on him and he really didn’t want to embarrass himself further.

Seeing as Haruka wasn’t going to say anything else, Tachibana sighed but didn’t press for for more details, ‘Smart guy.’ Haruka thought.

Quickly returning to his polite demeanor, Tachibana smiled lightly at Haruka. “Well then Nanase-
san, shall we start?” He said while prompting Haruka to take a seat.

Giving him a curt nod, Haruka sat back in his seat and watched as Tachibana took his.

Tachibana was tall, at least 6 feet tall, broad shoulders, and his sandy-brown hair seemed unruly by nature, like a natural kind of bed head, and either that or he ran out of the house and didn’t have time to fix it. But even then, anyone could see that that was not the case. Not a single crease was visible on him, not on his pants, jacket or tie. From the brief full body glimpse, he was able to appreciate that his shoes much like the rest of him were shiny and not a single scuff was to be seen. He could also note that he was freshly shaved, his skin looked clean and smooth.

And his eyes, those eyes that looked almost exactly li-

“Um, Nanase-san?” Tachibana’s voice brought him out of his daydream and when he saw him extending a hand towards him, he instantly looked at Tachibana with a questioning gaze.

The man sighed, but it came out like an amused hum more than anything. “I asked if you brought the options available for the event?” And once again, he extended his hand towards him.

Haruka, embarrassed that he had been caught daydreaming, handed him the folder without any comment.

Tachibana took the folder and immediately started going through it, his green eyes scanning over the pages faster than any normal person could.

Haruka couldn’t help but admire him once more. He had this kind of confident aura around him. Not so much so that he seemed pretentious or arrogant, but just enough to give off a highly approachable and polite kind of feeling, yet also exuded the kind of authority of a man who knew what to do or say to get what he wanted. His posture was that of someone who knew what he was doing and Haru could only imagine that he had worked very hard to obtain his current position.

This surprised him, after all, this person couldn’t be that much older than him, two or three years at most. ‘He must be really good at what he does.’ He thought. Not anyone could work at one of those two companies just because. So for someone so young to be working there, this guy had to be something else.

Apart from Tachibana’s looks, even Haruka, who was mostly uninterested in anyone or anything, could recognize an attractive person when he saw one. And if Tachibana wasn’t the kind of guy that both women and men alike stopped to admire as he walked by, then he really didn’t know what being attractive was.

“Like what you see?” Tachibana looked up from whatever he was reading and regarded Haruka with a smug half smile, eyes sparkling with amusement, his hand resting at his temple, his head tilted in an almost alluring manner.

Haruka stared at him bemused.

Not because he had been caught staring (again). No, it was because the way he had said it, the way he was looking at him right now. Green had said the exact same thing and even though at the time it had been under more… intimate circumstances, the undertone, the intention, the… he didn’t know exactly how to phrase it. It was just something about the way he had said it that turned his legs to jelly and filled his stomach with butterflies. It had been very much like the way Tachibana had just talked now.

He had to be imagining things. This had to be his overactive imagination taking hold of his good
senses again. It was his mind making comparisons just like it had been doing for the past 2 weeks, right? What was the chance of meeting one specific person—the one person you thought you would never, ever, see again—in the immensity of a city like Tokyo?

Because honestly, what were the possibilities, the odds of that actually happening? This… this person was just someone who resembled that Green really well, so much so that it made things easier for his brain to find similarities.

Haruka realized his mouth was slightly open, he must have looked dumbstruck. Shutting his mouth, he hastily looked to the side and hid his face behind his bangs. His face was a flaming red, if the warmth he felt was anything to go by. Finally he muttered under his breath a half-hearted, “Not really.”

He heard a barely contained chuckle and glared at Tachibana from behind his bangs. “Sorry, sorry.” He frowned slightly and sat upright in his chair, “I’m really sorry, that was really inadequate and unprofessional of me.” Even if Haruka had been the one who acted first, why this guy was apologizing? “Please forgive me, Nanase-san. It won’t happen again.”

What was wrong with this guy? It had been Haru who had been ogling him, not the other way around. If anyone should be apologizing it should be him, not Tachibana.

But he really wasn’t going to take a chance and embarrass himself, yet again, so he nodded stiffly and said a little “It’s fine.”

Instantly, Tachibana looked at him with a bright smile and an almost childish glint in his eyes. It was like he hadn’t expected Haruka to forgive him and was overjoyed that he actually had.

Haru wanted to roll his eyes as the word ‘Annoying’, flashed through his mind again.

Once again deciding that distraction was the best way to go about things, Haruka spoke up “So, which one did you like best?”

Taking up his business like attitude, Tachibana answered and Haruka almost laughed about how fast he shifted between moods. “I think the second would be better. The one with tiramisu, fruit cups with syrup and some natural drinks?” Tachibana questioned, as if inviting Haruka to give his own opinion on his decision.

Once again, ridiculous, because if this person had asked for fried chicken, burgers and coke they would probably make them even though they were a little shop specialized in sweets.

“All right.” Was Haruka’s answer, he really just wanted to go. This little appointment had lasted longer than he originally expected and had evoked some really unnecessary thoughts.

Tachibana was practically beaming at him when he heard Haruka’s answer, as if he had been waiting for his approval. Again, what was wrong with Tachibana? He seemed serious one moment and the next his eyes lit up with childish excitement, these mood swings were starting to make Haru feel dizzy. All he wanted was to get this done and be on his way home where a nice and warm bath was waiting for him.

He imagined the warm water relaxing his muscles and the steam creating a humid atmosphere that clung to the walls and his little mirror.

“-iba-san and we should be set.” Haruka snapped out of his daydream at the sound of Tachibana’s voice. He was looking at Haruka as if expecting an answer and all he could do was stare at the man’s face with a blank expression.
Tachibana chuckled at that and repeated what he said. “I was saying that I will take this to Mikoshiba-san and as soon as I get the ‘okay’ from him, I’ll contact you and then we should be all set.”

Haruka was surprised at being read so easily, people usually weren’t so patient after noticing Haruka wasn’t listening, they would give up with a sigh and then dismiss him by saying they would talk to his superior.

Deciding not to dwell on the thought any longer, he nodded in response, confirming that he would deliver the news back to Rei.

“Okay, so I think that’s it.” Tachibana said, “Unless there’s anything else you want to add… Nanase-san?” Haru, who was already half standing, brusquely turned his head.

That tone of voice, just a moment ago, it sounded almost suggestive. Like if Tachibana was daring Haruka to voice his thoughts, and not necessarily the work related ones.

He looked the brunette in the eyes and for just a second he could’ve sworn he saw recognition and amusement in them, but then he blinked and when he looked again it was gone.

Haruka’s features scrunched up in concentration and searched the man’s face for any trace of those two emotions he had seen, but he found nothing. Tachibana was offering Haruka his polite little smile once again. He had always thought he possessed the perfect poker face, but now knew there was someone else who had one just as good, albeit in the form of a smile.

Either way, it probably was a trick of the light and his tired mind seeing things that weren’t actually there. Because even if this person was who Haru had mistaken him for, why would he even remember him?

Surely for that other person Haruka had just been one more. Another one on the pile, a pleasurable memory that faded into oblivion the next morning.

Next morning? Scratch that, 10 minutes after everything was done, Green probably hadn’t even wasted a second of his time thinking about him, and here he was obsessing over someone he didn’t know.

He needed to stop this train of thought and get on his way if he wanted to be able to take the next train to the center and be home in the next hour or so.

Standing up completely, Haruka put into place his emotionless mask and bowed a little to the man in front of him who was standing as well. “Thank you for this opportunity. Good afternoon.” Not waiting for an answer, he rounded the table and was just reaching for the door handle when he felt a big, warm hand encircling his wrist.

He froze mid step and didn’t dare to turn around. Every single nerve in his body seemed to concentrate its attention at his right wrist. He felt an incredible warmth making its way up his arm and leaving a tingling sensation on his skin.

The rest of his body felt stiff and cold, but then the warmth he felt was pressing against his back more firmly with the presence of a solid body.

Haru’s breath hitched and he stilled even more. Slowly, ever so slowly, the hand trapping his wrist started making its way up his arm, the palm of the hand slightly grazing across the cloth of Haruka’s coat, and even thought his coat was anything but thin, it still sent jolts all over Haruka’s nervous system.
He wasn’t stupid. He knew it was Tachibana who was doing this, his movements sensual with no trace of innocence. His business aura was gone almost as if it had never existed.

No, the atmosphere was tense and charged with something electric, it was almost as if at any instant he would be able to hear the crackling of electricity and little sparks would be visible. It was heavy and hot and made Haruka’s gut twist in anticipation.

But anticipation of what exactly? Why was Haruka allowing this? He could just break away and push the man away. That was the most sensible thing to do, Haruka knew that, he just couldn’t bring himself to do it. And even then, that wasn’t the thought that stood out from the rest. What was swirling and twisting in Haru’s head was a simple question:

Why?

Why was Tachibana doing this? It made no sense, they met each other, what? 20 minutes ago, 30 maybe? This made no sense at all. Of course he wasn’t one to talk, after all he had went to bed with someone he had a conversation with for roughly 10 minutes.

All thoughts scattered and flew out the window the moment he felt his head being moved out of the way and Tachibana’s face pressing against the exposed side of his neck as he inhaled deeply. Haru couldn’t hold back the strangled noise that came out of his mouth.

Tachibana paid no attention to this and tangled one hand in Haruka’s dark locks, tilting his head even more to give him even better access.

He traced the side of Haruka’s neck with the tip of his nose while he smelled and gave a content sigh.

Haru’s mouth hung open slightly and he was sure his face was as red as a tomato. He didn’t know what to do. He just knew that he didn’t want to get away from the incredible warmth that Tachibana offered and his electrifying touch.

He sucked in a breath when he felt Tachibana’s lips ghosting over his skin. His Adam’s apple bobbed visibly whenever he swallowed and the small vibrations he felt as Tachibana chuckled sent a shivers down his spine, which Haruka had a really hard time suppressing so he wouldn’t notice.

He felt Tachibana’s lips travel upwards, reaching his ear, he knew Tachibana was going to speak. “I—”

Tachibana’s voice was cut off by the loud ringing of his phone and he swiftly let go of Haruka.

Haru, who’d been in a state of trance up until now, recovered quickly and opened the door to the conference room. He heard a raspy “Hello?” and Tachibana clearing his throat.

He didn’t wait for Tachibana to finish his call, and he didn’t even turn around to see the expression on Tachibana’s face. He didn’t wait to see and Tachibana didn’t bother to call out to him.

Almost sprinting, Haru made his way towards the elevators and once there hit the button with unnecessary force. He was breathing heavily and he was pretty sure he was still blushing.

Why was the damn elevator taking so long? He tapped his shoe impatiently against the polished marble floor.

The elevator arrived and its doors opened up for Haruka to get in. He was just pressing the button that read ‘lobby’ when he heard it.
“WAIT!” Tachibana was running towards the elevator, green eyes sparkling, and voice almost frantic.

Haruka felt trapped and he started to panic. Tearing his eyes away from Tachibana’s running figure, he pushed the button to close the doors and the last thing he saw was a flash of surprised green.

Leaning against the wall opposite to the door, he tried to even out his breathing.

It didn’t work.

By the time the elevator doors opened up at the lobby Haruka was sprinting once again.

He didn’t pay attention to the angry voice of the receptionist at the front desk or the weird looks directed his way from some of the hotel guests.

He needed to get away from there and he needed to do it fast.

What the hell had just happened?! He wasn’t like that! He usually didn’t tolerate physical contact. What’s more, he tried to avoid it as much as possible. Even when he’d been with… that person, it had taken a lot of time for Haru to even want to sit at a distance of less than 10 cm while they watched TV.

So why, in the name of whatever god existed, did he let Tachibana do that to him? This wasn’t like him, not at all. Had he reached such a definite state that he had even started to lose the essence of who he was?

Slowing down, Haruka realized he was at just 2 blocks from the train station. Fishing his phone out of his pocket, he realized he didn’t have it.

Touching and taking out everything he had on his pockets, he realized he must have forgotten it in the conference room.

Of course, that must have been why Tachibana ran to catch up to him. He wanted to give it back to Haruka, and Haruka who had let his imagination get the better out of him, had run away like a cowardly puppy.

God, he was so stupid.

Letting out a big sigh, he found himself at the entrance of the train station. He quickly made his way to the waiting area.

He stood there for a good five minutes thinking about the way he had run off. His face burned with embarrassment. He was such a kid.

But even so, why had Tachibana looked so… afraid? It was like thought he’d never see Haruka again; which was stupid considering his cafe was currently in the process of being hired for catering for Tachibana’s company.

Or maybe, it had been because of what happened earlier? His stomach churned at the memory of Tachibana’s lips and warm breath ghosting above the skin of his neck. The way he inhaled so deeply as if he wanted to memorize Haruka’s scent.

*All passengers with destination to Tokyo please board at platform 9.*
I repeat, all passengers with destination to Tokyo please board gate 9.

Mechanically making his way over to the designated platform, he entered the train and found a seat. He tried with all of his might to forget about what had happened, but even then, it was no use.

He could swear he still felt the heat radiating from Tachibana’s body, making every single strand of hair on his body stand on end.

When he closed his eyes he could still feel the ghost of a gentle touch, almost letting himself get lost in the memory of that intimate caress.

Opening his eyes and shaking his head in disappointment, Haruka spent the rest of the train ride mentally resigning himself to his fate of another sleepless night.

Chapter End Notes

Edited by Gentle Smiles :)

Helloo my dears, new update! First of all, I just wanted to let you know that I have a beta now! So I hope everything will be clearer and easier for you to read (I know it is for me xD).

I know my updates are really all over the place and I wish I could say I will be more constant, but I just started school again and this will most probably mess up with my time, but I promise I will try to update at least twice a month. I don't know if I'll be able to do it, but I guess it will all depend on how much homework I get.

Anyways, did you like it, did you hate it? Was it good or should I never be allowed to get near a keyboard again? Comments always make my day and if you go out of your way to write something to me, I'll probably love you forever and ever. Kudos are also much appreciated.

Until next time and I hope you all have a wonderful week! ^^
Chapter 9

Chapter Summary

There would always be fakes, but even then, there’s no such thing as a perfect copy.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

The last thing Haru expected to see when he got to his apartment was Nagisa sitting in front of his door.

“Haru-chan!” Nagisa exclaimed in an animated tone. His eyes widened for a second while magenta eyes regarded him with the utmost interest.

Looking away and taking his keys out of his pocket, Haru passed by Nagisa and made an attempt at trying to get in while leaving the little hyperactive blond outside.

Needless to say, it didn’t work.

Taking his shoes off, the blue eyed man didn’t even bother to close the door once he saw that Nagisa had slipped inside and was already taking his shoes off as well. He gave Nagisa a little signal to let him know that he had to close the door, even though he actually didn’t care if it was locked or not.

It wasn’t as if he had anything worth stealing anyway.

Haruka made his way over to the kitchen and poured himself a glass of water with ice. He didn’t offer anything to Nagisa knowing that if he wanted something, he would just come and take it without asking.

Taking his apron from where he had left it this morning, atop of the table of course, he tied it around his waist and walked towards the fridge so he could take out a piece of mackerel.

God, he was starving.

He hadn’t eaten a thing since that morning, and a singular piece of toast with jam couldn’t actually be called ‘breakfast’. Of course he could have eaten something at work, but he'd never been a sweets person. Seeing the same desserts day in and day out didn’t help him to find them appealing.

Taking out his cutting board, Haru took out the flour and poured some of it onto the board and covered the fish with that and just a little bit of salt.

He didn’t feel like doing anything too fancy or complicated. He liked simple and enjoyable things. He liked having everything committed to memory and change was something that didn’t sit well with him. Consistency, that’s what he looked for in everything he did.

‘And you’ve clearly and successfully achieved it, haven’t you?’ Asked his conscious in a sardonic tone.
Haru frowned and started his tiny stove, taking out from one of the shelves to his right a medium size pan he covered it with oil. He made sure the fire was as high as it could and once he was sure the pan was hot, he spread some salt over the oil, enjoying the crackling sound indicating the oil was hot enough. The dark haired man placed the slice of fish almost ceremoniously onto the sizzling oil.

Hot and burning, the dense yellow liquid started jumping and staining everything within a 15 cm radius. Haru didn’t even try to protect himself from the scalding oil, he felt numb and the slight burning pain made him feel as if he wasn’t just going to float away and disappear.

During the ride home a thousand and one thoughts went through his mind making his head spin as soon as he sat down in one of the train’s seats. His sleep deprivation had decided to knock at his door and hit him square in the face.

He had drifted in and out of sleep, all the while seeing behind his closed lids, green and gentle eyes and fiery red hair, sensual and warm hands that ran all over his body with a background of screaming and angry voices. He had started to mix the present with the past and he didn’t really know where he was or what he was supposed to be doing, but then the loudspeaker’s had announced that the train was arriving at Minato station and he snapped out of the semi trance he had immersed himself into.

The rumbling of his stomach had kept Haruka lucid enough to remember that he had a piece of mackerel left sitting comfortably on his fridge that was just waiting for him to get cooked. So, excuse him for being more than a little surprised when he saw his little blond and cheerful friend at his front door.

It wasn’t the first time Nagisa had come to his home, hell, he came by Haru’s house at least three times a week and sometimes he would even stay over. He was another constant in his life, no matter what, Nagisa would always find a way to sneak into his space, literally and figuratively. And thinking about Nagisa… he had been awfully quiet.

Flipping the fish onto its other side and looking over his shoulder, of course he had first checked that the fish was perfectly cooked, the short male scanned the little space for his blond friend.

It didn’t take long. Nagisa was sitting by his little dining table that consisted of a little square table of metal with the top made of glass, a set of three black chairs that combined with the table and yellow tablecloth that that person had given him.

Even after he had left him, Haru hadn’t been able to take it away. It was the only thing he had left after abandoning Haruka, and even if he knew he ought to throw it away, he couldn’t bring himself to.

This train of thought was getting out of line, so he quickly refocused and turned back to his fish.

“This is the tablecloth Rin-Rin gave to you when he moved, isn’t it?” Haru’s shoulders stiffened, his posture going rigid, his hand gripping the spatula till his knuckles went white and if he hadn’t known Nagisa for as long as he did, he would’ve probably thrown the hot pan at his face.

“Why are you here?” He asked instead, hoping Nagisa would take the hint and drop the subject. To his amazement and joy, the blond actually did.

“What took you so long getting here?” He asked and Haru almost wanted to go back to the previous subject.
“Too many people.” Was his curt response. He really wasn’t in any mood to humor Nagisa and his growling stomach was making it even more difficult to think as the seconds flew by.

And talking about food…

He promptly turned off the stove and just let the pan cool a little while he flipped the fish a few times over so the skin would be golden. Once that was done, he reached for a plate and served it, some rice would’ve been nice with it but he didn’t want to cook anymore, so he settled for a piece of bread.

Haruka set the plate on the table and took his half empty glass of water. The only thing that was heard were the sounds of the fork when he took a piece of mackerel and a few bites later, the glass being lifted from the table so he could drink from it.

It was far too quiet and more with Nagisa sitting at arm’s length.

Finishing his food and standing up with the intention of washing the dishes, he could feel the intense stare of perceptive and intense magenta eyes on his back. So as he neared the dishwasher and dropped in his plate and glass, he asked without turning around.

“Why are you here?” He didn’t want to face Nagisa just yet, his not so enjoyable journey back home was still wrapping around his brain like a winter fog, making his thoughts murky and more than a little confusing.

Haruka could hear the scrapping of the chair on the floor as Nagisa stood up, but instead of his usual energetic chatter or overwhelming questioning, he was greeted by just the smallest one silence.

After a while, he was just turning back, deciding that Nagisa had probably left the room, when he felt a pair of short arms being wrapped around his middle. He stood shocked, not rigid though, as Nagisa hugged him from behind. Of course the little blond could get really touchy and apparently didn’t know the meaning of ‘personal space’, but this was different. Because even if this was a friendly hug, it also had the underlying feeling of comfort and understanding.

It was almost as if… as if… as if Nagisa was trying to protect him.

Like if he just wanted to give some kind of indication to Haru that he was there and he wouldn’t let him drift away. Not even when… when that happened, had Nagisa done this. Of course he had been there for the dark haired man, but he had never, surprisingly or not, pushed for details. He didn’t even know what exactly had happened between him and that person, clearly he knew part of the story but not all of it.

He then felt Nagisa’s arms tightening a little bit before he spoke. “I don’t know what happened and I won’t ask you to tell me.” Haru’s breath was coming out in irregular intervals and even if Nagisa was smallest and not as strong, he probably would’ve fell down if he hadn’t been supporting him. It didn’t help that he was talking in the softest and understanding tone he had ever heard him use and it just made the lump in his throat bigger and the oppressing weight on his chest feel heavier.

“I just want you to know you can count on me, it doesn’t matter it’s just to talk,” He continued in an even gentler tone. How was that possible, Haru didn’t know. “Or to just sit next to you in silence… of course I would prefer if we could eat something or maybe prank people over the phone.” Nagisa laughed a little and he could feel the vibrations travelling all over his body. The knot in his throat lessened a little.
“I guess that what I’m really trying to say is that… I’m here.” Haruka’s eyes moistened a little and the ponderous feeling returned. “Just… don’t forget that, okay?”

He didn’t say a thing, he didn’t move nor did he made any attempt at turning around, but he did relaxed a little against the little that was wrapped around him and thanked, for the millionth time, for having someone like Nagisa by his side.

The growling of Nagisa’s stomach did make Haruka turn around and as he turned with an eyebrow raised, the little blond just looked at him with big, bright magenta eyes.

“And talking about food… do you think we could order pizza?”

Haruka watched as drool fell from Nagisa mouth and dampened the pillow. He sighed internally and took a tissue from the nearside table to wipe it away. After accommodating Nagisa so he wouldn’t fall off the bed, he made his way towards the little balcony in the back of the room.

The sight wasn’t much but it did have a nice view of the park that was just a block away. He watched as cars went by and people walked in all directions, the lights from cars and streetlamps illuminated his face and he couldn’t help but notice how it all seemed alive.

Every person down there were all thinking different things, doing and thinking something entirely unique. Of course some would be thinking the similar things, but the context and the people they associated with would be totally different from the person next to them. Each and every person was a little world, a little universe destined to be one that would never be the same as any other.

They all had different wishes, needs and experiences, and even if you put them in the same situation they would react differently. That’s why he thought that trying to classify people was stupid. Clearly, there were patterns, but trying to make everyone with a certain characteristic fit into a specific category was foolish.

There would always be fakes, but even then, there’s no such thing as a perfect copy.

Haru leaned on the railing and supported his head with his hand, because even if they were allone and the same or one and nothing like any other, they were all insignificant. Every single one of them, he included, were nothing more than passing beings, a breeze in a storm, a grain of sand in the desert. Use the metaphor you liked the most, the feeling is the same, the meaning does not change.

Some may say they don’t care, but no one wants to be forgotten. We live off memories, our entire existence and being is through memories, and memories are all we’ll ever have. That’s why we try to make people remember us, our names or sometimes just our faces, because if we are memories and memories are all we have, we will keep on living as long as someone remembers us.

The funny thing is that most of the time, instead of trying to make people look back and have a pleasant memory of us, we hurt them so they won’t forget, because negative emotions are all the more powerful. A word laced with enough poison can be even more fatal than the cut of a knife, because the physical scar will heal and disappear, the scar a word leaves will stay and no one will notice because they can’t see it.

Haruka smiled with amusement he didn’t feel, up at the sky. “Was that why you said those things? Are you afraid of forgetting and being forgotten as well? Are you as terrified as I am... Rin?” He
whispered that name and then closed his eyes, but instead of the flash of ruby red that almost always greeted him, he was welcomed with a vivid and soft green.

Quickly opening his eyes at once, Haru allowed himself a little self-indulgent smile while he rested his cheek against his palm. “And you? Are you afraid my dear and smug, Green?”

Shaking his head at how clichéd he must have looked there, he made his way inside and went over to the futon that was set just beside his bed in which Nagisa peacefully laid.

Laying there, he took the bed sheets and tucked himself in until he was a little cocoon with just the top of his head visible. And as he counted mackerels, his mind exhausted from every little thought, he was pleased to find himself in a dreamless sleep.

Chapter End Notes

Edited by Gentle Smiles.

New update! I know I said I would try to update sooner, but school's time consuming and before I knew it, I was swimming in tests and projects, but either way I'm sorry about the delay.

I don't know if you noticed, but this chapter is shorter than usual, but I think it turned out fine. I hope you all liked it :)  

Soo... did you like it, did you hate it? Was it good or should I be banned from using the Internet? Kudos are always appreciated and comments, I swear, make my day, week, and month like you have no idea, so be sure to comment if you found this even remotely interesting ;)

Hope all of you have a great start of the week and until next time! :D

PS. I should be uploading a one shot in the next couple of days, it has nothing to do with this story, but do please look forward to that. I know I'm looking forward to you reading it ;)
Chapter 10

Chapter Summary

Haruka didn’t know and wasn’t really interested. What he wanted to see, was what he had created.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Up until that point, it had been a normal day.

Haruka had woken up from a deep and peaceful slumber. He had been able to rest throughout the whole night and when he had gotten up, he had felt rested, something he hadn’t been able to feel for a long time now.

After making his bed, he had made his way over to the bathroom and started to fill the tub. It was still early and his shift at the coffee shop didn’t start for two more hours. After the bath was full and the water warm, he stripped out of his clothes and just laid there. He was in an utter state of relaxation.

He started thinking about what had happened just two days before with Nagisa.

After he had gone to bed, it had seem as if he had just closed his eyes and then he had an hyperactive young man jumping on top of him, screaming at the top of his lungs to get up so they could make breakfast. Haruka hadn’t really minded much, after all, he had been hungry as well and because neither of them really felt like cooking, they ended up going to a little restaurant a block away from where the dark haired man lived.

Nagisa had ordered an overly sweet tower of hotcakes with strawberries and as soon as it had arrived, he had drowned them in whipped cream and honey. Haruka on the other hand, had ordered a simple, but quite good, omelet.

Upon finishing their breakfast, Nagisa told Haru that he couldn’t go back with him because of an assignment due the next day, and after a little scolding from him, they had parted ways with Nagisa’s promise to come by on the weekend.

The next day as he had made his way over to the park so he could admire the Sakura trees that were just about to bloom, sudden thought hit him.

He thought that maybe he could ask Nagisa to go with him to watch the trees blossom, but then rapidly reconsidered and decided that if by the time it happened he still wanted to go, he would ask him or maybe simply go alone.

Sakura trees had always fascinated him. Maybe it was just all of the books he had read that had turned them into a symbol of peace, quiet and balance, or maybe it was just the rich smell it carried all over the place when the wind blew and hundreds of little petals floated in the hyperactive and utterly busy city life. Or maybe it was this nostalgic feeling he got when he saw the flowers swaying lazily, almost hypnotically, as if they wanted to make him submerge under their spell and
surrender to whatever they wanted to show him.

Of course, he could also blame all of this on his half-awake brain.

After he noticed that he had stopped walking to stare directly to one of the closest trees that were near the park’s entrance, he picked up his pace and directed himself towards his apartment. But then, halfway up the stairs, it suddenly hit him.

An image appeared in his mind and made his fingers itch to start painting.

Almost tripping as he took the stairs three at a time, he opened his door and hastily closed it and didn’t even bother taking off his shoes as he took them off while half sprinting towards his little studio.

Just like Nagisa, he had an assignment, but unlike him, Haruka’s was due in three more weeks; however, due to a recent ‘artist block’, he hadn’t been able to come up with a half decent idea, but even if this assignment wasn’t really one that would compromise his score at the end, he didn’t want to turn in something mediocre. And so, when he had entered the little studio, just beside his bedroom, he quickly started looking for a canvas to put on top of his easel.

As soon as he found one, he frantically started looking for his oil paintings and brushes and when he found them… that was it.

He didn’t stop, not to eat, nor to maybe catch some sleep.

He needed to finish this, he felt it with the very core of his being and he knew, he just knew, that if by any chance he were to stop, he wouldn’t be able to continue painting. Maybe he had gone a little “over the top” in that moment, but weren’t all human beings like that? A little crazy, a little dark, a little angry, a little creative, a little bit of everything.

And so, he painted, and painted, and painted, and painted.

Throughout the night and the early hours of sunrise and even past that, until it was finished, until his arms, hands, fingers, shirt and everything around him was covered in paint and the canvas had not even one space left without some type of color.

By the end of it all, his fingers ached and his legs were cramped from standing so much time and even if his stomach was grumbling and demanding him to eat, his eyelids could barely stay half-lidded and every time he blinked, made him feel as if he would just collapse right there and then and just sleep until eternity.

So, with wobbly legs and an exhausted mind, he had started walking to his room next door while he took off his shirt and let his slide down his legs. He was left with nothing but his blue boxers and soon as he found himself in front of the bed, he just dropped on top of it as if he weighed a ton, and before he could even take his next breath, he fell asleep.

Now, just looking at the little droplets of water falling down the walls of his bathroom while a little sun filtered through the little window just on top of his head, as he realized that it was getting kind of late and he needed to get out of the bath soon, all that frantic feeling and desperate need to engrave what he was seeing in a canvas, made it feel like it all had been just a bad dream. But he knew it hadn’t been a dream, the emotions had been more intense than anything his sleep deprived mind could come up with and besides, when he had gone to bed yesterday morning, he had left a little trail of paint on the floor.

As it appeared, he had apparently even gotten paint on his feet or maybe he had stomped in some
paintings. Haruka didn’t know and wasn’t really interested. What he wanted to see, was what he
had created.

It might have sounded weird, but at that moment, he couldn’t remember what he had painted. He
just couldn’t. He had wracked his brain trying to come up with the image he had felt like it was
printed in his eyelids, but came out blank every time he tried.

It was also kind of ridiculous, because anyone would expect that he would know what he had done,
and he probably should and of course, if he really didn’t remember, he might as well just open the
doors to the studio and see it for himself. But that’s where the real problem resided, because
actually… he was kind of afraid.

Haruka couldn’t really pinpoint why he felt that way, but it was just as if when he opened the door,
he would discover something he really should just keep hidden. Every pore in his body, told him
not to go inside, to have the painting removed by someone else and just forget about it. But human
beings are really curious creatures, because you tell them no or that they can’t do something, the
more they’ll try to do or achieve it.

And so, with his curiosity peaked and indecision present in every beating of his heart, he stood up
from the tub and slowly made his way towards his little art studio. When he got to the door, he
hesitated, but then thought that at some point he was going to have to see it and that he was just
being ridiculous.

Swinging the door open and as soon as his eyes landed on the painting, he froze.

But it wasn’t like those dramatic moments in books in which the protagonist’s breath would come
out in ragged breaths and his mind would go blank or something like that. Quite the opposite thing
happened.

His face was the same stoic mask it always was, his breathing was even and if you were to see him,
you would probably think he wore a bored expression, but that was just outside, because inside, a
thousand thoughts were swirling, moving and tangling around his mind.

All of his attention was concentrated in the canvas on top of the easel. The image that was painted
upon it, was that of a Sakura tree, but unlike any of the previous sketches, drabbles or formal
paintings with the usual light pink flowers, this Sakura tree, had four different colors.

The tree itself was nothing special. It started from the left side of the canvas and it looked as if it
was a really windy night almost as if all of the branches were swaying in the direction of the coast
and a lot of little petals were swirling around, dispersing themselves all over the canvas until they
met the far right corner of the painting and got lost into the image of the sea and a rising sun.

The striking thing, or what Haruka thought was striking, was that the petals and flowers in the
branches were of a startling red color. It almost seemed as if the Sakura tree was burning and the
petals were little flames, scattered all over and trying to burn the painting itself with its wild
passion and freedom, but even then, it looked as if the fire was struggling to survive, as if it felt
that at any given moment the wind would blow strong enough and extinguish its existence, and
then as you kept on looking, the fiery red, started transforming into a light pink, and then it melted
and mixed completely until it evolved into a cold, bright and hard blue.

This shade of blue, looked almost like ice but denser and more intense. It seemed as if little crystal
shards were thrusting into the canvas, almost as if wanting to tear the painting apart until it was
nothing more than shreds. But just like with the fire petals and its alleged struggle, this blue petals,
looked utterly fragile and almost as if you could just reach out and the instant you made contact
with them, they would shatter into a million unrecognizable pieces.

As the whole setting advanced, the iced crystal petals morphed into a soft green color and unlike the other two colors which were as intense as they could be, or as intense as Haruka could make them look, this one seemed calm and peaceful, because while the red looked as if it wanted to make time pass faster and the blue seemed to be trying to freeze time and space, the green looked as if it was just flowing and dancing with the wind and time. Stray rays of sunshine gave the green color a luminescence that made it looked almost as if the whole thing was glowing.

As Haruka gaze scanned the last track of the painting, he noticed that at the end all of the colors, the scalding red, the piercing blue and the gentle green, all created an outstretched hand made out of the petals scattered by the wind and reaching out towards the golden sun. The piercing black and lifeless night at the beginning of the canvas, had given way to a radiant and hopeful sunrise.

‘What does it mean? Why did I paint it? All those colors, what do they represent? What did I want to convey? Is this supposed to be an abstract painting or a realistic one? What a messy palette… so many things… this might just give me a headache.’

A thousand and one questions were spinning inside Haruka’s head and he could do nothing to stop the torrent of ideas flashing through his mind, he didn’t even have time to comprehend a question because another was already forming and presenting itself in front of him.

Shaking his head and walking towards the painting, which was quite big, and taking one of the finest brushes he could find as well as some black paint. Standing in front of the painting, Haru felt an almost sense of intimidation. It seemed as if the colors were actually alive, as if they were trying to claw their way out of the canvas and envelope everything in their hasty, uncoordinated, passionate and beautiful whirlwind.

Huffing at such sentimental gibberish, he swiftly took some paint with the tip of the brush and wrote on the inferior left corner in standard writing:

\[HK/2014\]

It was a requirement that all of the student’s paintings had to be signed and given to the teacher with a paper at the back with all of the standard information. Sighing and turning around, Haruka deposited the brush in a container with a special liquid to clean his brushes, he would come back later and clean it properly. Right now, he needed to start making his way over to work if he didn’t want Rei bickering him about being late.

Grabbing a granola bar from the cupboard, Haruka made his way over to the entrance of his apartment and started putting on his shoes. He took the coat that was hanging at the entrance and checked his pockets.

‘Keys, wallet, phone… phone?’ He started rummaging through his pants and coat pockets but found nothing. It wasn’t as if he cared that much about his phone or that he had anyone in particular from whom he was expecting a call, it was just that the little thing was kind of useful to keep track of time since he didn’t use a watch.

Suddenly he remembered. He had left his phone at the hotel where he had met with Tachibana... where he had let his guard down and then after not opposing any kind of resistance, he had ran away like a scared dog with the tail between his legs.

Just the memory of Tachibana’s electrifying touch was enough to make frustration bubble inside of him and his cheeks to burn with embarrassment. Just recently had he been able to stop with the
random visions of green eyes and a dazzling smile, and he really didn’t want to start daydreaming and remembering… inconsequential things.

Resigning himself to a lost phone, Haruka finished putting his shoes on and went out the door without bothering to lock it. He couldn’t really care about such mundane things and if someone was to barge in, they would be disappointed because Haruka wasn’t a person with many and/or expensive things.

It was a bit cold outside but just barely noticeable. The seasons were changing and spring was just around the corner. Haruka’s thoughts unexpectedly, or expectedly, drifted back to the canvas back at home and whatever it meant.

It really didn’t matter how much he tried to take it out of his mind after that, it was no use. His stubborn mind, just kept going back to that specific subject and filling his mind with unnecessary questions that most likely, had no answer. The only good thing was that because of his restless mind, the trip to work felt shorter and a little more bearable, because before Haruka noticed, he was already pushing open the door to the coffee shop.

“Haruka-kun, good morning.” Rie gave a nod in his direction but rapidly turned his attention back to the person he was attending.

Giving a small nod of his own, Haruka made his way over to the kitchen and once inside, he hung his jacket and put his apron on. Nagisa wasn’t there yet, but that wasn’t surprising, as the little blond was almost always late. Of course Rei would scold him when he got there, but then Nagisa would make a flirty comment, Rei would say how inappropriate it was and he would leave, letting Nagisa off the hook.

Smiling just the tiniest bit at the remembrance of his clever little friend, Haruka was just about to start taking out the necessary ingredients for some chocolate cake, as he had noticed they had run out of it when he walked in, when Rei came in through the door.

“Haruka-kun, would you please take care of taking the orders? Nagisa-kun is running late again and I just noticed a wrinkle in my uniform which is unacceptable. I can’t let our clients look at me like this.” Rei had said that with such despair, as if he had committed some horrible crime and Haruka had to suppress the sound of incredulousness that was threatening to come out of his mouth.

“Okay.” Even if he was mocking Rei mentally, he would never betray the emotionless mask he always wore and for which he was famous for with the people who knew him. Taking off his apron, he hung it up again and made his way over to the counter.

It was still pretty early, and people wouldn’t start coming until, at least, 15 or 20 more minutes, which left Haruka with quite some time to kill. He leaned over the counter and rested his head in his closed fist as he stared into space and just tried to make a mental list of what he would do that day… He would finish his shift at the shop, then he would make his way over to university, go to all his classes and talk to his artistic expression professor about his finished work, then he could probably go and grab dinner at the near ramen shop before heading home, an---

“...use me? Um… excuse me?” Haruka snapped out of his mental list at the sound of someone talking to him and a hand being shaken in front of his eyes. He almost grunted in annoyance and rolled his eyes, but he was able to contain himself at the last second.

“Welcome to ‘Cinnamon Taste’. What would you…” Green met blue, blue met green, and all Haruka could think about was that he couldn’t quite believe his eyes...
Standing in front of him, with a black coat over his gray suit and peaking from beneath it a deep and shining blue tie, was standing the man with the greenest eyes Haruka had ever seen, framed with some black glasses that looked almost “too good” on him.

Tachibana was smirking, he wasn’t even showing teeth, and it was just a slight elevation of the right side of his mouth as he saw Haruka’s surprised expression and seemed pleased by it.

“Surprise.” Tachibana said and the sound of his voice traveled from Haruka’s ears all the way towards his toes and leaving a prickling sensation all over his spine.

“What are you doing here?” Haruka’s composure was slowly coming back, but the shock of seeing Tachibana again and with the appearance of someone who was going to a photoshoot instead of to an office, really wasn’t helping his train of thoughts.

“As blunt as ever.” Tachibana made a gesture as if he was wounded by Haruka’s coldness, but the unmistakable sarcastic tone and the smile he couldn’t quite wipe off his face, betrayed him and showed just how much he was actually enjoying himself.

“Well, I had some things to do in this part of the city and decided to come and say ‘hi’.” Now this definitely was suspicious. Why would he even bother to come and do something so trivial? And the familiarity with which he talked to Haruka was kind of unnerving.

It wasn’t a big secret that Haruka wasn’t such a sociable person, and he liked keeping his circle of acquaintances to a minimum. So having someone like Tachibana coming here and talking to him like they were “all-time friends”, was really getting on his nerves.

“And also, I came to give you this back.” Tachibana extended his hand over the counter and left a little object just beside casher. When Haruka looked down, he saw it was his phone. “You forgot it when you left so soon after the meeting we had.” He was looking at Haruka with a measured and calmed face, as if nothing had happened after their meeting ended and Haruka had left because something had come up.

Not really knowing why he felt a pang of annoyance, he just stared at the phone for a good five seconds before taking it and sliding it into his back pocket. “Thanks, Tachibana-san.” Haruka let out through gritted teeth.

“No problem.” Tachibana scanned Haruka’s face and seemed to find something very amusing or entertaining as he smiled widely at him and turned his face to look at the menu.

Taking advantage of Tachibana’s distraction, Haruka examined his face once again.

It wasn’t that it was different, it was just those damn glasses. They made him look a little bit older, but not in a bad way, because as he had previously stated, he looked absolutely sexy. The black frames brought out the vivid and shining green of his eyes and the strong cheeks were accentuated. His sandy-brown hair was stylishly messy, if such a thing existed, and just gave him this youthful aura of confidence.

Uncannily fast, Tachibana turned his face and once again their eyes met and Haruka was drowning in a sea of green. Smiling once again, Tachibana spoke, “I would like three chocolate cookies and an Expresso to go, please.” Breaking out of his momentary daze, Haruka entered the order on the cashier and told Rei the order.

To keep himself from having another ‘showdown’ with Tachibana’s intense gaze, Haruka busied himself with taking the cookies from one of the displayers. Soon enough Rei was touching the little
bell and saying that the order was ready as he left it over the little window so Haruka would take it.

“That would be 350 Yen, please.” Haruka said, and when he extended his hand to take the 4 one hundred Yen coins from him, Tachibana extended his hand as well and caressed the inside of Haruka’s hand and wrist with his fingertips.

Little electric shocks went all over his arm, making him shiver, and Haruka almost dropped the money.

“Keep the change.” Tachibana said and took his order as he turned to leave.

Haruka’s cheeks were blazing hot and he was almost sure Tachibana had felt the shiver he had provoked to travel all over his body. Looking away, Haruka was awaiting the ring of the door that signaled that he was gone.

“Oh, and Haruka….” He hastily turned his face at the sound of his name voiced in a tone of danger coated in sweetness, a tone that evoked the feeling of wanting to run away, but that was way too tempting to actually do so. “I remember.”

He remembered? What did he remembered? What was Tachibana talking about? And as he saw Haruka’s confused expression, he smiled a predatory smile. “And you should totally check your phone once you charge it.” And with that, he turned around and left blue eyes looking after him, watching his back as if it contained the answers Haruka was looking for.

Seriously considering making up and excuse to leave at that moment, Haruka was interrupted with the chiming sound of the bell on top of the door and was greeted with a swarm of people who wanted their morning coffee.

Sighing in frustration and realizing he was trapped, Haruka tried to mentally prepare himself for an exhausting day, but nothing could distract him from thinking of the little device that was in his back pocket and that now seemed as if it weighted ten times more than the last time he had had it.

Chapter End Notes

Edited by an amazing person <3

Soo... new chapter! I know updates are taking longer and longer, but school is just really getting to me and the amount of homework I'm getting it's actually ridiculous. The good news is that I'm getting one week off from school, so I'll try to write as much as I can so I can update sooner and have some back-up material :)

Another reason why this chapter took so long, was because I recently went through a major ‘author's block’ and no matter how hard I tried, I just couldn't write something half-decent, and I just didn't want to post some mediocre writing and I hope that you guys enjoyed this, because once I got over it, I really liked how this chapter turned out!

So, did you like it, did you hate? Was it good or should I become a hermit so I can't get near a keyboard again? Comments always make my day and kudos are much appreciated. You can always find me on twitter like: @ArtistiqueR12. I would love talking to you! ^^
As always, thank you so much for reading and keeping track of this fic, and I'll read you (hopefully) very soon!
Chapter 11

Chapter Summary

Instead, he just laid there staring into the dark ceiling in the comfort of a bed - that was starting to feel a bit too big and too empty for him lately-, trying to grasp the sleep that would very unlikely come tonight...

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Greeting
Nodding,
Billing,
Turning,
Grabbing,
Handing out,
Giving change,
Waving,
Repeat…

For some reason today was busier than usual, people came in and out of the door and the combination of voices, people texting, phones ringing and the soft background music were making Haruka’s head spin.

“Macchiato with mint, Expresso and Cinnamon Blast, ready!” Nagisa’s voice rung from the little kitchen as Rei put the three drinks in front of Haruka so he could hand them out.

Rapidly turning around, Haruka took one chocolate muffin and two vanilla cookies while he reached out for the drinks. Only taking the Macchiato and the Expresso, he handed them out to the school girls who were waiting at the front of the line.

“I’ll bring the other drink right away.” Haruka put all the things in front of the closest girl and turned again to take the last drink and be over with them so he could move on to the next client.

“Here.” Haruka said as he handed the girl the last of her order.

“Thank you.” The girl said with a wide smile and flirtatious eyes.

Haruka sighed internally, but directed a small smile at her. The girl blushed and hid her eyes behind her bangs.

She was cute. Short with long caramel hair and honey eyes, her friends giggled and blushed
alongside with her. It wasn’t the first time they came to the shop and Haruka was sure it wouldn’t be the last either. Up until now, the girl always ordered the same, said thanks, then would attempt to flirt with him, but as soon as Haruka returned the gesture, she would get flustered and leave with her friends.

She wasn’t the only girl who had attempted something like that with him and nor was she the only one that Haruka suspected had a petty crush on him. When he first noted that some girls were like that, he would just direct them a disinterested look and if they came back again, he would treat them as coldly and curtly as he could, but when Rei had picked up on his demeanor, he had talked to him and convinced him not to push them away, not because he wanted to make Haruka feel uncomfortable, but because they could become frequent and valuable clients.

Rei clarified that Haruka didn’t have to outright flirt with them, just a little smile here or a look there, to keep them interested and coming to the shop. At first, Haruka had completely refused to do such a thing, but with time he came to realize it was easier to fake a smile or a kind look, than frowning and glaring the whole day and either way, it was a win-win situation for everyone.

Haruka could avoid any awkward moments, Rei didn’t have to keep track of every single move he made, the shop got frequented by more people and the girls which tried to get closer to him got a little discouraged but not heartbroken, and they could always twist things a little to have something interesting to share at lunch with their group of friends.

Taking the drink from the counter and leaving in a rush, the group of girls went away through the door and Haruka was once again taking the order of a middle aged woman who was trying to balance her phone in between her ear and shoulder while she took out his wallet and tried to order a cup of coffee.

Sighing once again, Haruka resumed the cycle he had going on until a few moment ago, because at least that way he would be able to distract himself from thinking about his own phone and the person who had given it back to him.

Greeting
Nodding,
Billing,
Turning,
Grabbing,
Handing out,
Giving change,
Waving,
Repeat...

And to think it was just 9:00 AM.
“Here’s your change and your drink. Have a nice day.” The woman acknowledge Haruka’s farewell with a distracted nod as she took her dark coffee without taking her eyes off her phone and directed herself towards the exit.

As her heels resonated through the mopped floor and the little bell atop the door rang signaling that she was gone, Haruka let himself drop on the floor behind the counter as his legs finally gave out.

To say it had been a busy morning was an understatement.

It seemed as if half people of Tokyo had decided they needed coffee that morning and as if by coincidence, three quarters of the coffee shop in the city had been closed.

When Haruka finally thought that he was done with every single client in the shop, another swarm of people would come in, some even pushing each other in an attempt to get to the front of the line so they could buy their precious brown liquid.

Nagisa, Rei and him, had been performing an improvised, yet coordinated dance the whole morning. Haruka would take the orders and give them to Rei, meanwhile Nagisa would be taking out and placing cups, bags or any other thing that needed packing close to Rei so he just would pour or place inside them whatever the costumer had asked for. Haruka would be giving out the change to whoever had ordered and then Nagisa would place the complete order over the little window so Haruka could take it and hand it out.

The hectic activity hadn’t stopped until it was almost eleven and even when the influx of people seemed to diminish a little, things still were pretty active. Haruka looked up and saw the clock.

1:37 PM

They wouldn’t be closing until little over an hour, but in that moment, it looked as if people were already at their work and not loading Nagisa, Rei and himself with work.

“Haru-chan! Are you okay?” Haruka turned around and found himself looking into big and teasing magenta eyes, but with a hint of worry in his eyes.

“Fine.” He responded and then added. “Just tired.”

Nagisa laughed and disappeared through the door, only to come back a few seconds later with a glass of water with ice and offering it to him. Haruka could’ve hugged him, but it was just too much effort and he really was tired after all the shuffling around that day.

“Man, that was exhausting! We had never had so many people come to the shop before!” Nagisa said while stretching his arms in front of himself. “But it sure wasn’t boring! Hey, Rei-chan! Did you do some kind of promotion or something?”

Rei, who had been in the kitchen until that point, came out through the door while sipping a glass of water as well. “I don’t know what happened, nor did I do anything special.” He looked pointedly at Nagisa. “And please stop calling me that, Nagisa-kun.”

Nagisa pouted in that way that looked as if he was a kicked puppy asking for reason as to why you
would treat him so rudely. “C’mon Rei-chan! You’re no fun!” He promptly stood up while he placed his hands on his hips. “Why don’t we take a break and go out to eat something?” He said in an excited tone, while looking expectantly at Haruka and Rei.

Haruka just shook his head. He wasn’t really hungry, and the visit from Tachibana had left his stomach full of knots and effectively filling his stomach.

Rei declined as well, saying that he had packed his lunch and was planning on eating at the back of the shop later. Nagisa just puffed out his cheeks and told them that even if they said no, he would go out himself and true to his word, he took his coat from the hook on the inside of the kitchen door and went out before Rei could even finish saying that his lunch hour wasn’t until half an hour more.

Haruka just looked as Nagisa’s figure passed in front of the shop and disappeared in the streets of Tokyo. He shook his head and smiled gently, while he heard Rei sighing. He closed his eyes and rested his head in the wall behind him, just letting himself rest before any other person decided to come in and force him to stand up.

“Haruka-kun?” Rei spoke and begrudgingly, he opened his eyes and looked up to where Rei was standing. “I think it’s okay if you go now.”

Haruka raised an eyebrow at him, but was already standing up.

Rei shrugged. “Before all that crazy amount of people started coming, you said there was something you needed to do at the university. I think for the most part we’re covered and I don’t think that more people will be coming, at least not like earlier, so if what you have to do is important, you can go and I’ll have Nagisa-kun work a little more for leaving without my permission.” He finished, as he frowned while he said the last part.

Haruka just finished standing up and straightened his clothes. He gave a short bow to Rei and directed himself towards the kitchen so he could hang up his apron and pick up his coat and bag. As Rei had said before, it didn’t looked as if many people were going to come, so he supposed he could go and either way, he was kind of surprised Rei had remembered.

He had lightly commented to Nagisa that he had something to talk about one of his teachers at the university, it really wasn’t a ‘life or death’ matter, but the sooner he got it over with, the better.

Putting on his coat while he took his bag and put it over his shoulder, he opened one side of the counter so he could pass through, Haruka turned once again and said goodbye to Rei, but Rei just halfheartedly waved at him, as he was reorganizing all of the dishes and cups back in the kitchen.

Taking his cue. Haruka made his way over to the door and exited the shop. The sky was clear, but there wasn’t much sun. There were some people on the streets but not as much as before due to most being at their offices working. His classes didn’t start until two and a half more hours, and that left him with enough time to go and look for his teacher around the art department and be on time for his first evening class.

Haruka started walking to the train station while he accommodated his bag more comfortably in his shoulder, it wasn’t that it was extremely heavy, as he only had the drawing pad he used for his sketching class, some texts books for the ‘History of Art’ class and some arts supplies, but it was that he felt a little anxious.

Painting had always been something natural to him. Since he was a little kid and had been able to pick up a pencil and a surface to sketch on, his fate had been sealed.
Book covers, napkins, tables, sheets of paper, tablecloths, wall and even his parent’s and his own clothes, they had all been target of his imagination running wild and an art supply being nearby. Of course at first he had gotten in trouble for painting something else that wasn’t his coloring book or a blank sheet, but with time his parents came to accept the artist that was inside him and bought him all kind of things so he could experiment and have his own technique.

With time and without a teacher, his paintings and drawings had improved immensely and getting a scholarship hadn’t been very difficult. His parents had wanted him to pursue a sports scholarship with his amazing ability in the pool, but as he had stated before, swimming was the only pure thing he had left, and after his parents had found about his sexual and romantic preferences… well, ‘tainted’ had been the word he had used since then to describe himself.

Without noticing, he was already sitting at the train and by what the man in the speakers were saying, he should be getting off on the next stop.

Haruka huffed.

He had been getting all absorbed in his thoughts an awful lot lately. He couldn’t even keep track of where he was going. It was kind of becoming a habit and it was incredibly annoying.

A voice came through the speakers announcing their arrival, and Haruka soon made his way over to the exit, even though the train wasn’t crowded, quite the contrary actually.

The train came to a halt and as soon as the doors left a gap big enough for him to pass through, he step outside and started making his way over to the university, which was just three blocks from the station.

He thanked whatever god was watching, because the streets weren’t as crowded as they used to be and so under the record time of three minutes, he was taking the stairs to enter the building.

Tokyo University of the Arts

The sign was just above the entrance and some might say the black bold letter were intimidating, and they might be right. ‘Tokyo University of the Arts’ is one of the most prestigious universities in all of Japan if you wanted to study anything related to the art department.

Getting the full scholarship had been quite the hassle, but due to some connections his father had unexpectedly had, it hadn’t been as hard as it could have been.

Of course, he had to have at least an average of B+ in every single class and score of at least an A-in all of his tests, but in the end everything was worth it. If you could graduate from there and make some good contacts while you were at it, you had practically resolved any problems you might have had in the future… at least, economically speaking.

Making his way throughout the maze of corridors and trying not to bump into anyone as students with paintings, instruments and various other things walked by. He needed to talk to his oil painting teacher, Mrs. Takizawa.

Finally getting to his destination, he started looking for his teacher but it appeared as if the room was empty. He looked at the clock that was just above the teacher’s office and realized his next class would be starting in less than ten minutes.
Sighing with irritation, Haruka closed his eyes and was just turning around when he came into contact with a smaller body and the sound of some books dropping to floor made him open his eyes reflexively.

“Oh my, if it isn’t Haruka-kun!” Haruka found himself staring into honey and crinkled eyes. He smiled softly when he recognized the woman standing in front of him.

“Takizawa-sensei.” He said gently while he stepped away and bent down to pick up the books he had made her drop.

As he stood up and handed her book back, he took a better look at her. Mrs. Takizawa was an elderly woman; about 65 years old was his guess; her long gray hair was always in a sideways braid, her glasses were on top of her head and her eyes were framed by more wrinkles than Haruka could count or even try to distinguish between one another.

Gentle eyes regarded him with interest and the little woman took the offered books from Haruka’s hand. “So, tell me Haruka-kun, what is it that you need?”

Internally thanking the little woman in front of him for not trying to engage him in small chat, he stood up straighter and then spoke. “I finished the art assignment.”

Raising an eyebrow, Mrs. Takizawa looked at him as if to tell him to continue speaking. “Umm… well… It’s actually bigger than what I originally thought it would be and well… I didn’t exactly follow the instructions given… so I… umm… I was wondering if…”

Mrs. Takizawa held a hand up, effectively stopping his half-coherent sentences. “Bring it tomorrow before your first class and I shall be the one to judge if I allow or deny your submission.”

Sighing in relief, Haruka’s shoulders sagged and his posture relaxed. He gave a simple nod and when he turned lifted his head to see Mrs. Takizawa’s face, she was smiling softly. “Now, get going or you’re going to be late for your class.”

Turning to see the clock once again, he realized he had less than 5 minutes until his ‘Digital Design’ class started. Making a hasty bowing position, Haruka started half-running and half-sprinting towards his classroom.

Digital design was one class he struggled with, along with English, because even though he could draw practically anything on paper, when he used a computer or tablet, he instantly became worse than a three year old learning how to paint without getting out of the line of a printed image.

Okay, maybe he wasn’t that bad, but he wasn’t nearly as good as when he was sitting in front of a blank canvas.

Almost knocking some random person, Haruka decided it was better to focus on where he was going than on which were his worst classes. Making a sharp right turn, he ran at almost full speed to the class door and half a second later after he came through the door, the bell rang signaling the start of the lesson.

His teacher was already there, a middle age man which Haruka had never tried to remember the name of. He always looked pissed-off an as if breathing the same air as all of the students in the class gave him a headache. However, despite the fact that Haruka though he didn’t like him, the man was a genius when he picked up the tablet and started sketching in their standard design program.

But just seeing the electronic device, made him think of his uncharged phone and of what
Tachibana had said. Haruka sighed in frustration. Now that he had remembered about the irritating matter that had kept him distracted all morning and that almost made him drop some of the drinks at the shop, he was sentenced to be distracted all of what was left of his classes.

His thoughts couldn’t have been more certain, because he wasn’t able to concentrate for the rest of the evening. Not when his digital design class was finished and he went to his sketching class and the teacher said they were free to draw whatever they wanted. He had ended up with a blank sheet of paper looking back at him as if mocking Haruka, and he had to ask the professor if he could bring the assignment the next day.

His teacher had, rather sourly, accepted and told him that it better be the last time something like that happened. Haruka just nodded and bowed and then left for his next class: History of Art. Which had been downright disastrous because he ended up paying even less attention than normal and the worst part was that the old lady who taught the class had given the chapters they had to study for a worksheet two days onward and because Haruka hadn’t been listening because he had been thinking about the little irritating item on his back pocket, he was forced to talk to one of his classmates, situation that he didn’t particularly enjoyed.

By the time all of his classes were over and done for, Haruka couldn’t even remember what classes he had had or if he had homework for the next day. The only thing he knew was that he was practically starving and he needed to get to his apartment so he could charge his phone.

Practically sprinting, he made his way towards the university’s exit and went to a little restaurant that was just around the corner and that sold a pretty good mackerel ramen. He entered the little place and made his order fast and to go, all the while tapping his foot on the floor and looking at the clock on one of the walls every two seconds.

His order was ready and he was gone in less than 10 seconds not even waiting for the girl at the counter to give him back his change. He ran towards the station and just barely made in time to catch the train that would take him home.

The train was overcrowded, thus making him stand for the whole ride. Once the train came to his stop, he was the first out of it and he reassumed his sprint towards his apartment, but this time a little bit more carefully as to not completely ruin his food.

When he found himself at the bottom of the stairs, he took them two at a time and almost tripped with his own feet. Quickly recovering his balance, he took one big breath and tried to control his breathing as he made his way over to his apartment door.

Once in front of it, he took out his keys and opened the door calmly. He had come to the conclusion that running and making every little thing hastily wouldn’t help him, and either way, he would have to wait at least half an hour for his phone to charge so he could see whatever it was that Tachibana had left on his phone.

Taking his shoes off, he made his way over to the kitchen and left the plastic bag on top of his little table and then went to his room, were his charger was waiting to be plugged.

Removing his phone from his back pocket, he plugged it and soon the screen lit with an image of a battery charging. Suddenly, his stomach grumbled and he decided to leave the matter of his phone alone in favor of eating what was destined to be his dismantled ramen.

As soon as he got to the kitchen, he didn’t even bother taking out some sort of dish so he could pour the ramen in it, the plastic plate they had given him would have to do. Undoing the knot on top of the bag, he took out the little container, which was wrapped in plastic, as well as some
chopstick that were included and after taking off all of the wrapping, he started eating.

Even if the trip had been a hectic one, most of the ramen was undamaged and it tasted good, so at least that had gone right.

For a few minutes, he didn’t think of anything as he enjoyed his meal with the utmost pleasure while he effectively, silenced his aching stomach. He really ought to start eating better and having some kind of schedule for eating all of his meals. He could do something so much more elaborate and tastier than what he was having, after all, he wasn’t going to the culinary academy just because.

Maybe he would cook something on the weekend and have Nagisa stay over so he would make sure there were no leftovers and it was always relaxing, in a weird kind of way, having Nagisa around.

He just seemed to transfer some kind of liveliness into Haruka that made him almost feel light, but at the same time grounded. It was a hard to describe, but he knew he wouldn’t change his best friend for the world or even had the accurate words to describe it.

Nagisa simply was almost like family, like a brother, sometimes an annoying and bothersome one, but Haruka still loved him. Their friendship was something beyond blood, because even when his own parents had rejected and belittle him, Nagisa had been accepting and had had open arms were Haruka was able to take some kind of comfort.

Lifting the chopsticks to his mouth and noticing that he didn’t pick up anything, he looked down and saw that the dish was empty. Taking it along with the chopstick, he deposited both of them on the trashcan and went over to his room.

Sitting down on the edge of the bed, Haruka reached out and saw that the image of the battery was almost full. Unplugging the charger, he leaned back again the mattress while he moved upward so his head would be resting on his pillow. Pressing the button on the right side, the screen went black for a few moments until it lit up again and his lock screen came into view.

Now… where to look first? Tachibana had just said to check his phone, he hadn’t really said what he had to check, so deciding on taking a look at his photo files, he opened the app with the touch of his finger.

Nothing.

Just the same old 3 photos he had saved. Going back to the main screen, he looked at his voice notes, but just like with the photos, nothing new was saved there.

Getting irritated, even though he hadn’t look so much into his phone, he decided to look on his contact list. Going through it was a fairly quick affair, for he didn’t know that many people and wasn’t interested in getting half of Japan’s phone number as some people seemed to attempt doing.

He was getting to the end of his list when he suddenly saw a number he didn’t know and that had the icon of a draft saved just beside the number.

Giving the screen a confused look, he entered and saw that a text message had been written. He read the message and then called the number in which it was saved. Three rings went by before anyone answered.

“Hello, how may I help you?” His voice was formal but nice and open for conversation.
“Really? Dinner? Couldn’t you have thought of something more original?” Haruka’s voice was petulant, as if he was a child who was promised something big and was instead given not even half of what he had hoped for. He could practically see the other man’s smug smile.

“Why, hello Haruka-kun. Would you prefer something else then? Maybe something more… private?” He could feel the condescendence dripping from Tachibana’s words but even when he knew he was just teasing him, Haruka couldn’t help but blush at his insinuation.

“I never said that. I just said it was unoriginal.” This time Tachibana laughed, low and beyond amused. Haruka frowned. “Am I really that funny?”

“Oh, yes.” Tachibana said happily. “But that is not what this call is about, is it?”

Haruka swallowed because his voice had changed in the span of a nanosecond. Really, this guy’s mood swings were going to give him a headache.

“No need to be afraid of me… after all, I won’t do anything you don’t want me to do.” Tachibana’s voice had changed again, this time gaining a dark, seductive tone...

“I’m not afraid.” He replayed too quickly for anyone to actually believe it. He really wasn’t afraid of this person, he was afraid of what he knew Tachibana could do…even worse…Haruka was certain that he might end up liking it.

“Sure.” Tachibana dragged the ‘r’ making it seem like he was purring. Venom mixed with the sweetest honey. “So, is that a yes?”

Haruka was silent for a second or two debating on whether this was a good decision, but already knowing the answer.

“Yes.”

“Great! I’ll pick you up from university on Saturday. 7:30 PM, at the entrance. Don’t be late.”

Now his head was swimming, he had started out with a happy voice, then changed to an informative one and ended up with an almost angry tone that spoke of discipline and the expectance of orders being followed.

“So I have no say in when is convenient?” Haruka asked while arching an eyebrow even though he knew the other man could not see him.

“Wipe that pout off that little pretty face of yours, and yes, you do. But I know better.” Haruka’s face was an incredulous one when he heard Tachibana saying to stop pouting, which he was absolutely “not doing”, and then saying with such confident that he knew better than Haruka his own schedule.

“Wait a sec-” Haruka was cut short.

“I’m sorry, but I need to leave. I’ll message you later.” And with that the call was ended leaving Haruka with a dumbfounded look on his face.

‘Whatever…’ Haruka thought to himself while he turned around on the bed and left the little device on his nightstand.

He really didn’t have the energy at the moment to think about what just happened, he was
inexplicably tired and he sure as hell had a lot of time tomorrow he could spend going over his latest conversation with the green eyed man with the rollercoaster mood swings; besides, as he stated before; the other’s weird and spontaneous personality had left him particularly drained and a dull ache had started on the left side of his head.

Extending his hand so he could reach the nightstand, he turned off the light and didn’t even bother to change out of his clothes or do all of the other things he ought to have done that night before actually going to bed...

Instead, he just laid there staring into the dark ceiling in the comfort of a bed - that was starting to feel a bit too big and too empty for him lately-, trying to grasp the sleep that would very unlikely come tonight... “Saturday...” the word resonating in his head like a promise of what he couldn’t even begin to understand, but that make him tingle in all the right places at the thought of it...

Chapter End Notes

Hello lovely AO3 people! I hope you liked the new update <3

Don’t you love Makoto? Because I sure do ^^

So, did you like it, did you hate it? Feedback is always appreciated and all of your lovely comments just absolutely make my day, so be sure to leave one because they encourage me to keep on writing. Kudos are always appreciated too ^^

Well, until next time and I hope you have a lovely week <3
Chapter 12

Chapter Summary

‘Well...’ He thought. ‘At least he has manners.’
He scrolled down to the next message.

From: T. Makoto
To: N. Haruka
Date: 17/03/2014 22:02 PM
Don’t be late.

‘I take that back.’ Haruka thought with annoyance, but then the fact that he was going out tomorrow with Tachibana hit him.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

“Time’s up! Please stop everything you’re doing.”

Haruka had just about finished putting a sprinkle of cinnamon on top when the instructor spoke.

“Aikawa-san, please stop whatever you’re doing. If you do not, I will be forced to nullify your test.” The instructor said in a severe tone as Haruka wiped off his forehead some little droplets of sweat.

Haruka hadn’t even bother in remembering her name because this kind of people only came to the Academy once.

This time around, it was a petite middle age woman who wore her hair so high and so tight it looked as if her skull was being pulled. She was dressed in a very formal suit and she squinted at all of the people in the room through her black glasses as her mouth set in a firm line.

“This time around, it was a petite middle age woman who wore her hair so high and so tight it looked as if her skull was being pulled. She was dressed in a very formal suit and she squinted at all of the people in the room through her black glasses as her mouth set in a firm line.

“Please, pick up your desserts, in whatever state they might be, make a line and put them in front of the card with your name. We’ll be informing you of your results on Sunday afternoon, before your classes for the day begin.” She changed her posture and as she moved, her heels resonated in the wood floor. “The minimum you ought to get to pass is of 7.5 points out of 10, if you are not able to get to this score you will be given another chance, and if you still fail, you’ll have to repeat the class or go looking for another institution.” She scanned the room and settle her stare on Haruka, who looked right back at her with bored and indiffrent eyes.

Lifting an eyebrow at him and placing her hand on her hips, she spoke again. “With that being said, you’re dismissed and free to go.” She disappeared through a door that was at the back of the room and as soon as she was out, everyone in the room erupted in chatter and made a line so they could place their dessert on the corresponding place.
Nobody made a move to go and finish whatever their dessert was missing, all of the classrooms had cameras and nobody was foolish enough to try something and risk getting expelled.

There was a total of 15 people in the room, and Haruka stood at the end of the line. He could hear the conversation of some of his classmates, distressed comments like ‘I couldn’t finish the topping, it will be tasteless!’ or ‘I didn’t know what to do, I hope it’s not too simple’ and of course there were the ones like ‘Mine’s the best, there’s no way I won’t get a perfect score’ and ‘They will love it, I just know it!’.

He couldn’t bother to exactly pin-point which voice belonged to who or who made each comment. He just wanted to place his dessert and head home so he could get started with his essay of ‘Picasso’s cubism technique’, which he had to have start writing more than a week ago, but only remembered today because his History of Arts teacher had reminded them it was for Saturday, that was of course, tomorrow.

He couldn’t bother to exactly pin-point which voice belonged to who or who made each comment. He just wanted to place his dessert and head home so he could get started with his essay of ‘Picasso’s cubism technique’, which he had to have start writing more than a week ago, but only remembered today because his History of Arts teacher had reminded them it was for Saturday, that was of course, tomorrow.

He started to tap his foot against the polished wood floor because the line wasn’t moving at all and if he didn’t want to fall asleep while doing his homework, he really needed to get going.

Haruka stepped out of the line a little, careful not to damage his dessert, and looked at the front of the line, where two girls had stopped to chatter. Frowning and not really caring, he started walking towards the front. Once he got there, he started looking for his name, and when he saw it in the middle of the table, he gently placed the plate there.

“Hey!” One of the girls said, clearly looking upset. “It wasn’t your turn! You had to wait!” She was one of those rich girls who got everything they wanted whenever they wanted and were annoying as hell.

Haruka turned to look at her with an expressionless face. “You were taking too long.” He answered simply and started walking back so he could get out there.

“Ha! I bet you didn’t even finish your dessert and you just want to leave so you don’t see when everyone laughs at your pathetic effort.” He froze mid-step and turned around, the girl was looking at him with a snarky smile on her face, but when she saw the stony and cold look in his eyes, her face fell and she took a step back.

“And just what do you think I did?” Most days, Haruka would just brush off those types of comments that came from unimportant and hollow people, but today had been a particularly bad day and he was just waiting to take out his suppressed energy with someone.

“W-well, something bad and… and tasteless…” She seemed to have forgotten how to talk as Haruka approached the table once again, he couldn’t even bother try and remember this girl’s name because even if he tried he knew he would come out blank.

“Huh… if you’re so sure, why don’t you see for yourself?” And he stood beside his dish as he signaled it with his hand.

In the middle of the white plate, was sitting a perfect chocolate-strawberry crumble ball. A chocolate chip cookie served as a base and on top was a half circle of chocolate, filled with meringue and sealed with a thin layer of sweetened condensed milk. On top of that, laid two red strawberries cut in half in a bed of granola, all of this covered by circular cage of chocolate and with little sprinkles of cinnamon and little dots of strawberry jam all around the cookie so it added to the color and presentation.

The girl had her eyes wide and was now looking at him like a cornered animal would, she opened
her mouth to say something, but Haruka quickly cut her off.

“So, as you see I really don’t think you should be worrying yourself over other’s people’s dishes, because…” He looked down at the plate on her hands that contained a simple slice of cheesecake with almond and vanilla ice cream that was already starting to melt. “Well, you should obviously worry about yourself first.”

She looked down at her dessert and made a little squeaking noise, just like a mouse.

Haruka then noticed that everyone’s attention was fixated on him and the gravity of what he had done dawned on him.

Clicking his tongue and hiding his eyes under his bangs, he made his way towards the door without another word.

He directed himself towards the lockers and just took his bag and coat and started to walk towards the main door. The noises and lights of cars and buildings greeted his exit as he started walking down to the train station.

He walked down the corner and pressed the button so the light would change from green to red so he could walk to the train station. As he waited, he looked back at the Academy.

Le Cordon Bleu Academy

Tokyo

The golden but simple letters with a dark blue background to complete the contrast stare right back at Haruka. ‘Le Cordon Bleu Academy’ was a very prestigious culinary academy that had facilities all around the world and offered an infinity of courses in different areas.

From all types, kinds and styles of gourmet food to the most delicate and delicious patisserie.

The entrance exam had been tough and he almost didn’t make it, but his choice of a white and dark chocolate cake with almonds, a recipe that he learned from his grandmother, had done the trick and he had been accepted.

He was now almost done with the two year program of pastries. The funny thing was that he didn’t actually liked sweets all that much, it was just the making and creative process it involved, had always fascinated him.

What you could do with flour, eggs milk, sugar, butter, oil, water and some colorant, was just extraordinary and even as a kid he had always been left in awe as his grandmother made cupcakes or cakes with different colors, tastes and scents.

Haruka suddenly realized that most of his classmates were already exiting the Academy and that if the stupid lights didn’t change at that exact moment, then he would be stuck for some really awkward seconds with them standing next to him in that corner.

Whoever was up above, seemed to take some pity on him and as his classmates approached, the lights swiftly changed from a neon green to a bright red.
He rapidly crossed the street and didn’t bother to look back. He just wanted to get home, get started with essay and then sleep until his annoying and stupid alarm woke him in the morning.

The train station was 4 blocks from the Academy and by the time he was in the platform, he was more than a little out of breath. He heard a woman talking through the loudspeaker, saying that it wouldn’t be at least 10 more minutes until his train arrived.

Sighing, because he knew that 10 minutes might as well be 20 or even half an hour. He started thinking about what had happened back the Academy.

He really hadn’t mean to be so mean… well, it wasn’t as if he had said anything specifically hurtful or insulting; was it? It had just been the tone of his voice… and if anyone knew how much a tone or words could hurt, that was him.

It had just been a bad day, not that the girl on his class had the fault.

He had woken up later than usual, because he had been staring up at the ceiling thinking and going over and over again the conversation they had had. He just didn’t get how a person, who wasn’t even in front of him, could make him feel so much in so little time.

And so while thought after thought went through his mind, by the time he had any signs of falling asleep, it had already been 4:30 AM and his first class the next day at the university started at 9:00 AM.

When he had woken up, it had been a quarter to ten and so, in a whirlwind of curses and semi-acrobatic dynamics to get dressed, he was off and out the door and sprinting towards the station trying not to miss his train. But it seemed as if that day, the word ‘mercy’ had been erased from the face of the Earth, because just as he was setting foot on the platform, the train closed its doors and left.

As he had sighed in frustration, he had made his way out of the station and looked for an available taxi on the streets. He thought that he might be getting a bit of luck when, not a minute after, a cab parked itself in front of him.

Of course, the driver was a woman that talked way too much and smoked even more so. The little space in which Haruka had been for the next 45 minutes, had been the definition of Hell and when he finally got to the university, he smelled like a chimney.

When he made it to his classroom, he had already missed half of the classes he had that day and he was just going to apologize to the teacher when the bell rang, signaling the end of his sketching lesson.

Once the professor saw him, he just made a signal for Haruka to go look for him after he was done with all of his classes.

He sat at the back of the class and as he waited for his teacher of History of Art to arrive, he could notice how some of the people that were near him recoiled a little on his seats, trying to get away from the nauseating odor he was exuding.

To say that he didn’t pay attention would be an understatement, he was practically forcing himself not to drift off as his teacher continued to talk about cubism and realism paintings. He only paid attention at the end and right on time to be reminded of the essay due to the next day.

Haruka then had called in sick, because he had his sculpturing class next and he really didn’t think he would be able to do anything more than cut himself with the aluminum cans and wires they
were using for their project, and the stares he was getting from everyone were really starting to annoy him.

He had then gone to his apartment, the train ride somehow calming and once he was home, he had taken a quick shower, for he really couldn’t indulge in the comfort of water for too long.

He took a bag with his standard uniform for the Academy in Daikanyama.

He had emptied his mind of all the other things that had happened and went through the recipe of the dessert he was going to make in his head. He knew he needed a good score if he wanted to pass and start with the last phase of his pastries degree.

He had already received an offer or two from some well-known restaurants, but he first needed to have that little piece of paper that acknowledged him as a true chef.

He had gotten to the Academy with the idea of just entering, doing what he had to do and leave, but as soon as that girl opened her mouth, it was as if all the frustration and stress had come back an hit him on the face.

Haruka almost never bother with answering to this kind of people that only wanted to be the center of attention. But if there was something he hated was being called mediocre.

That girl hadn’t actually said it, but it was implied and he had had enough that day and she just had practically asked for him to take his frustration out on her.

Of course he hadn’t said anything that wasn’t true. Shinohara Chiyuki –the name of the girl, which he had just remembered- wasn’t one of the best students at the class and everyone knew she had gotten as far as she had because her parents had paid so she could pass.

Haruka couldn’t care less about how other people managed to pass or not, it wasn’t his business and he wasn’t interesting in knowing, but if you hadn’t gotten somewhere because of your own efforts, who gave you the right to judge and look down on others?

He felt the buzzing of his phone just as a voice was heard throughout all of the platform, informing that the train was coming and to please step behind the yellow line on the floor.

He took his phone out as he waited for the train to arrive. He pressed the button at the bottom of the screen and the screen lit up, revealing the photo of the ocean.

He slid his finger across the screen, effectively unlocking it and showing a little red circle with a number one, on top of the messages icon.

The train arrived and Haruka started walking towards the doors which were just starting to open. He really didn’t feel like standing the whole train ride.

As he took a seat, he touched the little envelope icon and the incoming message was displayed.

From: T. Makoto
To: N. Haruka
17/03/2014 18:27 PM
How’s your evening going?
I hope you haven’t forgotten about our plans tomorrow.

Huffing and rolling his eyes, Haruka typed back his response.

To: T. Makoto
From: N. Haruka
17/03/2014 18:29 PM
How could I possibly do that?
And fine, thanks.

Hitting send, he reclined a little against his seat, but as soon as he had closed his eyes, he felt his phone vibrating again.

From: T. Makoto
To: N. Haruka
17/03/2014 18:32 PM
Your sarcasm hurts, Haruka.

He decided not to answer, but then another message came in.

From: T. Makoto
To: N. Haruka
17/03/2014 18:34 PM
And just in case you were wondering, my day was actually pretty boring.
But really, you’re not going to cancel on me, right?

Annoying.- Haruka thought as he let out a huff-
To: T. Makoto
From: N. Haruka
17/03/2014 18:37 PM

Good for you… and No.

There, that should do it.

From: T. Makoto
To: N. Haruka
17/03/2014 18:40 PM

Splendid.
Remember, 7:30 PM at the university’s entrance.

How bossy, but now that he mentioned it…

To: T. Makoto
From: N. Haruka
17/03/2014 18:43 PM

I have a question.

From: T. Makoto
To: N. Haruka
17/03/2014 18:45 PM

Yes?

To: T. Makoto
From: N. Haruka
17/03/2014 18:48 PM

How do you know my schedule and the university I’m attending?
He really wanted to know, because he didn’t remember ever mentioning it over the two times they had met.

From: T. Makoto
To: N. Haruka
17/03/2014 18:51 PM
I am a man of various talents and contacts, my dear Haruka.

For some reason that last part made swallowing a little difficult for Haruka.

To: T. Makoto
From: N. Haruka
17/03/2014 18:54 PM
Oh, really?

From: T. Makoto
To: N. Haruka
17/03/2014 18:56 PM
You don’t have to believe me now. I could always show you tomorrow.
After all… we do have all night, don’t we?

Haruka just stared at the screen as he felt his cheeks heat slightly. This guy had too much confidence.

His phone buzzed again.
From: T. Makoto
To: N. Haruka
17/03/2014 19:00 PM

What wouldn’t I give to see your blush right now?

Of course this only made his cheeks grow warmer. Deciding he needed a break from Tachibana and his… comments, he went to settings and turned off the sound and then turned off the screen.

He would deal with Tachibana later. Right now he had an essay of at least 2,500 words and the draft for the index of his thesis that was for the next week, and if he didn’t want to be freaking out about it and hurrying like he was now, he should really start today, at least just do a part of it.

A voice was heard through the loudspeakers of the train, announcing their arrival to the station.

Promptly standing up, Haruka took hold of one of the hangers and hold on as the train came to a stop so he wouldn’t fall. The door open and he waited a little so he could pass without bumping into anyone.

As he stepped out and started walking towards his home, he started thinking about where he could find the information he needed for his essay.

Internet would have to be his main source while his text book could offer some support but not enough to accomplish the minimum of words needed. He suppressed a sigh as he crossed the street towards the complex of apartments.

He walked just a little faster and soon enough he was in front of his door, turning the doorknob and already taking his shoes off while he dropped his bag at the entrance.

As he walked down the little hallway, he noticed the stains he had left when he stepped on some of his paintings two days before. He would clean it up later, because in that moment all he wanted was to take off his Academy’s uniform and indulge for half an hour on the tub before he started doing all of what he had to do.

He knew he ought to get something to eat, but he would worry about that later. The only thing that matter at the moment was getting to where the water was.

Swiftly making his way towards the bathroom, he discarded his clothes as soon as he went through the door and while he finished stripping, he turned on the faucet and warm water started filling the tub.

For a few moments, Haruka stood completely naked in the middle of the bathroom as he waited and steam started to fog his little mirror. He closed the door and when he noticed that the tub was half filled, he entered and a sigh of relief and contentment left his mouth.

It felt so good to be surrounded by water, being enveloped in its loving, kind and gentle embrace. He just felt so at peace. The tension he had building up all day seemed to melt out of his body, and
he relaxed against the opposite side of the faucet.  

He was so glad he had decided to rent an apartment with a bigger tub rather than a larger bedroom. At least this way he could spread his legs as far as they would go and still be pretty comfortable as he sat there.  

He opened his eyes and just stared at the ceiling. The lights of cars passing by could be seen flashing through the little window that was on the bath’s side.  

He looked to the front once again as he rested his head on the tub’s edge. There was no need for him to clean himself, as he had done that earlier when he had come back from university.  

As of now, he just wanted to be one with the water as he closed his eyes.  

For a few minutes everything was fine, nothing but his soft breathing could be heard in the small room, but then a green color flashed behind his closed eyelids.  

Haruka opened his eyes in surprise but didn’t so much as moved a muscle, he didn’t want to disrupt the water.  

Deciding that now would be a good time to get out, before his imagination got the better out him. He reached out for a towel on top of a little table besides the tub and stood up.  

Water ran down his body in rivulets until just little droplets covered his skin as if he was covered in little diamonds making him glow a little.  

Taking a step out, he started lazily drying his body and once he was almost completely dry, he wrapped the towel around his waist and then took another, smaller one, and while he used it to dry his hair, he walked towards his room.  

Pushing slightly the ajar door, he stepped in his bedroom and went to his drawer to take out a pair of pajama pants, boxers and a loose shirt. He unwrapped the towel from around his waist and put on the white boxers.  

He let the towel he was using to dry his hair fall onto his shoulders and pulled up the pajama pants. He then took the towel that was around his shoulders and threw it over to the bed so he could put on the shirt.  

It was a really old shirt with the fabric being really worn off, but he liked it the best out of all his shirts since it was comfortable and soft.  

He took both of the discarded towels and walked out of his room and into the bathroom once again, to pick up the clothes he had left there.  

Haruka dropped both towels into a basket that was by the sink and then dropped his clothes on the basket that was beside the one where he had left the towels. Once that was done, he went to the entrance to take his things so he could start with his essay.  

Picking up his bag, he walked down to his studio in which at the far end was a little desk with a laptop, a printer and various other things he usually used when making projects or homework for the university.  

Dropping the bag once again at his feet, he sat on the wood cushioned chair and turned on his laptop. The screen lit up and the main menu appeared. He clicked on the Word icon and a new document appeared in front of him.
He quickly opened the browser and as it loaded he took out his text book and notebook with all of the linings and things his essay needed to have.

A rapid look at the clock on the far right end of the screen let him know that it was almost 8:00 PM.

He opened his textbook and typed on the searching bar as the searching bar appeared on the laptop’s screen.

“Now, let’s see…”

Haruka slumped down on his desk as he finished doing his essay and sent it to the printer and the machine started doing its work.

He peeked at the clock and it indicated that it was 11:28 PM. He sighed as hard as he could.

It had taken longer that he had hoped and expected to finish the essay, but finally 2,756 words later, he was done and was free to sleep to his heart content.

He didn’t have to go to work tomorrow morning because it was his day off and his classes wouldn’t be starting until 3:30 PM, which left him with a whole heavenly morning of sleep.

He then remembered that he needed to call Nagisa, but preferred to text him instead. If only he could find his phone…

He looked under his book and notebook, all over his desk and on his bag but there was nothing. Well, maybe on his uniform.

Standing up, he made his way towards the bathroom and once there he took hold of his white uniform pant and started rummaging through his pockets.

He took out the little device and touched the button at the bottom that would bring the screen to life. He had 8 missed calls and 7 text messages.

He unlocked the screen and not surprisingly, all of the calls were from Nagisa as well as 4 text messages. He didn’t even bother opening Nagisa’s text for he knew what they would say. Something between the lines of ‘I can’t believe you didn’t call me, Haru-chan’ and ‘Why are you so mean to me? You could at least answered one of my calls’ or something like that.

Instead he opened the other messages, which he had a pretty good idea from who they were from.

From: T. Makoto
To: N. Haruka
17/03/2014 19:35 PM
Please, don’t be mad. I swear I will totally make it up to you.

Again, this guy had way too much confidence.

From: T. Makoto
To: N. Haruka
17/03/2014 21:37 PM
Either you’re asleep or left your phone somewhere or you don’t care.
But remember: Tomorrow. 7:30 PM. University’s main entrance.
Well, whatever the case I hope you have the most pleasant dreams.
Good night, Haruka.

‘Well...’ He thought. ‘At least he has manners.’
He scrolled down to the next message.

From: T. Makoto
To: N. Haruka
17/03/2014 22:02 PM
Don’t be late.

‘I take that back.’ Haruka thought with annoyance, but then the fact that he was going out tomorrow with Tachibana hit him.
His heartbeat quickened and he squeezed his phone a little bit harder than necessary.
Where would Tachibana take him? What did he actually know about him? What would Tachibana wear?
Oh god… what will Haruka wear?

He didn’t know anything about fashion or combinations or what you usually wore to a date… he hadn’t gone out to many before and he really was at a loss and to be quite honest….But it was what it was: a date.

Knowing that there was only one person who could actually help, but already regretting his choice. Haruka loosened his hold on his phone and made the screen come back to life with a few taps.

He pressed the little purple and white icon of a phone and started dialing. He was about to press ‘call’ but hesitated for just a moment, but there really wasn’t any other person he could call and ask for what he needed. Gathering his courage, he pressed the red button and raised the phone to his ear.

“Hello?” A drowsy, tired voice answered.

Haruka didn’t believe it for a second.

“Haru-chan! Hello! You didn’t call me as you said! I was waiting all afternoon-” Haruka cut him off mid-sentence.

“Nagisa listen, I have something I need your help with…”

Chapter End Notes

Edited by arawaweru :)

Hello lovely people, I'm here with a new chapter and beta! ^^

To be honest, I really liked how this turned out. I hope you guys did as well ;)

Remember, kudos make me happy and your comments always brighten my day and since my birthday is on Saturday, be sure to leave a comment because this is like a present from me to you and the best thing you could give me is a comment, because that is one of the main reason why I continue to write this, to see that people actually like what I write... Oh my god, you just don't know the happiness it gives me. I swear I'm not even joking, all the support you guys have given me just leave me speechless and I swear I love every single one of you who actually take the time to read what I write. I never imagined so many people would read this, because I seriously thought if I got to like... 50 hits it would be amazing and I would have felt like a celebrity XD

But seriously, thank you soo much to each and every one of you, and I hope you have a wonderful weekend <3

Remember that you can always contact me on twitter: @ArtistiqueR12

And I will stop now because if I don't this will probably really long (well, longer), since I'm getting kind of emotional :’p

Until next time! :3
Chapter 13

Chapter Summary

Tachibana was looking at him with a determined look on his face and he knew, just knew, what he was going to ask, and Haruka knew, just felt it in his bones, what his answer was going to be.

“Would you dance with me?” Tachibana asked and extended a hand towards Haruka.

Tipping his head back, he drank whatever was left of the wine before putting the cup back on top of the table and taking Tachibana’s hand and standing up.

“Yes.”

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

“HARU-CHAAN!”

Haruka grunted and moved deeper into the sheets, leaving only the top of his head visible.

“HARU-CHAAAAAN! OPEN THE DOOR!” More banging accompanied the voice. “I KNOW YOU ALREADY HEARD ME! C’MON OPEN THE DOOOOOR!” He just wanted to sleep a little, was that too much to ask? After all, he was still tired from last night.

“HARUUUUUUUUUUU! LET ME IN!” Great, now he was using that little whiny voice of his. Sighing as if he had lost all hope, Haruka moved the sheets aside and sat on the edge of the bed, while he tried to make himself wake up a little bit.

“HARUUUUUUUUU!” Sagging his shoulders in defeat, he stood up and made his way to the door, and when he opened the door, he was greeted with a punch to the chest.

“Finally! What took you so long, Haru-chan?” Nagisa rounded Haruka and entered the apartment, dragging a little suitcase behind him.

Haruka closed the door while he rubbed the place that Nagisa had hit him in his haste of knocking the door. Nagisa hadn’t apologized, but it wasn’t as if this surprised Haruka. Over the years, he had learned that his blonde friend didn’t waste time in things he didn’t see as necessary, entertaining, worth doing or things that didn't bring a personal gain.

He saw that Nagisa’s snickers were left carelessly at the entrance and just sighed.

Making his way towards the kitchen, where he knew Nagisa was, he took a seat at his little table, and just watched as Nagisa rummaged through the cupboard and took out a box of vanilla and strawberry cookies Haruka always had in store for him. Ripping the top of the box open, Nagisa took one out and started to eat it while he took the suitcase once again and prompted Haruka to follow him, and to take the box of cookies with him.

Standing up once again, he followed his little friend towards his bedroom, but just as he was about
to enter the room, he was stopped by Nagisa’s frown.

“Haru-chaan… how many times have I told you to make your bed right after you wake up?” Little crumbs of cookie adorned the sides of his little pouting mouth, so Haruka couldn’t really take him seriously.

Turning around, Nagisa was about to start straightening the sheets when he stopped himself and directed the fabric towards his nose, taking a sniff. Quickly turning his face away, he took the two sheets, tangled them and threw them across the room towards the corner. He then turned around and looked at Haruka straight in the eye.

“How long has it been since the last time you changed your bedsheets?” Haruka just shrugged because he really didn’t know, the last time was probably 3 or 4 months ago, and that was really something Nagisa didn’t have to know.

Sighing as if he was dealing with a preschooler who didn’t get that he had to color inside the line, and not outside of it, Nagisa shook his head.

“You really are a handful, aren’t you Haru-chan?” Haruka wanted to answer that he really wasn’t one to talk, but knew that there really was no use in denying it, so he just stood there looking at the smaller male in front of him.

He supposed that the best course of action was distraction, so he signaled the suitcase that Nagisa had been dragging around and then spoke. “What’s in there?”

Magenta eyes sparkled and Nagisa smiled as if he had just been given a present.

Picking the suitcase up, Nagisa opened the zipper to reveal an incredible amount of clothes that Haruka was almost sure shouldn’t fit in a place like that.

The blond started to un-pack and straighten every piece of clothing that was inside the suitcase, and soon, Haruka’s bed was filled with at least 10 types of different shirts, sweaters, jackets, pants and scarfs.

Once everything was laid out on the bed, Nagisa turned around and stared at Haruka with the mischievous eyes of an excited child.

Haruka just had time to gulp, before Nagisa took him by the arm and released an amused laugh.

“C’mon Haru-chaan! Just try this last one!” Haruka was currently locked up in the bathroom while Nagisa was trying to make him come out so he could use Haruka as his mannequin.
For the past hour and a half he had been trying different combinations of attires that went to things that he never used to ones that he would never use.

After the fifteenth combination had failed, Haruka had promptly made his way towards the bathroom, locked himself in and took a shower. It had already been at least 35 minutes since he entered the bathroom and at least 30 that Nagisa was standing at the other side of the door, telling him to come out and try some other thing.

He was now just soaking in the tub while Nagisa continued to bang on his door. He had already decided that he would use whatever he picked up first from his little wardrobe and whether he looked good or not, he wouldn’t care.

Nagisa had just made him tired and hadn’t bothered to listen to a thing he had to say on whether he liked what was being picked out for him or not.

Haruka knew he wouldn’t be able to stay in the bathroom for much longer. After all, it was almost time for him to go and head for the University, and he couldn’t afford to be late anymore. The paper he had been working on last night was way too important for him to not to turn it in and the first class he had that day was sketching, and the drawing he did that day would be worth the note of the other two times he had missed class.

“Nagisa, no. Stop.” He said while sighing once again and standing up from the tub and reaching out for a towel. He wanted to drag on the dreaded moment in which he would have to come out and confront the little blond demon that was outside.

“C’mon I already said I was sorry! I promise I will listen to you from here onwards, but please! Just try this last one!” Haruka rolled his eyes, because Nagisa should know by now that he won’t fall for his ‘sorry’ voice.

Haruka could hear him sighing from the other side of the door, but he just continued drying himself and then taking a smaller towel to dry his hair.

“I’m really sorry Haru-chan, it’s just… you really don’t have a sense of fashion…” Well, it wasn’t like he was that far off of the truth. It was just that he didn’t get why there were specific things that needed to go together and things that didn’t. If he wanted to use a yellow shirt with a pink sweater and some blue pants, so what?

“Just this last one. I promise this IS the last one. If you don’t like it, then I will let you be and won’t pester you to try on anything more. Okay? Just please try this on.” Haruka finished drying his hair and threw the little towel into one of the baskets that were beside the sink and then wrapped around his waist the towel he had been using for the rest of his body.

He considered his options for a second. What was one more set of clothes really? He could try them on and then tell Nagisa off if he didn’t like it, and the blond would have to leave him alone because he would be doing what he had asked of him. And if he didn’t approve of what his friend had picked out for him, he could wear his usual clothes and to hell with looking presentable.

Making up his mind, he unlocked the door and was met with two big and glassy magenta eyes that were begging him to please do as they told him.

“Last one.” Haruka said and then proceeded to cover his ears to protect them from the little victory scream Nagisa let out when he heard Haruka saying those words, and just like when he had started using Haruka as his doll, he took him by the arm and guided him to his room.
Haruka was surprised, because when he entered his bedroom, all of the clothes that had been covering every possible surface of the house had disappeared. Nagisa had probably folded them and put them back in the suitcase.

The only things that were still outside were a polyester long sleeved shirt with a neck in the form of a formal shirt, a pair of black skinny trousers, a black button-down jacket with two bags on the front and his all-time black converse.

The combination was plain, simple and to be quite honest, perfect. It didn’t look like he wasn’t going to be able to breathe, like some of the pants Nagisa had made him try, and the shirt wasn’t as extravagant or… peculiar, as others he had been forced to try by said person.

“Out.” Was all Haruka said and before Nagisa could start complaining, he added. “Or I won’t try it on, and I swear I’ll wear the first thing that crosses my path.” He turned just in time to see Nagisa closing his mouth and pout, but doing what Haruka had told him to.

“Call me as soon as you’re done.” He said, and made his way out of the room, closing the door behind him but not locking it.

Haruka watched as the door closed and then let the towel drop to the floor to make his way over to his underwear drawer, so he could take out a pair of boxers, a white t-shirt that he always used underneath any shirt he used, and some socks.

He left the socks and t-shirt at the side of the clothes and put on the boxers. He then put on the white t-shirt and picked up the gray shirt and just stared at it for a few seconds before putting it on. He then slid the trousers on and was pleased when he noticed that they were made of a thin, elastic fabric that was really comfortable to move in unlike some jeans and other types of pants that Nagisa had made him wear.

Next, he took the socks and put them on, and then took his converse and started tying them. He was glad he could use them. Of course the sole was completely smooth from how much he had worn them, but they were in pretty good condition and he always felt more at ease whenever he wore them.

Lastly, he picked up the jacket but didn’t put it on. He wasn’t cold but he would take it with him if the weather decided to give a turn for the worst. Nowadays, the weather was kind of crazy.

Haruka stretched his arms in front of himself as well as his legs, and was pleased to notice that none of the clothes were uncomfortable or too tight or too loose on some places. They were just right.

“Come in.” He called out to Nagisa and he hadn’t even finished talking when the door flung open and Nagisa’s eyes just widened, and then he was being dragged out of the room and towards the bathroom, and in the next second he was looking at himself in the mirror.

The shirt attached to him like a second skin and accentuated his slim figure as well as the trousers, or what he could see of them, and the best thing was that he didn’t feel out of place or like he was trying to look like somebody he wasn’t, like with the other attires Nagisa had given him. It was still him, plain and simple Haruka.

And he couldn’t have been happier.

“You look amazing, but you need to leave now if you don’t want to be late for Uni.” He turned to look at Nagisa that was regarding him like a proud parent would and Haruka felt as if his heart was
He turned around and as he was crossing the bathroom’s threshold, he lifted a hand and placed it on Nagisa’s shoulder. “Thank you.” He whispered and before he could give a step forward, Nagisa was nuzzling his side and hugging him while he giggled happily and talked in a chirpy tone.

“You’re very welcome, Ha-ru-chaaaaan!”

Haruka was walking the two blocks that it took to get to the university and, meanwhile, he remembered what Nagisa had told him.

_He had, of course, known that Nagisa had been holding back since he entered the apartment, but once he was walking out the door, with the jacket tucked safely under his arm and his backpack over one shoulder and was just about to say goodbye to him, Nagisa said:_

_“Don’t think I have forgotten about before, Haru-chan. When you come back I want a full report on where you went, who you were with, what did you do and most importantly, if they were hot or not.” He had then pushed Haruka out of the apartment and just as he was turning back to go back in and take his keys, they were thrown at him and he had barely caught them before they hit them on the face. He had looked up to say something to Nagisa but he had been with a hand on the doorknob and was directing Haruka an angelic smile that he didn’t believe for a second. “Have fun on your date!”_

_And then he had closed the door on his face._

After that, the word ‘date’ had been rounding his head non-stop and had caused him to almost trip with his feet twice while he was walking down the stairs to get to the street.

He hadn’t been able to think much about it and just thinking about it was making his stomach feel full of… butterflies? No, that was such a crappy metaphor. More like… killer bees.

He was starting to feel kind of bad and his head was swarming with thoughts that he couldn’t even begin to identify. He grabbed the strap of his backpack and started trying to breathe through his nose. He concentrated on inhaling and exhaling and bit by bit he was able to empty his mind a little.
Before he even knew it, he was at the front door of the University and he watched as students walked by in a hurry to get to their classes. Haruka took out his phone and looked at the hour.

3:23 PM.

He sighed gratefully and started walking towards his sketching classroom. His ‘History of Arts’ class wasn’t until an hour and a half more and right now, he needed to concentrate on getting to his class, doing a great drawing and then he could do or think whatever else he wanted.

Picking up his pace a little, he reached his class and sat at the front of the room. He started taking out his pencil case and his sketching pad and saw as the classroom started to fill.

Of course, when he had walked in, some people had already been there, but it was in the last five minutes when everyone started coming, some in groups and others alone.

The bell rang and the professor entered the classroom and greeted everyone. Some answered, some did not, but the professor seemed to pay them no mind.

“Very well, today’s class will be ‘Free Sketching’.” Haruka smiled inwardly. “You can draw whatever you want in whichever technique you want, but it has to have at least four different elements and the background has to have as much detail as possible.”

He looked at everyone in the room before he spoke again. “You have all of the period to finish this assignment. You can’t talk among yourselves and you can’t consult me. If you can’t draw something, change it, and if you don’t know how to do something, do another thing. You can listen to music or look on the internet for a reference but I want the image you used to be sent to my email before the period ends, if you copy the image then you’ve got a zero.” He once again paused and some grunts could be heard around the room.

“You may start now.”

Haruka paid him no more attention and quickly took out his phone and his earphones. Most times he wouldn’t listen to music while he drew or painted, but right now, his mind was buzzing with distracting thoughts and he wasn’t able to concentrate on anything.

Untangling the earphones, which seemed to tangle themselves on purpose every time he wanted to use them, he hastily connected them to his phone and the lit the screen so he could enter his music. Not bothering in selecting a specific song, he just pressed ‘Shuffle’ and jazz music started playing as he blasted the volume.

He opened his sketch pad and took out a B2 pencil and started making lines and doing basic forms of people.

Since the professor had said that they were free to draw whatever they wanted, an image had invaded his mind, and he had been more than eager to start drawing.

He started doing the basic form of a chandelier on the ceiling of the room, and then grabbed and H2 pencil as he carelessly discarded the B2. Lines upon lines were being made and the side of his hand was starting to turn gray as his hand moved across the paper of his pad.

He extended his hand and reached for the eraser and once he was able to correct his mistake, he
started working on the detail of the dresses and suits of the dancing people.

Little groups of women chatting in one corner and men drinking at a bar.

A man that had dropped his drink stood on the right side of the page and some of the people that were near were laughing at him. The look of utter sorrow on the man’s face as he looked at the liquid and shattered pieces on the floor was still vivid in Haruka’s mind.

His hand was moving at an uncharacteristic speed and with each new line drawn, the picture became more and more alive as if graphite people were actually dancing and the liquor of the falling glass was actually moving and spreading across the marble floor of the room.

Men and women enjoying themselves in the bliss of alcohol and anonymity, hiding their true selves behind a mask. And the chandelier on the top illuminated the scene, casting light upon everyone, not letting them hide completely.

His hand was getting kind of cramped and by the time he was almost finished, his hand was of a deep silver/gray color instead of the white of his usual pale skin.

Haruka lifted his pencil and noticed how high the volume of the music he was listening to actually was. Taking the earbuds off, he pressed the button to light up the screen and then paused the music that was playing.

He sagged back against the chair and just admired his work once last time before he closed the pad and stood up to give it to the professor.

When the professor saw him coming, he took his eyes off of the book he was reading and simply said. “Leave it on top of the others and you’re free to go to your next class, or you can just stay in your seat, but not talking to anyone.”

Haruka just nodded and left the pad on top of three others that were on the upper right corner of the desk. He made his way back towards the table he had been working on and started packing his stuff.

Almost all of his pencils were scattered over the surface of the table and all around were leftovers of his eraser from all the times he had had to change something. Once he was done packing all of his things, he slung his backpack over his right shoulder and made his way to the door and directed himself towards the bathroom.

He needed to wash his hand. Well, both of them.

Haruka pushed open the bathroom’s door and wasn’t surprised when he saw that no one was inside. He made his way over to one of the sinks and turned on the faucet and before watering his hand, he took a little soap and started rubbing his hands together to get some of the graphite left on his hand to come off.

When he rinsed them, the water was of a grayish color and as he looked up and saw himself in the mirror, he noticed some fingers marks on his face.

He kind of wanted to laugh at himself, because every time he painted or drew something, he ended up getting himself dirty somewhere else that wasn’t his hands. Shaking his head at himself, he took a piece of paper and dried his hands.

As he was exiting the bathroom, the bell rang and dozens of students started coming out of their lectures.
Haruka didn’t want to get stuck in the human traffic that always formed after the bell rang, and so he started walking a little faster than most to get to his next classroom.

“…and so with this, we conclude today’s class.” Sighs of relief could be heard all over the classroom as the professor said those last words.

Haruka had been in a state in which he doze off for a moment just to be suddenly woken up a few seconds later.

Generally he was able to last through all of his ‘History of Arts’ classes, but with how little sleep he had gotten last night and Nagisa coming to his apartment earlier than expected, he was starting to feel tired.

“Don’t forget to leave all of your essays on my desk before you leave.” The little woman which imparted the class went behind the desk and started arranging some papers. “If you didn’t bring it today, you can still turn it in tomorrow but with half the score.”

The bell rang and it was the most beautiful sound Haruka had ever heard.

“You’re dismissed.” Chatter erupted as soon as the bell stopped ringing and the only thing Haruka wanted was to leave already. He took out the binder in which his essay was from inside his backpack and opened it to check its content.

Once he went through it and made sure everything was in order, he stood up and left the binder on the professor’s desk and turned around to take his stuff.

Picking up his notebook and his pens, he closed his backpack and walked out of the class and as soon as he stepped out, his stomach started making little flip motions.

He took out his cellphone and checked the hour.

7: 26 PM

The reason why he had been dozing off and waking up every five seconds, was because every time he closed his eyes, green eyes and a mischievous smile would invade his mind.

The killer bees from before were appearing once again and as he exited the University he noticed that the weather had gotten colder and decided to put on his jacket. He took his phone once again.
There was no sign of Tachibana and even if he was coming he didn’t knew in what he would be coming. Haruka huffed.

“Didn’t you tell me not to be late?” He thought out loud and just then, a silver Accord parked in front of him. Haruka just stared at it until a tinted window was rolled down and Tachibana’s voice was heard.

“Pick up service for Nanase-san?” Haruka crouched down and was greeted with a half-smile and dancing green eyes.

He gulped and stood straight once again.

“Are you going to let me in or…?” A click was heard and the door on the side in which Haruka was standing, opened.

Taking a step back, he pushed the door open wider and stepped in the car while he placed his backpack at his feet. As soon as he closed the door, the car started moving and soon they were driving in Tokyo’s traffic.

Haruka accommodated himself and put on the seatbelt. Once he was secured he turned to look at Tachibana, who had his stare trained on the traffic but wasn’t wearing his seatbelt.

“Do you always drive like that?” He asked before he could stop himself and Tachibana turned to look at him before he looked back towards the road, but this time with a little smile grazing his lips.

“Sometimes, why?” He was talking in a tone that let Haruka know that he was entertained. At what? Haruka didn’t know.

Haruka just shrugged and was rewarded with a little chuckle, before Tachibana spoke once again.

“Now that we’re done discussing my driving habits. Would you care for argentine food?”

And the smile on his tone was not lost to Haruka.
They had driven in relative silence the whole ride, only broken by the soft tango music that was playing on the stereo, or the trivial questions Tachibana asked him and that he answered curtly.

They were in a part of the city that he had never been to before.

Fancy restaurants lined and crowded the streets on both sides and people walked in and out of them in an almost constant measure.

It was kind of suffocating and overwhelming.

Turning the car, Tachibana parked in front of a restaurant called ‘Palermo’. The letters were white in a cursive calligraphy and the background was a dark blue color. The entrance was framed by big windows and there were a few low stairs with black railings on either side. The door was open and a soft yellow light could be seen coming from inside.

The sound of his door being opened made him jump a little and then a hand was being offered to him to help him out of the car.

“Would you care to join me?” Haruka was really starting to hate the smile that seemed to accompany Tachibana’s voice every time he talked, but he took his hand nonetheless and refused to answer him.

Once outside, Tachibana looked at him with green, dancing eyes and Haruka just turned his head so he wouldn’t have to look at him.

They walked towards the entrance and were soon greeted by a pretty woman, probably in her late twenties, wearing a black dress and her hair styled in a messy bun at the top of her hair, asking them if they had a reservation.

“Yes.” Tachibana answered charmingly. “The reservation has to be on the name of ‘Tachibana Makoto’.” He finished with a smile. The woman seemed a little dazed for a few seconds before she blushed slightly and started looking at her list almost frantically.

Haruka rolled his eyes and Tachibana winked at him.

“I found it. This way please.” She gestured for them to follow her and her smile was more than a little flirtatious. Haruka decided to ignore her face and just follow her.

As they made their way deeper into the restaurant, he noticed that the place was bigger than what he had originally thought, because it was actually quite spacious. Everything was made of wood, from the ceiling to the floor, and the medium size stage at the far corner, which made it a little tricky to walk since the soles of his shoes were plain smooth.

The tables were lines in a circle which left a big space in the middle of the room. It seemed odd but whatever. All of the tables were of a black metal with a glass surface on top and a white tablecloth placed upon that, and at the center was a little candle inside a little vase, and the plates were framed by cutlery and a napkin folded in the form of a lotus flower inside the cup of wine that was beside the plates. It looked beautiful and elegant, and he suddenly felt out of place.

There weren’t many people beside them in the restaurant but they were all dressed in really nice clothing. A couple who were sitting by the stage consisted of the man wearing a black and impeccable suit and the woman wearing a really nice and short red dress. He knew it was only a matter of time before more people came and he knew they were all going to be dressed in a similar
fashion.

He snapped out of his thoughts when he heard a chair scraping against the wooden floor.

“Would you like to take a seat?” Tachibana was looking at him while he maintained the chair in a motion that prompted Haruka to seat down.

Hiding his blush behind his bangs, he made to the seat and Tachibana pushed it so Haruka could seat properly.

As Tachibana made his way towards his seat, Haruka checked how he was dressed.

Tachibana was wearing a white formal shirt with a gray three button vest and grey pants. His tie was of an emerald color that made his eyes stand out and Haruka suddenly wanted to have a sketching pad so he could draw him. His sandy brown hair was disheveled a little, just like the two previous times he had seen him, and Haruka thought how unfair it was when even if he wasn’t completely neat, he still looked like he belonged in a magazine or a really important business company.

Tachibana took a seat and then lifted a hand to get the attention of one of the waitresses.

An amiable looking brunette made her way towards them. She was dressed almost the same way as the woman who had greeted them at the entrance, the difference being that this girl had a little white half apron in front of her black dress and was wearing some enormous high heels. She smiled, a red lipped smile, and then spoke.

“Good night, my name is Angela and I’ll be your waitress today. What would you like to start with?” She took a little white pad from the front of her apron and placed a pen on top of it to start writing as soon as they started talking.

“Nanase-san, would you care to share a cup of wine with me or do you want something else?” Tachibana was looking straight at him and because Haruka felt like a little bit of alcohol could do him good, he just nodded. Tachibana smiled and then turned to look at the waitress.

“A bottle of ‘Chacra 55 Pinot Noir 2012, please.” Angela started to furiously scribble on her pad and then talked again.

“Would you like an appetizer or would you like to directly order your main dish?” Again, she was already set to start writing but Tachibana just shook his head.

“Could you please get us the wine while we decide on what to do?” He smiled almost shyly at her and Angela beamed.

Again, annoying.

“I’ll be back with your wine in a minute. Please look at the menu and call me when you’re ready to order.” She directed one last radiant smile at Tachibana and then turned around to go and get their order.

“So, what would you like to do? Appetizer or main dish?” Tachibana extended a menu towards Haruka while he scanned a menu of his own.

Haruka took the offered item and opened it on the first page and started reading through it.

Various types of meats and salads were what he could find, and almost all of them had some weird
name in what he could only guess was Spanish. He really was at a loss and he didn’t know what to do. The only things he could kind of identify were some of the names of the wines on one side of the menu. Haruka looked up from all of the confusing names and found that Tachibana was looking at him.

“So, appetizer or main dish?” He asked politely.

“Appetizer.” His stomach hadn’t stopped doing back flips the whole while.

“Okay. Meat or chicken? Or do you prefer something lighter?” Tachibana asked him with a raised eyebrow while he scanned the page where the appetizers were.

Haruka wasn’t an expert in meat or stuff like that, but even he knew that red wine was always better accompanied with meat.

“Meat.” Haruka answered simply.

“Any special ingredient you would like it with?” Tachibana looked up to see his face.

Haruka shrugged and just said. “Surprise me.”

And Tachibana’s face lit up.

Raising his right arm, Tachibana made a sign with his hand for the waitress to come and all the way she walked to their table, the flirty smile never left her face. She was also carrying a bottle of wine.

“Yes? Have you decided what you want yet?” She asked excitedly as she poured some into Tachibana’s cup and then did the same with Haruka’s.

“Yes, we would like to start with an appetizer.” Tachibana explained while he smiled softly at her. The waitress left the bottle on top of the table and took out her pad. “We want the Puyaso cut with chimichurri and some bread with butter, please.”

The waitress, whom he already forgotten the name of, scribbled on her pad as Tachibana spoke. Meanwhile, Haruka picked up his cup and made the maroon but shinny liquid swirl.

He really wasn’t interested in seeing how Tachibana and the waitress flirted, so he preferred to train his attention on the wine. It had a good consistency and the color was alluring, almost like if it was liquid velvet.

He raised the glass to his nose and gave a little sniff. It had a smell that evoked the image and flavor of red candied dried fruits. It also had an earthy edge combined with some kinds of minerals. It was kind of hypnotic, really.

Slowly, he directed the cup to his lips and took a short sip. Almost instantly, a juicy and rich flavor erupted on his tongue. It was rich and it kind of felt like caramel, but it was perfectly balanced with a slight bitter flavor, and he could taste the faraway taste of the tannin that added a pleasant texture to it.

He was about to take another sip, when he felt as if someone was observing him, but instead of taking the cup away, he directed the blood like liquid to his lips and turned his eyes to the front where he was met with an intense green gaze regarding him.

Haruka almost dropped his cup as he locked eyes with Tachibana and those goddamned green eyes
drilled his sapphire ones. He took a bigger gulp this time around and some of the liquid escaped his mouth. He set the cup down and not bothering on picking up a napkin, and with Tachibana’s eyes still scrutinizing his every move, he decided to give Tachibana something to train his attention on.

Ever so slowly, he opened his mouth, almost as if he was going to speak, but instead of words coming out, his tongue sneaked out and licked at the right corner of his mouth and just as he had thought, Tachibana’s gaze dropped to his mouth and followed every motion he made with his tongue.

Suddenly Tachibana’s eyes snapped up and stared directly to Haruka and Haruka’s breath hitched. Tachibana was just opening his mouth to speak when a chirpy voice interrupted him.

“Here’s your appetizer. Would you like me to serve you more wine, sir?” The waitress had just left plates with very good looking pieces of meat. There was a little white vase with a green like thing, that looked kind of weird but that Haruka would probably end up trying and a little basket was just beside it with some pieces of bread with melted butter on top.

Haruka rapidly took the napkin and whipped the side of his mouth. He then nodded and the waitress took the bottle of wine and served him some more. Haruka muttered a really low ‘Thanks’ and she smiled politely at him. She then turned to look at Tachibana.

“Are you ready to order yet or do you need some more time?” She was smiling brightly at Tachibana but said person had his eyes still trained on Haruka and just said distractedly.

“No, no, give us some more time… please.” He added the last part almost as if he was trying to grasp at some random thought. The waitress just made a little bowing stance and left.

Haruka made a really big effort on not looking directly at Tachibana, the burn of that intense stare just a few moments ago, still making his face feel hot.

He took his fork and picked up a little piece of meat to then submerge it into the green thing that was on a side dish. He looked around as he directed the meat towards his mouth and was able to appreciate that the restaurant was pretty much full.

At what point had so many people come? Almost every table was occupied by couples or groups of people that were obviously just coming from work. Men in suits and women with pretty short dresses or office clothes were chatting and laughing.

The thing was that it almost seemed as if they were waiting for something. There was this kind of expectant, jittery and electric mood that coated the atmosphere around everyone.

Deciding that he needed a little bit more of wine before he could taste his appetizer, because his throat felt kind of dry all of a sudden, he put down his fork and lifted the cup and took a long, big gulp. As soon as he finished drinking, a voice could be heard from a microphone.

“Hello, can you all hear me?” The woman that greeted them at the entrance was standing at the center of the stage with lights shining up on her and her question was followed by affirmations of the people at various tables.

Her smile grew wider. “Great! So as you all know, Friday nights are really special here at Palermo.” Her words were followed by some excited cheers and she laughed amused.

“Yes, what you all have been waiting for is about to begin! So please welcome our special guest of tonight!” Her voice was now more excited and lively. “Formed by some of the most talented musicians of Argentina and Uruguay, a group which its popularity has only gone up as time passes
by.” She made a dramatic pause and it seemed as if every single person in the restaurant was holding their breath. “It’s an honor to present to you: BAJOFONDO!”

Most of the people started applauding and cheering, some just clapped and other just stared at them. As she finished talking, a group of men started entering the stage from the left side of it and they positioned themselves in front of various instruments.

The woman started talking once again and Haruka served himself another cup and started drinking. “And now, please choose a partner and let’s speak with our bodies instead of our mouths!” Everyone cheered and rapidly, couples started making their way towards the center of the room.

So that’s why the tables were pushed against the walls. Haruka had thought that it was just because and not because there was an actual reason behind it. He was still holding the cup to his lips and the sweet smell of what was left of the wine in it was making his head swim.

Suddenly, something blocked the lights from in front of him and he looked up, still holding the cup.

Tachibana was looking at him with a determined look on his face and he knew, just knew, what he was going to ask, and Haruka knew, just felt it in his bones, what his answer was going to be.

“Would you dance with me?” Tachibana asked and extended a hand towards Haruka.

Tipping his head back, he drank whatever was left of the wine before putting the cup back on top of the table and taking Tachibana’s hand and standing up.

“Yes.”

Tachibana smiled and Haruka could feel his heartbeat speeding up.

They made their way towards the ‘dance floor’, Tachibana’s hand still clasping Haruka’s smaller one and Haruka was grateful, because as they walked he kind of felt as if he was going to fall. He then noticed that at some point, Tachibana had rolled his sleeves up and loosened his tie a bit.

They integrated the semi-circle that everyone else had formed and assumed positions. Tachibana placed his hand on his left side and Haruka immediately put his right hand on Tachibana’s left shoulder and then Haruka clasped his right hand with Tachibana’s left.

Haruka opened his legs a little forming a little ‘v’ and Tachibana placed his right foot in between Haruka’s legs while he took a step back with his other foot. All that was left now, was to wait for the music to start. They both turned around and then the voice of the violinist could be heard through the microphone. He was talking in English, but what he was saying wasn’t that hard, so Haruka could understand everything that he was saying.

“We hope that you enjoy yourselves tonight, and thank you for the opportunity.” He talked with a really thick accent and as soon as he finished talking everyone reassumed positions.

Haruka turned to look up at Tachibana and emerald eyes were looking down at him with some kind of challenging edge.

Haruka’s mind cleared for a second and while he knew that Tachibana was going to be the one leading their dance, but if he thought that Haruka would let him do whatever he wanted, Tachibana had another thing coming. Just as that thought crossed his mind, the bandoneon started playing and the elegant sound of the violin cut through the air.
One second they were static, the next, they were practically floating. Haruka was glad that the soles of his converse were as smooth as they were, because it made it all the more easier to slide on the wooden floor.

Tango was something you didn’t learn, you felt it and then moved your body according to the emotions the music gave you. They were now making a backwards walk.

It was all about the turning, tossing, feeling, touching, hearing, beating and any other sense or action that you could incorporate and then you’d translate that into dancing.

Tachibana’s steps were firm and powerful, Haruka moved and slid his feet with grace and speed. Tachibana suddenly made a cut and Haruka was almost thrown off balance but was able to regain his equilibrium fast enough and used the impulse he had left to take Tachibana’s hand and push himself against Tachibana’s chest while doing a fluid swirl that ended with Tachibana’s right arm wrapped around Haruka’s abdomen and Haruka right hand tangled in Tachibana’s hair.

The rhythm was different from traditional tango music, this had an electronic sound because of the addition of drums and a base, but the all-time sound of the contrabass, violin and piano made it all the more powerful.

Haruka disentangled himself from Tachibana and encircled him while he moved with deliberate and long steps. His hand moving over Tachibana’s abdomen until he had circled him and was standing in front of him once again, moving his hand upwards to trace the outline of his green tie.

Suddenly, Haruka’s hand was being taken and he was swirling with the help of a hand on his hip. They were turning and walking, then they were making cuts and swirling again.

One second he was in Tachibana’s arms and the next he was being turned and then he was opposing Tachibana’s advance with a twirl.

Haruka stopped his spinning by hooking his right leg with Tachibana’s left and then he wasn’t even touching the floor and Tachibana’s left arm was securely gripping his middle not letting him fall and they were making an eight turn.

When Tachibana lowered himself a little, Haruka took the opportunity and while Tachibana was still a little crouched, he pressed the right side of his face to the crook of Tachibana’s neck and breathed against it while he swayed his hips to the sound of the violin and the piano.

Tachibana crossed an arm through his front and made him take a little step back, so Haruka was practically rubbing himself against his front side in a very intimate and fluid movement. He could feel every single of Tachibana’s muscles through the thin fabric of his shirt and his body temperature went up a few degrees.

When they were both standing normally again, Tachibana took both of Haruka’s hips and anticipating what he was about to do, Haruka took impulse and jumped.

Haruka didn’t know if the music was still playing or not, and didn’t really care to be honest. All he could hear was the rush of blood in his ears, and the only things he could feel were the beating of his heart in an erratic dance inside his chest and two strong hands on his hips.

Tachibana lifted him up above his head and Haruka arched his back in a graceful arch and extended his arms and lifted a leg while Tachibana made a slow turn. Tachibana then let go of Haruka and Haruka prepared his arms and legs so Tachibana could make his catching easier.

He wrapped his arms around Tachibana’s neck when he felt himself being caught in strong arms,
and as he buried his face in the side of Tachibana’s neck, he could smell the scent of Tachibana’s
cologne and feel the slight cover of sweat that had formed over his skin.

And while he was being gently lowered to the ground and he opened his legs to make a split, he
tensed his arms around Tachibana’s neck and tipped his head back so he could look at his face, and
was met with blown pupils and eyes that had one of the most dazed expressions he had ever seen.

Tachibana lowered his face and his breath ghosted over Haruka’s lips. One of his hands was on
Haruka’s hip propping him up, and then Haruka was being lifted again and was standing with his
hand tangled deep in brown locks while his other hand rested on Tachibana’s shoulder and both of
Tachibana’s hands were on either side of his hips.

“Makoto.” Haruka whispered breathlessly.

“Haruka.” Tachibana answered in the same enchanted tone Haruka had used.

Haruka had at some point lowered his eyes to Tachibana’s lips and as he looked up once again, he
felt himself lose his balance. The combination of his racing heart and what was left of the wine
coursing through his veins was making him dizzy.

He was already preparing himself for the fall, when he felt himself being bent and a hand coming
to rest on the back of his neck and an arm being wrapped around his back.

He had apparently closed his eyes, because when he opened them, everything was green.

A brilliant green that consumed his every thought. Both of his hands, that had been dangling
awkwardly by his sides, came to caress the handsome face in front of him, and while Tachibana,
ever so slowly, straightened them up once again, Haruka continued to admire him. And then their
foreheads were touching and Haruka was still framing Tachibana’s face with his hands, and just
when Haruka was tilting his head upwards and Tachibana was moving his face downwards, the
clapping of someone made him come out of his daze.

Haruka looked around and noticed that the dance floor was empty and Tachibana and him were
standing in the middle of it. The clap had come from a girl with a blue dress and as he looked
around, he noticed that everyone was looking at them with an expression that made it seem as if
they were in some kind of trance.

Apparently, they hadn’t been the only ones in a kind of hypnotic state, because as more people
seemed to snap out of whatever had come over them, more and more people started applauding and
cheering. Some even whistled and Haruka was forced to untangle himself from Tachibana’s
embrace by pushing a little against the taller man’s chest.

Haruka’s face was hot and the embarrassment he was feeling made him want to run away, but a
hand firmly holding his own prevented him from doing so.

He looked up, and the smile that was adorning Tachibana’s face made it worth it, the
embarrassment he was feeling, the swimming of his head and the unsteady feeling that prevailed.

Because the look he was giving Haruka was that of a man totally enthralled and amazed by
something or someone, and the excitement and giddiness of knowing that he was the receiver of
such an expression, from such an interesting character, made Haruka feel almost as if he was
floating.

Okay maybe the wine had something to do with the floating part.
But as he took a step towards Tachibana, and he wrapped an arm around Haruka’s back so they both bowed at the crowd that was cheering for them, while he was crouching he turned to look at the man beside him, and as he gave Haruka an outstanding and perfect smile that made the corners of his eyes crinkle and all of his teeth visible, well…

Haruka couldn’t really help but smile just as brightly himself.

Chapter End Notes

Edited by arawaweru :D

Hello lovely AO3 people, I hope you're having a great week so far ^^

New update! To be honest, I didn't mean for it to be so long, because while I was writing it, I thought I wouldn't even get to the +3,000 mark, but then... BOOM! I ended up writing 8,324 words and 19 typed pages /\ Hope you don't mind?
Anyway, I'm happy that this is as long as it is, because I don't think I will be able to update in at least 3 more weeks :( It's, that I have some big tests coming up at school and I really need to pass *cough f!ck math and physics cough* So, hopefully this will make up for a bit of it...?

Sooo... did you like it? Did you hate? Was it good or should I be banned from using the Internet? I swear I live for the comments you leave, because they are so sweet and I love seeing that someone commented because they just make my day :) Kudos, are very welcome too because they let me know that you like this story ;)

So until next time, and I'll read you soon!

(PS. Extra points and a cookie to whoever gets the 'Beautiful Creatures' reference ;) )
Chapter 14

Chapter Summary

Haruka could feel his cheeks warming and his heartbeat picking up as he remembered more and more about what had happened. He grabbed the washbasin on both sides with his hands and leaned his head against the mirror in front of him.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

There was a dull ache on the back of his head as he started to claw his way out of the mental fog that had settled upon him.

Haruka could hear clacking sound of plates hitting one another and the sizzling of something being grilled in the kitchen.

He wanted it to stop.

Haruka wanted to go back to sleep and for the light drumming on his head to go away. It was as if little needles were being pushed into his scalp, and he knew that the moment he opened his eyes, the pain would only grow stronger, and he would have to drink a liter of water and take some painkillers.

His mind was already half awake, but he refused to cross that thin line between consciousness and sleep.

With that in mind, Haruka pushed the cover over and above his head, effectively cocooning himself and giving a long and satisfied exhalation, but instead of the floral scent of his detergent or the soft feeling of his sheets, what filled his nostrils and touched his fingertips was a musky aroma, new and manly, and the feel of something smoother than cotton. A scent he remembered all too well, from last night’s events.

Haruka eyes shot open and he sat bolt upright, making himself dizzy and consequently, causing him to thump back down onto his pillow. He hand massaged his temples as he willed the sharp pain on both sides of his head. He inhaled and exhaled deeply, trying to regulate his breathing as he closed his eyes.

Suddenly, he heard a plate hitting the floor and breaking, the sound only making his head pulse and flinch visibly. Deciding that he would eventually have to get out of bed, Haruka slowly opened his eyes, and once he was greeted by the ceiling of his little bedroom, he started to sit up just as slowly as he had opened his eyes. Once fully sitting on his bed, he rubbed his hands once again over his face and moved to the side, so he was sitting on the edge of the bed.

He looked at his bedside table and was surprised to find a glass full of water and two painkillers. Already knowing who had put them there, Haruka promptly took the glass of water and the painkillers and downed the little white pills in one go. His throat felt awfully dry and he drank the water greedily, even letting a little bit of it out of his mouth and into his shirt.
Haruka emptied the glass and put it back on top of the bedside table. He yawned and stretched a little, thanking whatever being existed above that any kind of medicine he took had a fast effect on him, or maybe it was just psychological, but either way, he could already feel the headache receding and even though his throat still felt like if he hadn’t drank a drop of water in five years, his head was clearer and the piercing needles had morphed into a dull ache.

Blinking a few times, Haruka looked around on his bed and his eyes stopped roaming the mess of sheets when they landed on a black coat… a coat that was way too big to be his and that he was sure he hadn’t seen before.

Slowly, almost suspiciously, as if the inoffensive piece of clothing would catch fire or explode or something of the sort, Haruka extended a hand and grabbed it. He looked at it and decided that, effectively, it wasn’t his. It was at least two sizes too big and he would never spend his money in something as expensive as a silk coat.

Taking the garment with both hands, he examined it more closely while he inched his face closer to the fine fabric. Even when he had his face at least a good 20 cm away from it, the scent he had smelled earlier reached his nose and wrapped around his head.

It was like no other, and without really meaning to, he dipped his nose into the soft fabric and closed his eyes. It smelled like some kind of cologne, the faraway scent of something newly bought and another thing he couldn’t quite place. It was hypnotizing and his head was starting to swim again, but this time it wasn’t because of the headache that had almost disappeared.

“Haru-chan?” Haruka jumped and promptly let go of the jacket while he turned to see Nagisa standing at his door with a raised eyebrow and a little knowing smile adorning his face. Haruka could feel his cheeks burning and decided to look away and shove the sheets aside, effectively hiding the piece of fabric.

Haruka stood up and started making his way over to the bathroom, passing Nagisa as if he wasn’t even there.

Once inside the little room, he turned on the faucet of the washbasin and reached out for his toothbrush and toothpaste so he could wash his teeth and get rid of the feeling of having been dead or in hibernation out of his mouth. While he brushed his teeth, he tried to remember how in the world he had ended up with that jacket, and so he decided to make a small retrospective. It wasn’t really necessary because almost instantly, a name flashed through his mind and his hand stopped.

‘Tachibana…’ That’s right, he had gone out with Tachibana last night. He quickly made a recount of what happened the night before.

Tachibana had picked him up at the University’s entrance and they had gone to an Argentinian restaurant. He remembered feeling slightly annoyed by the waitress’ flirty behavior but decided not to dwell on where the annoyance came from. He hadn’t known what to order because he wasn’t able to understand a damn thing of what it said and had told Tachibana to order for him.

‘Okay, that’s fine.’ Haruka thought while he sighed, seeing that he had done nothing out of the ordinary. He kept searching through his memories.

Tachibana had then ordered wine, something with a weird name that made his head start to ache by trying to remember the name. The wine had been exquisite and before he had known it, Haruka had taken 3 cups and then…

‘Oh no… Oh god, please don’t…’ Bits and pieces were flooding his mind, and as images flashed
through his brain, he started to feel dizzy again.

Memories of an electronic beat, bodies moving in sync as the music played in the background, dancing while twirling, twirling while dancing, a hypnotic moment, the wine coursing through his veins making him bold and every single time, the color green monopolizing his mind.

Haruka could feel his cheeks warming and his heartbeat picking up as he remembered more and more about what had happened. He grabbed the washbasin on both sides with his hands and leaned his head against the mirror in front of him.

He couldn’t believe what he had done. He had learned how to dance Tango because Nagisa had dragged him over to it with the pretense that they ‘didn’t do enough things together’ even though they saw each other almost every day at the coffee shop. Haruka had tried to convince… that person of going with him but he had dismissed it with a derogatory shrug and saying that it dancing was ‘stupid’. Of course, Nagisa stopped going after the second class, but Haruka had found a sort of ‘freedom’ in it, so to speak, and had kept going for the following 2 years.

That had been 4 years ago, he had stopped going right after that happened. During that time, Haruka had abandoned most of the things he was doing at the time and had almost dropped out of University. If it hadn’t been for Nagisa he probably wouldn’t even be doing the things he did nowadays. Again, if it wasn’t because of the little blonde with the lively personality.

But leaving that aside, because getting depressed right now wasn’t going to help him, Haruka continue to remember what had happened last night.

After they had finished dancing, and everyone had stopped applauding and he had almost made out with Tachibana in front of all the restaurant… ‘Wait.’

That’s right, because of the combination of adrenaline and wine he had had on his system, he had almost kissed Tachibana. Well, he would be lying if he said that even without that he hadn’t wanted to kiss Tachibana, but it was that guy’s fault. He had lifted and guided Haruka through their dance and even though Haruka had put up some kind of resistance, Tachibana had been dominant during the whole ordeal.

It was just that smile, that voice, that scent, that had wrapped itself around his head and made him weak in the knees, those hands that had lifted him off the floor so effortlessly and his eyes… god, those goddamned green eyes that sparkled and danced with different colors and emotions every single time Haruka had looked at them. Well he couldn’t be blamed for falling into that person’s trap, could he?

He then remembered that they had been promptly interrupted by someone applauding and he had tried to disentangle himself from Tachibana but was stopped by Tachibana himself and they had both received the cheering of the crowd. Haruka could remember the feel of some disapproving gazes on him, but hadn’t really cared.

Various persons had insisted on them dancing once again, but Haruka had declined profusely as well as Tachibana, and as soon as they had reached their table once again, he had started drinking what was left of the bottle that Tachibana had ordered earlier.

After that everything was kind of a blur. He knew he hadn’t gotten really, really drunk, because if he had, the headache that came when he was hungover should have lasted longer and should have been stronger.

He vaguely remembered getting into Tachibana’s car and the next thing he could make out was
feeling himself dropping onto his bed and falling asleep to the feel of a hand moving his hair out of his face. His face suddenly felt hotter than ever before at the thought of Tachibana bringing him home and making sure that he got into bed, like a parent taking care of his child.

God, Haruka could feel his face burning with mortification and embarrassment.

‘It would have been better if he had just left me passed out on the street… I’m so stupid.’ In that moment, he wanted nothing more but to have the earth swallow him whole and never being able to see the light of day again. ‘What he must think of me now…’

“Haru-chan, your face is really red.” Haruka made a gurgling sound as he swallowed some toothpaste left in his mouth and turned around to see Nagisa standing in the doorway with a really amused expression. Haruka just turned around as rapidly as he could and rinsed his mouth with water and splashed some on his face for good measure.

He was surprised when it didn’t evaporate right after touching his face because he could swear it was boiling. He rubbed his hands against his face and splashed two more times, just to try and diminish his blush.

Haruka then reached out for the towel just beside the washbasin and dried his face as best as he could as well as his neck and arms that were all wet due to his hasty movements. Once he was done with that, he started walking towards the kitchen, once again passing by Nagisa as if he wasn’t there at all.

When he entered, he was surprised to find a plate with grilled mackerel, rice as a side dish, and a glass with orange juice. He turned around just in time to see Nagisa enter the kitchen and signaling him to take a seat.

“I thought that you would be hungry once you woke up, so I made you lunch!” Nagisa answered Haruka’s unspoken question and smiled while he reached for a pair of chopsticks that were on one of the cabinets. He then offered them to Haruka with a smile on his face. Haruka could do nothing but stare with surprise into his eyes and reach out mindlessly for the chopsticks before sitting down to eat.

Nagisa chuckled and moved his hands in front of himself, gesturing Haruka to start eating. “C’mon dummy! It will get cold if you don’t start eating soon!” That seemed to make Haruka snap out of whatever had come over him and train his attention on the plate of food in front of him, and that made his stomach grumble.

“Thank you for the food.” Haruka said quietly while he chopped a piece of mackerel and directed the chopsticks to his mouth. It was slightly overcooked, but it wasn’t as if it was inedible, so he continued to eat while Nagisa reached out for the box of cookies Haruka always bought for him and watched Haruka eat while he stood there eating away at the cookies.

Haruka decided not to think and instead just concentrated in eating his food and drinking the juice.

When he was nearly done, he noticed the slight smell of alcohol on himself, as if he had spilled some of the wine on his clothes. Haruka looked down on himself and was able to distinguish some darker stains on the front of his shirt where the wine had stained the fabric. Haruka huffed in annoyance and guilt.

They were Nagisa’s clothes after all, he would make sure to drop them at the dry cleaner on his way to work the next day. He finished eating and stood up to wash his dishes but was stopped by Nagisa.
“No, no, no. You go on and take a bath and I’ll wash these.” Haruka directed a puzzled look at his friend. Puzzlement suddenly turned to suspicion because, sure the blonde was helpful, sometimes anyway, but he never acted this attentive if it wasn’t because he wanted something. Nagisa feigned a hurt expression when he saw Haruka’s narrowed eyes.

“C’mon Haru-chan! Don’t look at me like that! I’m just trying to be a good friend here!” Haruka didn’t believe it for a second, but not really in the mood for arguing, just shrugged and made his way over to the bath once again. Entering the little room and closing the door behind him, Haruka rapidly stripped of his smelly clothes and entered the tub.

Once inside, he turned on the hot water but was greeted by an initial stream of ice like water. He shivered a little and shrunk back in on himself but soon relaxed. It didn’t take much time until warm and delicious water started filling the tub and steam started rising all over and around him. Haruka felt as if he was finally able to breathe again. All tension disappeared from his body gradually and the only thought that prevailed was that if only he could stay in the water forever, he wouldn’t mind paying any price.

Water was the place where he felt most comfortable at, where he didn’t have to speak or utter a single word, and it was a place where he could just be himself, nothing more and nothing less. A place where his quietness wasn’t a problem or where he had to put a barrier between him and the world because he was suspicious and cautious of everyone and everything.

Sighing in contentment, Haruka dipped his head under the water and opened his eyes while he was under. Even the ceiling of the bath looked different and enthralling when he viewed it from the water. The liquid always provided Haruka with a different perspective of everything around him. It cleared his mind and helped him lose track of time and to forget the reality he was in.

Feeling as slight burning sensation on his lungs, Haruka sighed internally and emerged from under the pristine liquid and rested his back against the tub with closed eyes. He realized that the tub was at its point of overflowing and quickly turned the faucet off with practiced ease.

He knew it was just a matter of time before the water got cold, so he opened his mind and relaxed once again against the tub’s side. Almost instantly, his mind conjured the image of green eyes and his eyes shot open.

He grumbled in annoyance. Why couldn’t he get that guy out of his mind? Well, this time, it was probably due to their little outlet the night before, but what about all the other times? During this last month, Haruka had found himself thinking about Tachibana more often than not, and it didn’t help that he reminded Haruka of a certain person he’d had an… encounter with not too long ago.

Of course, Haruka was just making assumptions, because he could actually go and ask Tachibana something along the line of: ‘Hey, were you the guy I slept with a month ago?’

Haruka knew there were more subtle ways to ask something like that, but he really wasn’t a person that liked to kick around the bush or that had enough confidence to ask something of the sort.

And anyways, it wasn’t as if he had some solid proof. They were just some little things, like gestures and expression that Tachibana did or use that were way too similar to that person’s. Adding to the mix that they had the same height and body build.

A knock on the door made him jump and lose his train of thought. Just then, Nagisa’s head peered inside the room. “Haru-chan? You should really get out of the tub if you don’t want to catch a cold.”
Haruka sighed and then nodded. Seeming satisfied with that, Nagisa closed the door and disappeared once again. Haruka stood up and took the top off of the pipe so the tub would start to empty itself. He reached for a towel, dried his body, and then wrapped it around his waist. Then, he took another smaller towel and started to dry his hair while he made his way to his room. He couldn’t see Nagisa, but he probably was in the kitchen eating whatever was left of the cookies, and so he closed the door and opened his little closet so he could get a pair of comfortable clothes he could sleep in.

Taking out a loose and old gray shirt along with some black sweatpants, Haruka took out a pair of socks and a pair of boxers and quickly changed into his change of clothes. Taking the towels in one hand, Haruka made his way to the bathroom once again and left them on top of the wash bin; he would be sure to hang them up later.

He then made his way to his little studio. He wanted to check how he did on his exam at the Academy. Promptly sitting in the chair, he turned on the laptop, typed in his password, and waited for a few seconds for the screen to light up.

Once his desktop appeared, Haruka opened a browser and logged in to the Academy’s student platform. He entered his users, which consisted on his name, and then typed in his password. Soon, the screen was filled with the upcoming events, entrance exams, and various other things that the Academy had upcoming.

Not really interested in all of that, he quickly clicked on the ‘My Scores’ button at the top of the page and waited for his calcification report to appear. He waited anxiously while it loaded, because even if he was confident in what he had done, he could never help but worry before he saw his score, hoping that he had performed well.

The page finished loading and various scores appeared next to the name of the activity, he scrolled down and wet his lips while he got to the last activity on the page. It read:

**Final Test: Make a dessert within the estimated time.**

**Value: 10 points.**

**Your score: 10.4 points.**

Haruka could feel a smile tugging at his lips, and he let out a small, breathy and relieved laugh when he saw his score. All his hard work had paid off and was now showing. He reclined back on his chair and looked up at the ceiling. Under his score was the date of when they were giving the diplomas to the people that had passed and the date of when the people who hadn’t been able to pass could do the test again.

Feeling kind of cheerful, he decided that he had to share the good news with Nagisa. Standing up, he went looking for his little friend, but even when he had looked all over, he couldn’t find him. Haruka frowned, and once he had confirmed that Nagisa had actually left, he went to his room and looked all over for his phone.

He found the little device resting on his bedside table and swiftly slid his finger across the screen to make it come to life. It had just 29% of battery left, but what he wanted to see was going to be quick and then he could leave it charging for the rest of the day.
He opened the message icon and saw that he had 15 unread messages.

Haruka went through them all and noticed that most of them were from Nagisa the night before asking how his ‘date’ was going, the latest was received that day, not too long ago.

From: H. Nagisa
To: N. Haruka
19/03/2014 14:32 PM
Haru-chan, something came up and I had to leave /\
Be sure to drink lots of water, okay? :D
P.S. I’m staying over tonight. Don’t run away :))))))

Haruka knew that this was coming, he knew he wouldn’t be able to avoid Nagisa’s curiosity for much longer, it seriously surprised him he had been able to get away with it until that day.

Also, Nagisa was the only person that could actually make a smiley face emoticon look threatening.

Not even bothering to answer Haruka scrolled to the next message.

From: T. Makoto
To: N. Haruka
19/03/2014 10:15 AM
Good Morning, I hope you had pleasant dreams.
Please call me once you see this.
Also, last night was lovely. Thank you.

Haruka felt a knot form in his throat as he read that last part and his face heating up once again. Deciding that he wouldn’t be calling Tachibana until he had recovered some of his dignity, he locked his phone and plugged it in so it would charge.

To distract himself from doing something he might regret later, Haruka walked down to the kitchen and started making a list of things he had to buy in order for Nagisa to eat if he was staying over.
His friend, never mind his size, could eat more than what Haruka had once thought was humanly possible.

Haruka sighed with dismay, because even though this day was just starting, Haruka was already wishing it could end.

Chapter End Notes

Edited by arawaweru :)

Hello lovely people, I'm back! :D I'm pleased to announce that I'm finally done with tests and I will be able to write, so you can expect another chapter in the next few weeks.

I'm sorry that there isn't much going on in this chapter, but I do need to write some transition chapters that just help the flow of the story, and on the next chapter I'll finally be able to write 'The Talk' between Haru and Nagisa, and please do look forward to an embarrassed Haru and a teasing Nagisa! (Also, jelous and protective Nagisa, because... because I want and can write him like that) >:D

Sooo... did you like it? Hate? Was it any good or am I going to get banned from the fandom? Remember, comments always make my day and they are the reasons I even continue to write this and I will love you forever if you do <3 Also, kuddos are equally because they let me know that you're liking this story! :D

Anyways, that's it for now. I hope you have a great 'what's left of the week' and I'll read you guys next time! ^^

(P.S. Did you guys read the Makoharu Mook? God I was squealing and crying at 2AM as I read on twitter a raw translation. It was so perfect and Makoharu was just so gross and adorable and my heart can't take it because I just love them and... ashdffkds *-* Okay, I'll stop now).
Chapter 15

Chapter Summary

He needed to get that phone back.

Now.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

The artificial light of the grocery store just made Haruka all the more impatient to get back home as soon as possible.

He had gone out of his way to the closest store because he had run out of chips, treats and all the things that health channels and reports said that would significantly shorten your life span and make you overweight, the kind of stuff that Nagisa consumed in inhuman amounts, and that if Haruka didn’t have at home, the little blond would probably tear down his apartment in search of them.

He looked down at the list he had clutched in one hand and made his way over to the snacks and sweets aisle. He had to buy some chocolate cookies with marshmallows, M&M’s with and without peanuts, cheese, spicy, BBQ and normal flavored chips, strawberry pocky, gummy bears of different flavors and sizes, at least one can of each and every single flavor of soda and some gummy bears he would have to classify by color so Nagisa would be happy.

Haruka sighed internally as he thought of how much money he would be spending in all of that food, the only thing that relieved him was knowing that at least Nagisa would eat all of it and none of it would go to waste. He didn’t like junk food all that much. He preferred his all-time favorite grilled mackerel with a side dish of rice and some vegetables.

He pushed the cart along the alley and took everything he needed from the list, along with some water bottles and some granola bars he liked. He knew he wouldn’t be eating much that night, because surely Nagisa would have him talking until he was satisfied and knew every single detail of what happened that night a month and a half ago, and his ‘date’ the day before.

Haruka loved Nagisa, there was no doubt about that, but his friend could be a little too ‘meddlesome’ sometimes. He wanted to know every single detail of what happened in Haruka’s life, but he just wasn’t a talkative person, not even when he was with someone he knew practically all his life like Nagisa.

Of course, when it came to matters like this, Haruka knew there was no escaping it and that even if he tried to dodge the subject, Nagisa would just bother him more with it. And in the end, and he would end up telling the blond everything just for the sake of shutting him up.

Haruka was also preparing himself mentally and building up a wall of discretion and indifference around himself, because he knew how much Nagisa liked to tease and pick on him, and with what they were going to be talking about, he was certain that Nagisa would take every single chance he got to make Haruka embarrassed, flustered, annoyed, or even all three at the same time.
Haruka sighed once again.

Just thinking about what the little monster could say to him made him want to run away or escape to the mountains and never come back, but he knew full well that even if he went away to Mars, Nagisa would still find him and make him talk.

He just really wanted to get this over with, as he was not known for his patience and having the pressure of thinking about what would happen just made him all the more restless.

Having collected all of the items he needed to make Nagisa happy, so maybe he would show Haruka some mercy, he made his way over to the cashier.

A young man, probably 3 or 4 years older than him, was standing in front of the cashier, and when Haruka started to empty the cart, the man just eyed him with a frown but proceeded to charge every single item Haruka left in front of him.

When the man told him his grand total, Haruka visibly flinched, but if it was for the sake of appeasing Nagisa, he would do almost anything.

Haruka took out his wallet and handed the cashier the money, and while he packed everything in several bags, he was given his change. Gathering all of the bags, he made his way to the entrance and exited the grocery store.

It was warmer than it had been this last few months, but the chilly wind still persisted, as if some strange being was giving its’ last breath and was trying to remind people that it was there, that he hadn’t gone away… that it existed.

A car drove by him and a cloud of black enveloped him. He stopped breathing for a few seconds until he deemed it secure to breathe once again, but the smell of the smoke still lingered on his clothes and made him cough a little.

That was one of the things Haruka disliked most about the city life; the smoke, the absolute pollution that persisted over everything and anyone. Not just from cars but from buildings, restaurants, advertisements, music and people.

During the day, cars and people populated the streets and anywhere you looked, you would probably see the grayish cloud of smoke left behind by some car or bus, you would be able to appreciate hundreds upon hundreds of people walking, running and talking on the phone, each in their own little and secluded universe, ignorant to the world around them.

At night, the only difference was the lights. Lights everywhere you looked and covering almost any surface of the places that came to live at night. It all made a rainbow of different brilliant colors that made it impossible to distinguish the stars above unless you got on top of a building and even then, you would still have the reflection of all that light around you.

Haruka sighed as he felt his fingers starting to go numb from carrying so many things. The store wasn’t that far from his apartment, but with four bags in each hand and with so many things in each, it was a rather long trip, or at least that’s how it felt to him.

He got to the stairs and started climbing them, maybe a little too fast, but to be honest, all that he wanted was to get to his apartment so could drop the bags on the kitchen and being able to feel his fingers again. Once in front of the front door he took another bag into his left hand and quickly used his right to open the door.

When he got inside, he unceremoniously took his shoes off, closed the door with a little kick and
practically sprinted towards the kitchen where he dropped all of the bags on top of the little table and was finally able to breathe, as he felt blood finally flowing once again through his numb fingers.

He massaged his hands a little and then started looking around the bags for gummy bears he bought. Once he found them, he went to the cupboard and took out five little plates in which he would be able to separate the sweets by color. Opening the first bag and sitting down, he started sorting through it and organizing the bear-shaped sweets.

Suddenly his phone vibrated.

Putting the bag of gummies down and reaching for a napkin so he could take off some of the sticky feeling from his fingers, Haruka stood up and took his phone that was on the counter by the dishwasher.

The screen was lighting up with Nagisa’s name and he swiftly slid his finger across the screen. As soon as he put the phone close to his ear, Nagisa’s voice was heard.

“Helloooo? Haru-chan, are you there?” Haruka sighed and that seemed as enough of an answer. “Haru-chan! You didn’t forget I’m coming over right? Because if you did, you should probably start getting ready because I’ll be there in 15 minutes tops.” Nagisa giggled and Haruka could feel the start of a headache.

“No Nagisa, I didn’t forget and I’m already getting things ready.” Haruka answered.

“Great! Because we’re going to have so much fun! We’re going to eat, watch some movies, and then eat some more… I can’t wait to get there!” Nagisa sounded so enthusiastic and excited that Haruka couldn’t help but smile a little at the childish attitude of his friend.

“Oh and just so you know,” Haruka’s smile was gone in an instant at Nagisa’s sudden change of tone. “We’re discussing your little date from yesterday and what happened over a month ago.” Haruka closed his eyes and sighed.

“… Right…” He really wished Nagisa would let it go, but he knew that wasn’t going to happen, so instead of fighting him, like he used to do before, he just resigned himself to his fate and accepted that he was going to have to tell Nagisa wether he liked it or not.

“Great! Then I’ll see you soon Haru-chan!” And with that, the line was cut and Haruka was left with the phone still against his ear.

Realizing that he didn’t have much time until Nagisa got there and seeing that he still had one and a half bags of gummy bears to sort out, he quickly set out to work and tried to focus all of his attention in the sorting of the candies, but he really couldn’t keep himself from thinking.

He couldn’t really imagine himself telling Nagisa everything that had happened, not what happened yesterday and certainly not what had happened at the ball… it was all just so embarrassing… In both situations he had acted like a completely different person from who he usually is, and that is being the one in control.

In both… incidents, Haruka had let someone else take charge, of course he had offered some resistance at first, but only halfheartedly and had caved in with just a touch in the case of Green and a word in the case of Tachibana.

Now that he thought about it… there had been something that been bugging him since morning when he went through his memories of the day before.
The way Tachibana sometimes spoke or acted, his way of expressing himself and how sometimes he regarded Haruka, with something like a knowing glint in his eyes.

Haruka shuddered.

God, those eyes… they were like an ever changing palette of green. They sparkled when he was amused, they lighten when he talked freely, they dulled when he wasn’t really paying attention when he was talked to, they shone when he was entertained and when they darkened… He had seen so many colors in his eyes he had lost count of how many types of green he had seen, because there was always something new in them and when they had danced, when they chatted on the car, when they were eating, the color always changed, somehow or in some way, it was never the same shade and that made it all the more intriguing.

It kind of reminded him of, well… Green.

That night almost two month ago, he had been unable to get Green out of his head because every single time Haruka closed his eyes, he remembered those eyes, and now that he thought about it, Tachibana’s and Green’s eyes were pretty… similar, and not just his eyes. The way they handled themselves, with an air of confidence that seemed almost arrogant, the tone of voice they both used as if they knew how much they could affect people and use that to their advantage.

And now that he realized this, it almost seemed as if they were the sa-

“Hmpf!” His train of thought was lost to the immediate urgency of not getting his head slammed into a plate of blue gummy bears. He slammed his hands against the edge of the table, hard enough to almost turn the table over and making some of the plates spill their content.

Haruka sighed in relief when he was able to stabilize himself and was sure the table wasn’t going to cave in. He turned around to see Nagisa laughing his head off by the door adjacent to the kitchen and closed his eyes to get his heart beat under control.

The fright Nagisa gave him was probably one of, if not, the worst yet.

Being Nagisa’s friend meant that he had been the target of Nagisa’s pranks during almost all of his life. The blond would come up with the most weird and disturbing ideas to frighten people and even though he had made Haruka and accomplice more than once, that didn’t mean that he hadn’t suffered to his friend’s hands more than once.

But this time, Nagisa had really given him the scare of a lifetime, but that was probably because he had been so engrossed with what he had been thinking, not that he remembered anyway. Nagisa had made his mind go blank and forget whatever he had going through his mind.

“Oh my god, Haru-chan! You look like an old man clutching your chest like that!” This remark was followed by another fit of laughter and when Haruka opened his eyes to see Nagisa, the blonde was red in the face and had tears streaming down his face from how long and hard he had been laughing.

This was enough to bring Haruka back to his senses and make him huff in annoyance.

“Hello to you too, Nagisa.” Haruka said with an eye roll while he started to put the gummy bears that had fallen into their respective color.

“Awww! Don’t be mad, Haru-chan! It was just a joke!” Haruka turned around to look at Nagisa’s
face and saw his friend smiling and looking at him with amused eyes.

“Whatever.” Was Haruka’s curt answer. Eventually, he had finished sorting through the spilled gummy bears. “Aren’t you hungry?” He asked while facing Nagisa again.

Nagisa’s eyes sparkled at that and he soon spotted the sweets and his eyes shone.

“Haru-chan! You’re the best!” Nagisa then proceeded to attack, because there was no other way to say it, the gummies.

Haruka stepped aside as Nagisa devoured his ‘food’.

“Djhd yfm buhfy mfhorg?” Nagisa asked with his mouth full, Haruka just stared at him with a look of utter confusion.

Nagisa made a big show of swallowing and then asked again. “I asked if you bought more.” Haruka just lifted an eyebrow and signaled the bags by the counter.

Nagisa immediately went over to them and starting rummaging through them, he promptly took out a bag of BBQ flavored chips, opened it and started eating. Seeing as Nagisa was way too engrossed in food to do anything else, Haruka started walking towards his bedroom.

“Wherf are shou goinf?” Nagisa asked when he saw Haruka leaving. Haruka turned around and frowned.

“Decide whether you want to speak or eat.” Nagisa just smiled and Haruka frowned harder. Nagisa hadn’t swallowed before smiling. “I’m going to prepare the futon.”

“Oh, Okay!” This time, Nagisa did swallow before answering. “Did you buy any soda?” Haruka didn’t turn around, just answered over his shoulder.

“Cherry flavored. Look for them in the bags.” Haruka just heard Nagisa’s excited squeal but continued walking towards the little closet in the hall.

He heard some ruffling upcoming from the kitchen and even though he knew it was most probably Nagisa making a mess of his kitchen, he just took the futon, two pillow and some extra sheets and went over to his bedroom.

Haruka tried to make it as comfortable as possible, since he would be the one sleeping in it because every time Nagisa stayed over, he would take possession of his bed and God knew there was no way that Haruka would be able to move him from there.

He heard running footsteps coming from the hall and had just enough time to throw himself on top of his makeshift ‘bed’ before a flying Nagisa jumped over him and landed on his, actual, bed with a thud.

Nagisa was laughing out loud and rolling around the bed while Haruka tried to get his heartbeat, once again, under control.

“Nagisa…” Haruka said, his voice slightly muffled because of his face being pressed against the pillow.

“Now, now, Haru-chan, wasn’t that fun?” Haruka didn’t even bother answering and just burrowed his face deeper into the soft cushion.
He heard ruffling from above and then felt the futon deepen just slightly. He then felt Nagisa occupy the side beside him, their shoulders brushing. An unexpected, yet comfortable, silence fell upon them and for a few minutes neither or them spoke or moved, just enjoying the serene atmosphere that had somehow formed.

Haruka would have laid there like that for the entire night and wouldn’t have complained, he had almost forgotten why Nagisa was there in the first place, but just when he was debating whether to drift off or not would be a good idea, Nagisa talked.

“Hey, Haru-chan.” Nagisa’s voice was unexpectedly soft, and the sudden change made Haruka turn around and face his friend. Surprisingly, Nagisa was looking up at the ceiling and wasn’t giving any sign of returning his stare. “I know I came here to talk about what happened yesterday and almost two months ago, but…” He made a short pause and this time, he turned and faced Haruka. “If you really don’t want to talk about, you don’t have to.”

Haruka looked at him as if he had two heads and three eyes. Nagisa gave him a sideways smile. “It’s just… you looked so tense.” Nagisa frowned slightly and Haruka thought that it was a gesture that didn’t seem to belong in Nagisa’s face at all. “When I got here you were spacing out, you had this… concerned look on your face… and I don’t know, I guess I felt bad.” This time the light in Nagisa’s amethyst eyes dimmed. “You know I would never make you do something you don’t want to do, I don’t want to make you uncomfortable, I just want you to be happy, you know that right?” Nagisa’s eyes were getting watery and at the sight, Haruka could feel his heartbeat skipping a beat and his stomach twisting. It wasn’t pleasant.

Nagisa took a big breath.

“So… I wanted to tell you that if you don’t want to tell me right now, you don’t have to. I won’t force and I won’t push you.” Nagisa gave him a tiny smile and the threat of a certain salty liquid escaping his eyes seemed to be avoided.

“But just so you know, I’m always here, okay? Whether you want to tell me today or in ten years. I’ll always be willing to listen.” Nagisa smiled at him so brightly that Haruka had face his pillow in order to hide his blurry sight and having it misunderstood by Nagisa, just like when he had arrived and thought that Haruka had been worried about his coming, while Haruka had just been thinking about something completely different.

He didn’t know why Nagisa was being so understanding and for some reason, instead of making him want to leave the matter completely, since his friend had told him it was totally fine if he didn’t tell him, it made Haruka want to tell him.

At the very least, he would be able to get some of it off his chest and maybe Nagisa could help him solve the mess he had in his head from the previous day occurrences.

Haruka turned his head slightly, just enough for half of his face to be facing Nagisa, and taking a big breath, talked. “Catering.” He said simply.

Nagisa looked at him with confusion, but didn’t say anything for which Haruka was grateful. “I met him because of the catering service.” Understanding downed upon Nagisa’s features while his eyes shone with something akin to approval just gave him a look that told him to continue.

And so, Haruka told Nagisa everything, well, almost everything. He left out the part when he had almost kissed Tachibana, because just remembering it made his heart stutter and a lump to form in his throat. But he did tell him about how he had met him, about how he had given him back his
cellphone and how he had invited him out.

Not really wanting to tell him about what had happened in the office when he had ‘forgotten’ his cellphone, Haruka skipped right to when Tachibana picked him up at the university.

Haruka told him about the restaurant, about what little they had talked about, about how he hadn’t known what to order because he couldn’t understand a damn thing off the menu, how he had gotten half-drunk by just taking two cups of wine –Nagisa had let out a snort at that but had quickly apologized and urged him to continue-, he told him about when they had danced and how thankful he had been for those lessons they had taken, even though Nagisa had stopped going after two classes, and how he just vaguely remembered getting home with Tachibana’s help.

“Aw! Such a gentlemen!” Nagisa had said while he fluttered his eyes in such a ridiculous way that Haruka had to turn around for a few seconds to hide his smile.

Again, he left out the part of blurry images of being tucked into bed and a delicate touch that now that he thought about felt somehow familiar, brushing away the hair over his face. Haruka dismissed this thought quickly in favor of not losing the little confidence he had been able to gather and continue telling Nagisa about what had happened.

Haruka’s suddenly made a little jump when he realized that there was nothing more to tell about his little ‘night-out’ the day before, and knew that he could end his story there and not tell Nagisa about what had happened almost two months ago, he knew that his friend wouldn’t pressure him to continue, as he had stated before, and Haruka believed him, but he had to tell him.

No, more than that, he wanted to tell him. And so, once again he took a deep breath and started talking once again with the undivided attention of his friend on him.

He told Nagisa about how he had been looking for him and once he had decided that he probably wouldn’t be seeing Nagisa for the rest of night because he was probably more preoccupied with flirting with Rei, he had decided to go to the bar and get kind of really drunk.

Haruka noticed that when he had mentioned Rei’s name, Nagisa’s eyes had lost focus for a moment before clearing right after and pay attention once again, but decided not to comment on that and continued recounting his story.

Well, this one took a little bit less than the one of what had happened the day before. After all, what Haruka and Green had talked about that night had been relatively nonexistent after they had made their way up to one of the hotel’s rooms.

Again he omitted what had happened during that night, because well, it was embarrassing, and Nagisa really didn’t have to know about what they had done. He just told Nagisa about the rules he had set and how Green hadn’t even argued with him.

“They guy knew how to please you, didn’t he?” Nagisa had said, effectively making Haruka’s face turn scarlet under less than a second and burrowing his head once again in his pillow.

Nagisa just laughed and Haruka had wanted to choke him, but settled for hitting the blond in the face with a nearby cushion.

Once Nagisa’s snickering had died down and Haruka’s blush had subsided a little, he told him about when he had woken up and had found himself clean and neatly tucked in on the bed as well as all of his things by the nightstand and his clothes folded in a chair by the bed.

Nagisa had opened his mouth as if he had wanted to say something but had closed it immediately
after, almost as if he had had a sudden realization and was just about to comment on it but had decided against it at the last second.

Haruka let it slide once again, noting that if it had been important, Nagisa would have told him instead of staying quiet.

He finished his tale by telling Nagisa that he had taken a short shower at the hotel and then headed straight for his apartment just to fall asleep again. Haruka cleared his throat after finishing and quickly realized that he was craving a glass of water after all that talking, but when he glanced in Nagisa’s direction, seeing his friend with a thoughtful expression, he decided against it in favor of hearing what the blond would say.

“My, my, Haru-chan… Seemed like you had quite a little bit of fun, didn’t you?” Nagisa directed a sly smile towards him and Haruka decided just to roll his eyes and face the other way.

“Shut up.” He said simply and he heard Nagisa’s laughter coming from beside him and it somehow calmed him. From what? He wasn’t really sure - he just knew that he had been kind of tense while he awaited Nagisa’s reaction.

“Wouldn’t you like to see him again?” Nagisa’s sudden question make Haruka frowned and he decided to face him again before answering.

“It was just a one night thing, Nagisa, and even if I did see him again, I don’t think I could even look him in the eye…” Well, it wasn’t as if Haruka hadn’t thought about the possibility of seeing Green again, but honestly speaking, what would he even say to him if he ever saw him again?

“Oh, hey! My name’s Haruka Nanase and I’m the guy you had sex with five minutes after meeting at the masquerade ball. Fancy meeting you here.”

Yeah, totally not happening.

He would probably first die of embarrassment when having to face a person with whom he had done something like that with, and either way, what were the chances of meeting that person again?

Tokyo was a large city with millions of people living in it. You could pass someone on the street and never see him or her again in your entire life, so how could Haruka expect to see someone he had met at an anonymous event, ‘interacted’ with for a couple of hours and then waking up to that person being gone?

Thinking of meeting that person again was naïve and so he had tried to bury the memory deep within his mind and maybe just remember it as something he had done in the spur of the moment.

“Well, if you did at least I would be able to snap a picture of your cute tomato face!” Haruka tried to hit Nagisa once again with the pillow, but it seemed as if he had been expecting that and he just jumped before Haruka could get a good hold on the cushion.

“Don’t be mad Haru-chan! Even I know that’s kind of impossible, it would just be so exciting… like something out of a movie or a book!” Nagisa had a faraway look in his eyes as he was probably imagining some kind of dramatic and totally non-realistic setting between Haruka and a faceless stranger.

Haruka huffed and that seemed to snap Nagisa out of his daydream as he looked back down at him.

“Fine, fine let’s forget about that… for now.” Haruka just sighed… again.
“Whatever.” Was his court response.

“And what about Tachibana?” Nagisa said while lifting an eyebrow and Haruka just shrugged.

“What about him?” He said nonchalantly even though his heart had skipped a beat at the mention of the green eyed man.


“He has texted you?” The blond said after giving an over exaggerated sigh.

“Maybe.” Was Haruka’s vague response.

At that Nagisa stood up and went out of the room and towards the kitchen. Believing that he was just probably going to get something to eat, Haruka slumped down on the futon once again.

A minute or so later, he heard Nagisa’s footsteps coming back and once again he faced his bed where the blond would probably sit down again. As his friend came closer, Haruka was able to hear the little sounds of Nagisa typing something on his phone and when the shorter male entered the room, he was able to confirm that Nagisa was in fact typing something, but it wasn’t on his phone, it was on Haruka’s.

Alarms suddenly started ringing in his head and he thought that just maybe, it would have been a good idea to put on a password on his phone, but seeing as Nagisa was already going through all of his files, it didn’t have much sense to do so now and instead of trying to snatch the phone away, Haruka settled for waiting until his friend was finished. In the end, Nagisa would have seen it anyways.

“Haru-chan, you’re so mean!” Nagisa said while he threw the phone over to Haruka and he just barely managed to catch it.

“Nagisa! What the- why am I the mean one?” He said a little bit out of breath since he had almost thought his phone would end up being crashed against the wall. It wasn’t as if he cared that much about the device it was that it just useful to see the hour and talk to… certain people… and stuff.

“Youf tefsted Tachifana morf than youf ever tefsted me!” Nagisa whined while not bothering to remove his face from the pillow and Haruka had to strain his ears to catch what he was saying.

“Nagisa, what are you talking about?” Haruka didn’t see what the big deal was. He didn’t see Tachibana every day, like he did with Nagisa, and so that was why they had texted each other more, and anyways, if Nagisa really wanted to talk to him, he would just give Haruka a quick call that he would be coming over, not that Haruka was complaining.

Nagisa however, didn’t seem to get this, and when he turned around, his eyes were a little red once again.

“You’re talking to him more!” Nagisa exclaimed and Haruka was surprised at the genuine anguish he heard in his voice. “Next thing I know, you’ll hang out with him every day and you won’t even answer my calls! I won’t be able to get a hang of you no matter how hard I try and you’ll forget about me and I’ll be all alone and you’ll be happy, but I’ll be alone!” Tears were streaming down Nagisa’s face and his face denoted total despair. And then, Haruka did the last thing anyone could thing he would do.

Haruka laughed.
Nagisa stared at him with hurt in his face while he huffed and hid his face in a pillow. Seeing as his friend was getting offended, Haruka toned down his laughter and went over to the bed where Nagisa was currently sulking. He started to softly shake his friend’s shoulder.

“Hey, Nagisa. C’mon, I didn’t mean to laugh.” Nagisa just continued to ignore him and bury his face deeper into the pillow. “It was just… you were saying such absurd things that I couldn’t help myself.” He finished with a short chuckle. Nagisa suddenly incorporated making Haruka’s eyes widen in surprise.

“It’s not absurd, it’s the truth! How can you laugh?” Nagisa said with hurt in his eyes, Haruka just cocked his head and looked at him.

“Because you’re my best friend, nothing will change that.” Haruka said with such sincerity that Nagisa just sat there still for a few seconds seemingly processing what the blue eyed male said. Suddenly, Haruka was being tackled into the mattress and Nagisa was nuzzling his side hard enough to leave a bruise.

“Ow, ow, ow, OW! Nagisa, stop it!” Nagisa didn’t let go of him but did tone down his excitement.

“Haru-chan, Haru-chan, Haru-chan!” He hummed happily and Haruka just laid there more confused than ever. Nagisa suddenly stilled and throwing all of his weight in Haruka’s middle, he reached around him to take Haruka’s phone from the floor.

Haruka grunted a little but endure for the sake of the little devil not falling over and breaking his neck in half.

Once Nagisa got hold of the little device, he sat down beside him and Haruka was able to breathe again, and having curiosity over what Nagisa could be doing this time, he looked over Nagisa’s shoulder. When he saw what he was trying to do, Haruka tried to snatch the phone away.

“What the HELL do you think you’re doing?” Haruka said in a frantic voice while he tried to take the phone, but to no avail, Nagisa was moving like a damn contortionist.

“What do you think? I’m helping you, of course!” Nagisa said with a voice that was way too innocent to be believable.

“By calling him?! Why would you do that?” Nagisa was two taps away from calling Tachibana and he could absolutely not let that happen.

“Um, because he texted you telling you to call him? Really Haru-chan, one would think you didn’t even read the message he sent you.” Nagisa had clicked Tachibana’s name and the call button was now visible.

“Give. That. Back!” But at that moment Nagisa pressed the call button and leaped out of the bed while Haruka slumped down on it.

“You’re no fun, Haru-chan! And either way, if I don’t help you, you would never have called him!” Nagisa then proceeded to press the ‘speaker’ button and Haruka could hear the ringing that meant calling.

Haruka stood up, but Nagisa took three steps backs in a second and then phone continued to ring.

He needed to get that phone back.

Now.
“C’mon Nagisa give that back!” He tried to take again but Nagisa evaded him as if it was nothing.

‘Please don’t answer, please don’t answer, please don’t answer!’ Haruka repeated that in his head like mantra.

“Nagisa if you do not give that back, I will personally murde-”

“Hello?”

Fuck.

Chapter End Notes

Edited by arawaweru :)

Hello, hello, hello, hello lovely AO3 people! Finally a new update! First of all, I wanted to apologize for such a long wait, but I just had the worst case of writer's block and couldn't write two words without wanting to delete them immediately or writing really long things and deleting them instantly because I just couldn't get them 'right'. Also, I went on a surprise trip with my family and wasn't able to write a single thing during that time and all in all, there were just too many things that prevented me from writing. But, once I came back from my trip, I was able to write this chapter in a few hours and now, I'm finally able to post it :D Also, this chapter turned out different form what I had originally imagined, but I liked it nonetheless, and I hope you did as well :) 

So, did you like it, did you hate? Was it good or should I just go on a another trip so I can't get near a computer anymore? Comments just absolutely make my day and they let me know that you like this story so I can continue to write it <3 I love kudos too... just so you know ;)

You can always contact me on Twitter: @ArtistiqueR12 ^^

Well, I hope you had an amazing week and I will read you (hopefully sooner rather than later) on the next chapter!

P.S. Also, shoutout to anyone who actually reads my ridiculously long end notes /\
Chapter 16

Chapter Summary

Haruka liked it. He liked that the silence wasn’t tense or felt stuffed, it felt light and… well, comfortable.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Nagisa was dead… Oh so dead, because as soon as he was done with this call he would make sure that his so called ‘friend’ didn’t see the light of the sun ever again.

“Hello? Nanase-san… are you still there?” Haruka flinched slightly when he heard Tachibana’s voice coming out of the little device in Nagisa’s hand.

Rapidly snatching away the phone from Nagisa, who had gone conveniently still, he turned off the speaker and placed the phone against his ear.

“Yes, I’m here.” Haruka just wanted to dig a hole and die, because he was really bad at talking over the phone. Actually, he was just bad at talking, period.

“Did you need something or is there something I can help you with?” Haruka’s eyes darted all around the room trying to find a reasonable excuse as to why he had called him out of the blue.

Suddenly, Nagisa’s exaggerated arm waving caught his eye and when the blond noticed Haruka was paying attention to him, he mouthed ‘The text. He wanted to talk to you.’ All of this was accompanied with a lot of weird facial expressions and body movements, but fortunately it helped deliver the message and Haruka promptly answered Tachibana’s question.

“You sent me a text telling me to call, so I’m calling.” Haruka bit his lower lip as he waited for Tachibana’s answer and when he heard a low chuckle from the other side of the line, he couldn’t help but relax a little.

“Well, well… who would have thought you were the ‘obedient’ type?” Haruka felt as his face going from cool to hot in the nanosecond it took for Tachibana to let out another soft chuckle.

“I’m glad I amuse you. Now, if you don’t have anything else to say, goodbye.” Haruka was about end the call, when Tachibana’s voice was heard from the other end.

“No, wait! I’m sorry!” Haruka didn’t answer but made a little acknowledgment sound. He heard Tachibana sigh in relief before he spoke again. “I’m sorry about teasing you, okay? I just didn’t really think you would call me back, I was actually planning on calling you later today and well… I just couldn’t stop myself when I saw you calling.”

What was this? Tachibana sounded as if he was… embarrassed? Could that actually be? He was just kind of rambling now that Haruka thought about it and it actually made Haruka’s mouth curve a little in a barely visible smirk.

“So, what did you want to say Tachibana… san?” Haruka added the honorific almost as an
afterthought when he realized he could come off as too straightforward or impolite.

“Oh! Please just call me Makoto, ‘Tachibana-san’ sounds way too formal and it’s not like we are
discussing work, anyways.” Haruka could feel himself frown a little.

He felt a little uncomfortable using Tachibana’s first name, but taking note of Tachibana’s tone he
knew that it would be no use discussing with him about it. And how did Haruka know this? Well…
Tachibana was using the same tone Nagisa used when he set his mind to something and if
someone knew how incredibly impossible a person could be while using that tone, it had to be
him.

“Oh… M-mmm… Mako-to.” It left a weird sensation in his mouth addressing Tachibana by his
first name, but he guessed it couldn’t be helped. Haruka only heard Tachibana hum and for a few
seconds neither of them said anything.

But the silence was turning heavy, and the only thing Haruka wanted now more than a shower, was
to end this call.

“So… what was it you wanted?” Haruka asked suddenly. Tachibana’s humming stopped and
Haruka realized how rude he must have sounded, he was just about to somehow apologize when
Tachibana spoke once again.

“Well, I wanted to know how you were…” Haruka was in mid eye roll and was just about to answer
when Tachibana, unconsciously, interrupted him. “And I also wanted to know if… if you’re free on
Friday afternoon?”

Haruka’s heart skipped a beat and a second later he suddenly felt the urge to sit down because the
room was kind of, probably spinning.

Was he—… was Tachi—… well, he guessed it was Makoto now— but was he— was he asking
Haruka out? But…

“Why?” That was the first thing that went through his mind as soon as the implication of Tach—…
Makoto’s – This was going to take quite some time to get used to and it was already getting on
Haruka’s nerves – words hit him.

“Spring is about to start and there’s an upcoming event because of the blooming of the cherry
blossoms, and well… It would be a waste to go alone, so I was thinking that maybe you would like
to accompany me?” Tachibana finished with a slightly unsure tone.

Haruka’s face had gone completely blank and he was staring at the wall in front of him with empty
eyes, but while he looked completely unfazed by what he just heard, his mind was a different thing
entirely.

A thousand and one thoughts were swirling around in his head.

He knew about the event of the cherry blossoms, of course Haruka knew, and how could he not if
it was taking place right in front of his apartment in the park just crossing the street?

Posters had been pasted on walls and brochures had been given out during the last few weeks and
he had even considered asking Nagisa to go with him, but now…

Well, he guessed he wouldn’t be going with Nagisa, would he?

“Are you picking me up or are we meeting there?” Haruka asked with a monotonous tone while he
could feel his face heating up.

He could feel Tach- Makoto’s – Haruka gave an exasperated sigh. – smirk before he heard it in his voice.

“Direct, aren’t you?” Tach- Makoto said in a teasing tone.

“Shut up.” Was Haruka’s curt response, to which an amused little laugh followed from the other end of the phone.

“Why don’t I pick you up so we can head there together, how does that sound?” Haruka shrugged, but then realizing Tac- Makoto wouldn’t be able to see him, he answered.

“As you wish.” Haruka didn’t think much about his words but it seemed to trigger something because when Ta- Makoto spoke again, it wasn’t the casual tone he had been using.

“You should be careful with what you say and who you say it to.” Haruka’s breath hitched because T- Makoto’s voice was now low, almost guttural and for some reason… familiar. Haruka didn’t have much time to dwell on it, because suddenly Makoto’s voice was back to normal, almost as if he hadn’t said anything in the first place.

“Well then, I’ll text you tomorrow just to confirm, okay?” Haruka rolled his eyes but hummed in agreement nonetheless. “At what time shall I pick you up?”

“Same as last time.” Haruka wished Makoto wasn’t as volatile with his mood, because honestly, he felt like he couldn’t keep up and that didn’t sit well with him.

“Friday at 7:30 PM.” Haruka just hummed in agreement but his stomach was doing little flips that just really prevented him from answering with actual words.

“Okay, I’ll see you on Friday, Nanase-san.” Haruka frowned.

“Haru.” He said simply.

“Sorry?” Makoto’s confused tone reached his ears. Haruka could feel himself blushing again.

“Haru.” He breathed. “Call me Haru.” And before he could hear Makoto’s response, Haruka pressed the ‘End Call’ button and hastily threw his phone onto the bundle of sheets and pillows behind him.

“Wow… your face is really red. Haru-chan.” Nagisa’s mocking tone was totally not what he needed right now.

“Shut up.” Was all Haruka said.

“Oh, doesn’t that sound familiar? I could swear I heard you saying those same words just a minute ago.” Haruka’s face felt hotter somehow. “But, then, it wasn’t to me. You were talking to… what was his name again? Maho… Miko… Mato…” Haruka lifted his gaze and immediately regretted it because Nagisa was looking at him with what was probably the smuggest smile on his face. “Makoto… wasn’t it?”

Haruka’s eyes widened and Nagisa’s feline smile grew bigger, if that was even possible.

“So… this is the same guy as last time, isn’t it?” Haruka just turned his face so he was regarding the blank wall in front of him, which by the way, had turned into one of the most fascinating things
Haruka had ever laid eyes upon.

“C’mon Haru-chan! Don’t be like that! It’s just a ‘yes’ or ‘no’ answer!” That’s what Nagisa said, but knowing him, and Haruka knew him pretty well, there was more to it than just a ‘yes’ or ‘no’ answer.

“I’m taking a bath.” Was all Haruka said and before Nagisa could protest, he made it to the bathroom in three long strides and shut the door.

“HARUUU-CHAAAN! C’MOOOON! THAT’S NOT FAAAAAAIR!” Nagisa’s whines could be heard from outside the door while Haruka drowned them with the sound of the water filling the tub.

Forty five minutes later, Haruka decided that it was about time to get out of the tub and stood up while he reached for a towel to put around his waist.

Once he made sure the towel wouldn’t fall off, he crouched down so he could let the tub empty out and meanwhile, he picked up his clothes from where he had dropped them on the floor and folded them.

Taking one last glance towards the empty tub, Haruka opened the door of the bathroom and made his way to his room.

He expected Nagisa to be sitting on his bed while he typed something on his phone or watching something on Haruka’s laptop, and to as soon as he saw Haruka, to throw himself at the blue eyed man or something of the sort.

What he did not expect, however, was to find Nagisa peacefully laying on the futon with his body in some weird position and his head resting in two different pillows. His mouth was a little open and he was snoring lightly.

Haruka huffed, but not in annoyance, but tenderness.

Nagisa was like the little brother he had never had but would always pester his parents about.

Sighing in defeat, he was quick to put some pajamas on and then proceeded to move Nagisa from the futon to the bed.

Haruka lifted him up with ease, because even though there were times when it felt like if Nagisa weighed two hundred pounds, he was actually really light and when it came to moving him when he was out cold, like right now, it was a fair and easy task to perform.

Nagisa wriggled in Haruka’s arms until he was nuzzling his chest and his arms were safely tucked one on top of another and Haruka couldn’t help but let his face melt into a soft smile.
When things like this happened and Haruka was able to appreciate Nagisa’s unguarded face, he just felt an overwhelming sense of protectiveness come over him.

Tucking Nagisa on his bed and covering him properly, Haruka let himself drop onto the futon while he arranged the pillows and sheets so he could be in a more comfortable position.

For a few minutes Haruka didn’t think of anything. He just laid there listening to Nagisa’s soft breathing, staring at the white ceiling.

Suddenly, his phone vibrated somewhere in the bundle of sheets and without much care, he just flipped them. After he heard the ‘clack’ of it when it hit the ground somewhere to his left, he reached out to take the device in his hand.

The screen was lit with the icon of an incoming message. Sliding his finger across the screen to unlock it, he pressed the notification to see who it was from.

From: T. Makoto
To: N. Haruka
19/03/2014 11:37 PM
Goodnight, Haru.
I hope you have the most pleasant dreams.
I’ll see you on Friday.
Don’t forget, 7:30 PM at the University gate.

Haruka felt himself blush while his annoyance increased.

Why was he blushing for anyways? This was stupid. Makoto was stupid. Makoto and his stupid ability to make Haruka’s heart skip a beat were stupid.

To: T. Makoto
From: N. Haruka
19/09/2014 11:40 PM
Good night to you too.
And I won’t forget, so stop it.

Haruka hit send and not expecting a reply, he plugged in his phone and wrapped himself in his blankets for a much needed sleep.

Haruka was starting to suspect that Rei had been doing some kind of propaganda because the days at the café had never been quite so busy.

When had Haruka had arrived – ten minutes before the shop opened – there had already been a line of about of six people by the door. He had thought they had been lining up to enter the store that was at the side, but when he had looked closer, he realized that the line was actually for his working place.

Using the back door as an entrance since the front one seemed to be ‘blocked’, Haruka was surprised when he heard the little rumble of the coffee brewer and the strong scent of caramel as well as chocolate mixing in the air.

He was quick to put on his working attire and when he opened the door, he was greeted with the sight of Rei taking some chocolate cookies out of the oven and placing the tray over the table and then with delicate hands, arranging them in another cool tray in the form of a flower.

“Good morning.” Haruka said a little awkwardly, but Rei didn’t seem to notice as he continued placing more pastries on trays.

“Good morning, Haruka-kun.” Rei paused for a second to adjust his red framed glasses. “As you’ve probably noticed, we might have a bit of a busy day today, so would you mind telling me if Nagisa-kun is coming anytime soon?” He said without looking up from the cupcakes he was lining up.

Nagisa had left before Haruka had woken up, so Haruka hadn’t seen him, but this kind of things happened more often than not, and even if Haruka woke up to and empty bed, Nagisa still showed up at work, so he answered like he always did.

“He should be here in no more than ten minutes.” Haruka felt out of place as he was just standing there looking at Rei doing five things at the same time while he was just standing there doing nothing.

“Okay, great.” Again, Rei didn’t look up. “Please take this to the counter and put them there for
display and then check the coffee machine, and if it’s done, then please put on another kettle.”

Haruka sighed in relief at being given something to do and proceeded to take three of the finished trays and making his way over to the counter so he could place them where anyone who came in could see them.

He was just putting on another kettle when the back door banged open and Nagisa’s loud voice was heard from the back of the shop.

“Good morning, Rei-chan!” Haruka would never be able to comprehend how Nagisa could be so active in the mornings, because no matter in which state he went to sleep, be that completely wasted or at the normal bedtime, the blond would always wake up with more energy than a five year old that slept peacefully during a whole night.

“Please stop calling me that, Nagisa-kun.” Came Rei’s mechanic response but even if Haruka couldn’t see him, he was able to distinguish that Rei’s answer was just out of routine. “Please change quickly and then go help Haruka-kun with the setting of the shop.”

Haruka could totally see Nagisa’s pout at being so poorly addressed.

“So mean, Rei-chan, but okay.” Haruka was surprised at this because it usually took more to make Nagisa do what he was asked.

He heard Nagisa’s footsteps making their way over to where he was and he quickly washed the surprise from his face, so when Nagisa walked through the door, he had his usual expression and Nagisa just passed by his side, slightly bumping his hip while he made his way to the counter with two trays of muffins in each hand.

Just nodding in acknowledgment, Haruka was about to go and help Nagisa place the trays when Rei’s voice flew from the kitchen.

“Haruka-kun, please open the doors, it’s about time we get started.” Haruka shuddered and made his way over to the door to let the, seemingly growing, line of costumers that were waiting outside.

As soon as the doors opened and people saw that they could come in, the shop came alive as the buzzing of conversations, steps, and cellphone notifications flooded the space.

Nagisa was already at the cash register and was giving all the people that were entering his sweetest smile and happiest tone, asking them what they would want and making suggestions.

Haruka was grateful because he preferred the job of doing the beverages and making sure the order was ready instead of having to tend to numerous strangers that he forgot their faces the moment the next one stepped in front of him to order.

“A Cinnamon blast and a cranberry muffin, please!” Nagisa’s voice cut right through Haruka’s thoughts.

Haruka started mixing and taking out all of the things he would need to make the beverage while he reached for a muffin by the counter.

“Two espressos and one ginger cookie!” Haruka was only half done with the previous order while Nagisa was already shouting the next and tending another client.

Haruka sighed as he took five containers and left them on display so he could easily reach for them and do whatever it was that Nagisa ordered.
“One Mocha with mint and two Caramel Explosions, please!” Nagisa’s voice was already ringing in Haruka’s ear and as he moved all around making, mixing and packing beverages and sweets. He knew that this was going to be one long day.

Haruka was exhausted, to put it simply.

The usual ‘morning rush’ had lasted until 11:30 AM and even after that, people had kept on coming through the door.

Nagisa, Rei and he had been exchanging places and occupation all throughout the day and even when Nozomi-san – another part-timer – had dropped by, they had still felt as if they didn’t have enough hands to prepare and attend the clients that kept flowing through the door.

It was now 3:33 PM and Haruka was taking off his working uniform and changing into his normal clothes to head to the University.

Well, classes didn’t start until 5:30 PM but they had been forced to close earlier than expected because they had run out of caramel and other various things that Rei would be buying later today.

And talking about Rei…

“Haruka-kun, Nagisa-kun.” Rei said by the door. Haruka nudged Nagisa, who had nodded off while putting on his socks. The blond gave a little jump and then proceeded to rub his eyes before focusing on Rei.

“As you both know, the joint event with ‘Aquamarine’ and ‘Clarity Freedom’ will be taking place in one month.” Rei regarded them both with a serious tone. “I don’t want to leave everything until the last minute, so we are going to be doing some preparations.” He then turned to Haruka. “Haruka-kun, the menu for the event has already been agreed on, but we will be doing a taste test next week on Tuesday at the hotel where the event is taking place, I’ll email you later the time but I will need you to come here on Monday to prepare some of the stuff for the next day so we don’t have to rush once we are there.” He then turned to Nagisa. “I will be requiring your assistance as well, Nagisa-kun, so I beg of you to be on time because otherwise it will affect all of this.” He then regarded the both of them. “Us three will be in charge of this taste test but for the event I’ll have the other four co-workers working with us and we’ll have the help of a serving company that has been chosen by one of our sponsors.”

“Okay.” Was all Haruka said and Nagisa just nodded in agreement, both of them were too tired to try and do or say something more elaborate.

“Okay, then, you’re dismissed for today.” Rei said as he grabbed his bag and made his way over to
the door. “Good evening to you both.” And with that, he went away.

Haruka just sighed and turned around to see Nagisa dozing off again.

God, Nagisa could really sleep wherever when he was tired, and well, this time Haruka couldn’t actually blame him. With all that moving and doing the whole morning and part of the evening, he felt as if his feet were about to explode and even his calves burned.

Haruka again shook Nagisa and just as last time, his friend gave a little jump before reassuming what he had been doing.

Haruka, who had already finished changing, stood up and grabbed his backpack and slung it over one shoulder.

“I’ll be going on ahead, you okay?” Haruka asked because he really wanted to get to the University because the results of the paintings were supposed to be up and on the main board by the teachers’ office.

Nagisa just waved a hand dismissively and smiled at him with knowing eyes.

“Go on, Haru-chan. I’ll be fine.” Haruka nodded and gave the key over to Nagisa so he could close once he left. “I’ll see you tomorrow.”

“Yeah, see you.” Haruka then turned around and left the same way Rei had only a few minutes earlier.

The streets weren’t as crowded at this time because most of the people were at work, but you could actually start to see little groups of high school students that had just finished the school day.

Haruka just wanted to get to the train station as soon as possible and sit down for a few minutes before his feet gave out on him, because honestly, each step felt like torture.

Once near the station, he made his way quickly to the train he needed to board and waited for a few minutes for the train to arrive and once the train stopped moving, he was the first to board and sit down.

Much like the streets, most of the passengers were high and middle school students but Haruka paid them no mind while he sat back and relaxed a little.

But a few minutes later, his phone vibrated in his pocket and with real reluctance he reached out and without looking swiped his thumb over the screen and then opened his eyes to see who was interrupting his few moments of peace.

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From: T. Makoto

To: N. Haruka

20/03/2014 3:59 PM

Good afternoon, Haru.
I hope everything’s going fine.

I just wanted to know if our plans for tomorrow still stand?

Haruka’s heart skip a beat once again when he spotted how Makoto had addressed him and immediately wanted to roll his eyes at himself.

To: T. Makoto
From: N. Haruka
20/03/2014 4:02 PM

Good afternoon, Makoto.

The one who can’t stand is me.

And yes, if you’re still up for it?

Haruka hit send and a heartbeat later, his phone was vibrating again.

From: T. Makoto
To: N. Haruka
20/03/2014 4:04 PM

What? Did you run a marathon and didn’t invite me?

And I’m always up and ready.

‘Smartass.’ Was what Haruka thought before typing.
To: T. Makoto

From: N. Haruka

20/03/2014 4:06 PM

Now, aren’t you a funny one?

Pretty busy day at work. I swear half of Japan came to the shop.

Yes, “7:30 PM at the University gate. Don’t be late.”

Haruka felt a small smirk on his face before he hit the send button. His phone vibrated once again.

To: N. Haruka

From: T. Makoto

20/03/2014 4:09 PM

You have a slight sense of humor yourself, don’t you?

Mocking people isn’t very nice, Haru.

But yes, don’t be late.

This was stupid. The stupid blush he could feel on his face was stupid, and even more stupid was that he didn’t know why he was blushing.
From: N. Haruka

20/03/2014 4:12

Don’t we all?

And I never said I was nice.

Yeah, yeah, you don’t have to repeat yourself so much.

It felt like he had only hit send when his phone was lighting up with the notification of an incoming text.

To: N. Haruka

From: T. Makoto

20/03/2014 4:13 PM

Touché.

I’m just making sure.

Either way, don’t push yourself too hard.

I have to go. I’ll text you later or tomorrow.

Haruka didn’t bother to answer and just sat there trying to calm his beating heart that for some stupid reason didn’t want to slow down.

After that, it wasn’t long before the train reached the station and he was the first to get out.

He followed the path that led to the University and within five minutes he was walking up the stairs and going directly to the main board.

The aching seemed to be forgotten in favor of getting to that board and see how he had done.

He was satisfied with what he had painted and handed over, but that didn’t assure him that he
would pass the course or even have a good grade on the assignment.

As these thoughts swirled around in his mind, he was able to see the board at a distance and how a small group had gathered around it and were trying to look at some of the papers attached to it. His steps grew larger and with four strides he was behind the small group and standing on his tiptoes to try and see what score he had gotten.

Suddenly, someone tapped his shoulder and he turned around rather violently.

Behind him was standing Takizawa-sensei with two girls and another boy from his class, and while the others were looking at him with a weird expression, his teacher was just regarding him with a neutral face.

“Come with me please, Nanase-kun.” She said while she signaled him and the others to follow her.

Haruka didn’t say anything and just joined the little group of four as they walked behind their teacher until they reached the art department.

Once there, the little woman turned around and faced them, and with an excited tone spoke.

“Well, I brought you all here because as you have probably noticed, none of your names are on the board outside the teacher’s office.” Haruka just scrunched his face in confusion as the other three nodded in acknowledgment. “You don’t have to worry about that. If your names aren’t there is because you’ve been selected and you obviously have the complete score in this assignment as well as some extra credits.”

The girl standing next to Haruka spoke then.

“I’m sorry Takizawa-sensei, that’s good and all, and please don’t get me wrong, I’m excited, but… we’ve been selected… for what exactly?” Their teacher seemed to brighten up even more at the girl’s question, who Haruka didn’t even know the name of.

“Ah! Now that’s the question I’ve been waiting for!” She smiled widely at them all. “The University is hosting a gallery and we’re selecting the best from every department to contribute to the exposition!” She then looked at each of them. “You four have been selected because each of your paintings had something that the others didn’t, be it: technique, theme, shading or just something new, original and attractive.”

The girls had big grins on their faces and the other guy other than Haruka was looking pretty smug.

“When and where is the gallery taking place?” Asked the guy. Really, Haruka ought to at least memorize some of the names of the people of his class, otherwise he would start referring to them as: guy 1, guy 2…

“Three weeks from now and it all be hosted here in the University. A lot of important people will be here that day and if you’re lucky enough, you might even get a sponsor.” Answered Takizawa.

“Also, it will be a night event and of etiquette so please gentlemen, wear a suit and you young ladies, buy a nice dress.” She was looking at all of them as if she was envisioning them in different clothes and it was honestly a little unnerving. “Also, you may invite 2 people to accompany you that night and those two people can invite one more person, so please, choose wisely.”

The girls were whispering excitedly among themselves but then decided to turn around and included the other guy into their conversation.
“Okay, now that the good news has been finally conveyed, you may leave for your afternoon classes.” Takizawa said.

“Haruka-kun, do you have any questions?” Haruka’s eyes snapped back to his teacher, who was regarding with the patient eye that almost all elderly people seemed to possess.

“Yes… No. Sorry. I… I’ll be leaving now.” Haruka said and then turned around to walk to his next class.

Rapidly he found his classroom and with an apology to his teacher, he sat in one of the empty spaces that were left at the back of the room.

He took notes and listened to his teacher telling them about the Impressionism and the most important painters and people during this period.

The bell rang and Haruka took out a pad for his sketching class that unlike other times, would be taking place in the classroom.

His teacher arrived and telling them he wanted them to draw something related to the city life, he left them all to their antiques and started looking through some papers while all of them took out sketching pads and pencils of various numbers.

Haruka took his phone and earphones and while he pressed play and random songs started playing, he started drawing a simple image of the train station he used every day.

It was simple and Haruka was done five minutes before his next class began and when the bell rang once again, while everyone was handing in their sketches, he was already out the door and making his way over to his History of Arts classroom.

His teacher was rather surprised when he saw him entering, because almost always Haruka was one of the last to enter, but he said nothing of it.

Little by little, the class started to fill and more and more people started coming through the door.

It kind of reminded him of the shop in the morning.

Soon, classes began and Haruka listened diligently as the professor explained and wrote on the board.

Again, the bell rang and the class was dismissed.

Haruka just gathered his stuff and weaved his way through the mass of students that were also on their way out.

Once outside, he paused by the ramen shop on the corner and ordered some ramen with mackerel and once his order was handed out to him, he started walking to the train station.

He had to stand during the whole ride because the train was overflowing with people, be it with University students or people going home after a long day at work.

Much like in the afternoon, once the train made it to his stop, he was the first one out and before he knew it, he was already opening his little apartment’s door and taking his shoes off.

He walked towards the little kitchen and pulling one of the chairs out, took out his food and started eating. He hadn’t noticed how hungry he was until the first bite made it to his mouth and his
stomach grumbled.

Haruka finished his food in under five minutes and then threw the plastic containers and wooden chopsticks to the trash can.

The fatigue he had felt after leaving the shop was catching up to him once again and the only thing he could think about was going to his bed and sleeping until he had to wake up to go to the shop the next day.

Rapidly discarding his clothes in the laundry basket, which was getting pretty full, he pulled on his pajamas and let himself drop onto the mattress, which felt, quite honestly, heavenly.

Only when he was tucked in and in one of the most comfortable positions he could remember ever lying in, he let the giddy feeling he had been feeling since his teacher had told him about the exposition take over him, and as he laid there, exhausted and quite happy, he fell asleep with a small smile gracing his face.

Haruka woke up the next day to the sound of his alarm clock.

He felt good, better than he had in a long time, and instead of begrudgingly leaving his bed, like most days, he stood up with, if not enthusiasm, at least not with reluctance.

He took a shower, changed and then went to prepare breakfast, which consisted of some eggs and a glass of orange juice.

He then went to his room, made his bed, and gathered his things to go to work.

While making his way down the apartment complex, he saw that the cherry blossoms were covered with white laces and little lights, those that were used around Christmas, and admired how the plastic shone dimly with the sunlight.

They would surely look beautiful at night was what he thought while he started walking towards the train station.

The train ride was peaceful and quick and once the train stopped he walked a little bit faster than normal towards his work place.

And just as he was rounding the corner, he saw it.

Pretty much like yesterday, there was already a line waiting outside the shop, but unlike the day before, this time there were at least ten people.
Once again, he used the back door and when he opened the door, and the smell of coffee and the sound of things being moved around got to him, he didn’t feel surprise. He just hurried to put on his uniform and a pair of comfortable shoes, because after yesterday’s experience, he didn’t want to feel that pain again, and then just gave a curt nod to Rei and helped him get everything ready.

Five minutes later, Nagisa, Nozomi, and Munakata entered the shop and helped them.

Soon, Nagisa was already at the cash register, Haruka and Rei were in the kitchen, Nozomi was setting some plastic containers so she didn’t have to reach for them while doing the orders and Munakata was opening the door to let the clients in.

Once the door was open, people purred inside and it was a blur form then on.

Nagisa, much like ever, shouted the orders left and right, and he wasn’t even done with one order when he was already saying the next. Munakata and Nozomi had created a little system in which Nozomi handed Munakata whatever he needed to make the beverage and then gave it back to Nozomi, so she could seal or close whatever that had to be sealed or closed, and then she would hand it back to Nagisa.

Meanwhile, Rei and Haruka were pretty much doing the same, just that they prepared whatever the clients ordered to eat. Haruka would prepare any of the salty stuff and then hand it over to Rei to wrap it and get it over to the counter, and if it was something sweet, then Rei would prepare it, then hand it over to Haruka to take over to the counter.

This pattern was followed the whole day until they had to close for the day because they had ran out of coffee – really, how can a coffee shop run out of coffee? – And dough for the various cookies they had on display.

Right now, they were all sitting down in the lockers.

True, Haruka wasn’t as tired as yesterday when it had only been Nagisa, Rei and him for the most part of the day, and he hadn’t been surprised when he had seen Nozomi and Munakata coming to work, even though they didn’t have to work until the next day, because with all those people, they needed all the help they could get, but it still left him tired due to all that moving around and making and handing out orders of different things.

“Good work, everyone.” Rei’s voice cut through the silence that had settled over all of them. “Nozomi-chan, Munakata-kun, I’m sorry I called you in last minute, but as you can see, things are pretty busy as of late.” He said, regarding the both of them with an apologetic look.

“Nah, don’t worry about it. Either way, I didn’t have much to do today.” Munakata said as he cracked his neck. The sound made Haruka recoil.

“I was actually surprised when you called me, Rei-san, but I don’t mind coming over so please don’t worry about it.” Nozomi gave Rei a little smile and Rei sighed in relief.

“If things continue like this, I will have to hire more people to come and help here, but I’ll wait a little and see how things go.” Rei was now massaging his temples as if to will away an incoming headache. “I will let you know if I decide to hire some people, and if you have anyone who might be interested then please tell them so we can do this as fast and efficiently as possible.”

They all just nodded and Rei sighed once again.

“You can leave. We won’t open tomorrow, because I need to go and buy all of the things we ran out of today, but please be here a little bit earlier than usual on Monday.” With that Rei, who had
already changed and gathered his things, gave a little bow to all of them and left without another word.

Haruka looked up at the clock on the wall.

3:55 PM.

His classes didn’t start until five, but he wanted to get early to the University so he could start on his sketching assignment because he just knew that the time they were going to be given to draw what the teacher had told them the day before wouldn’t be enough, if he wanted to do at least a decent job.

“Well, I’ll be leaving too. Good afternoon.” Nozomi’s voice came and when he turned to look back at her, she was already out the door.

Haruka looked around and noticed that once again, it was just Nagisa and he left, at what time had Munakata left? He didn’t know, but it wasn’t like it mattered to him anyways.

Haruka started changing into his normal clothes when his phone vibrated.

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From: T. Makoto

To: N. Haruka

21/03/2014 4:02 PM

Good afternoon, Haru.

I hope you and your feet are doing well?

Haruka huffed but started typing nonetheless.

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To: T. Makoto

From: N. Haruka

21/03/2014 4:04 PM

Same to you.
Me and my feet are pretty tired again, but thanks for asking.

I’ll see you later today?

He pressed the send button and he was just able to pull on his shirt before his phone vibrated again.

From: T. Makoto
To: N. Haruka
21/03/2014 4:05 PM

You should try to relax a little.

Of course, you already know where.

By the way, do you want to go get dinner or would you rather have something there?

This guy had pretty fast fingers and he had finally stopped repeating things. Haruka put on his jeans and jacket on before replying.

To: T. Makoto
From: N. Haruka
21/03/2014 4:09 PM

Oh? Would you be able to help me out with that?

But seriously, I’m fine.

At the park, I want Takoyaki.
Haruka took his bag and put his phone inside his pocket. He had brought a scarf just in case but he wouldn’t use it now. He then turned around and looked at Nagisa who had been rather quiet.

“I’ll be going on ahead.” Nagisa just turned around to look at him with sleepy eyes and gave Haruka a tired smile.

Haruka frowned.

“Hey, are you okay?” Nagisa just nodded while he rubbed his eyes.

“Mhm… just tired. I’ve been staying up until late studying for some test I’ll be having in two weeks.” Nagisa finished with a yawn and Haruka sighed.

“You still have time, so you shouldn’t push yourself too hard. Either way,” Haruka paused, giving Nagisa a tiny smile. “You’re a little freaking genius, so you’ll probably just read everything once and have it memorized.” Nagisa gave a tiny giggle and then looked up at Haruka from where he was sitting.

“Thank you, Haruka-chan!” He was smiling a full smile now and Haruka felt relieved at seeing his friend acting as cheerful as always. “And nice clothes by the way.” Now he just wanted to throw his bag at Nagisa’s face.

“Tch. Whatever.” Haruka said while accommodating his bag with all of his things over his shoulder. “Text me once you get home, okay?”

“Yup!” Nagisa was now standing and practically jumping up and down like a little kid. Seriously, from where did this guy get all that energy from? Whatever, he started walking towards the exit, and just as he was about to leave from the front door, Nagisa’s voice reached him from the locker’s room. “And have fun tonight, Haru-chan!”

Haruka just closed the door but was still able to hear Nagisa’s amused giggle.

“Please, put your art supplies down and hand in your sketches.” The teacher’s voice got resounded all around the room just as the bell rang.

Some students were rapidly tracing lines on their pads, trying desperately to finish their sketches, while others just gave resigned sighs and stood to leave their pads on the teachers’ desk.

And then there were people like Haruka, who were just giving final touches and stood up normally to hand out their finished works.

He looked at the clock by the entrance.
Haruka started gathering all of his pencils and other things he had used for his drawing. He was grateful he had been able to get to the classroom early so he had had a few extra minutes to work on his sketch before the class started.

Once he had packed everything and he was sure that nothing was left behind, he took his bag, slung it over one shoulder, and started walking towards the University’s main gate.

The corridors were flooding with students. Some were packed with sketching pads and art materials, you could see some that even had their hair of a rainbow color from all the paint stains they had all over their body, and some others were walking with different instruments and some were as red as tomatoes because of their dancing classes.

Once outside a cold wind hit him in the face and he took out the scarf he had been keeping in his bag up until then. He was grateful he had decided to bring it along.

He was just going down the stairs when the silver Accord from last time parked in front of the University.

Haruka walked a little faster and just when he was about to get to the car, the door opened for him and he was staring at Makoto’s smiling face.

“Punctual as always, huh?” Haruka said as he entered the car and closed the door behind himself.

“Always, my dear Haru.” Makoto said in a playful tone and Haruka looked away as he felt his cheeks heating and the car started moving.

Makoto just chuckled and Haruka decided that the city life at night was one of the most fascinating things he had ever seen.

“…ru?” Haruka didn’t want to wake up, so he just mumbled something and tried to push whoever it was away. He heard a low chuckle. “C’mon Haru. Didn’t you say you wanted Takoyaki? I can see the stand from here.”

Haruka perked up a little at this and since he was more awake than asleep, decided to open his eyes.
“Now that’s more like it.” Makoto’s smiling face was really close and this seemed to wake him up completely. “As much as I’d like to stay here and admire your blush more closely, I really do want to see the cherry blossoms tonight.” Haruka just pushed him away and rubbed at his eyes.

“Leave me alone.” Haruka mumbled as he exited the car and stretched his legs.

When had he fallen asleep? One second they had been driving through the streets of the city and the next thing he knew, they were already somewhere near the park.

“Ah, but where would the fun in that be?” Tachibana asked in an amused tone and Haruka just glared at him.

They started walking towards the park. Apparently, Makoto had parked a few blocks away from the park and it seemed as more people than what Haruka originally thought were attending the little ‘fair’, because the streets were packed with cars and little groups of people were making their way towards the same location.

Haruka started feeling a little reluctance. He didn’t like crowds, that’s why he lived in a little, almost secluded part in the vast city of Tokyo.

He recognized the streets in which they were walking because well, as he had mentioned before, the park where they were going was practically in front of his apartment complex and this was the route he used most when he went jogging.

They continued walking in silence, easily falling into a rhythm.

“So, how was University?” Makoto was the one who spoke and broke the silence, Haruka didn’t turn to look at him as he continued walking.

“Fine.” He had never been a talkative person, and he really wasn’t going to start now.

That was one of the reason most people gave up on trying to befriend him. They couldn’t tolerate the silence nor Haruka’s short and curt answers.

“Anything interesting?” Makoto, however, was kind of persistent because most people would just leave at that after an answer like the one Haruka had just given him.

“Not really.” And just to please the brunette beside him, he added. “The shop was pretty busy again today.”

“Ah, yeah. You mentioned that on a text.” Haruka directed a sideways glance towards Makoto and the tall man was smiling gently at him. Haruka rapidly averted his gaze. “Are your feet still hurting?”

Haruka only shook his head to signal his answer.

“Well, at least you didn’t have to sit for three hours listening to a 70-year-old person talking about the trash-we-call-food and how young people nowadays will end up having to roll around instead of walking when they get to their forties.” Haruka turned a little and almost snorted at Makoto’s face of distaste, as if he could recall every word.

Makoto then turned to look at him and when he saw the amusement in Haruka’s eyes, he continued to talk. “Seriously, this guy just kept on saying that if people still did things as in the ‘good old days’ and how those little metal boxes with shiny screens will be the end of society.”
Haruka just had to bury his face deeper into his scarf to stop Makoto from seeing the smile that wanted to slip onto his face, because even if Haruka hadn’t been willing to actively participate in the conversation, Makoto hadn’t cared and continued to talk, but Haruka didn’t feel as if he was just trying to fill the silence – which he supposed Makoto kind of was trying to do – but he was making Haruka feel as if filling the silence was just the natural thing to do, because he knew Haruka would listen, even if he didn’t really acknowledge whatever he was saying, like if it was a given that he would talk, Haruka would hear him out and the comfortable atmosphere would continue as if that was what was supposed to happen.

It made Haruka warm inside and really difficult to try and conceal his little, pleased smile.

Fortunately, he didn’t have to do so for much time because they were already at the entry of the park and the smell of food reached his nostrils.

His stomach grumbled and Makoto laughed a little beside him. Haruka just turned to look at something else other than the face of the brunet beside him.

“Let’s get something to eat, shall we?” Makoto made a gesture to go farther into the park, and soon, Haruka’s embarrassment was forgotten in favor of getting something inside his mouth.

Haruka easily spotted a stand of Takoyaki and rapidly made his way towards the line that was already forming there. Makoto appeared at his side not even two seconds later and they waited in amiable silence until it was their turn to order.

“Three portions please.” Haruka had opened his mouth to talk but the voice that resounded was Makoto’s. Haruka looked up at the tall man and he just received a smug smile and a wink in response, to which Haruka huffed and looked away, even though his face heated up a little.

“¥1650, please.” The middle aged lady who was taking their order said. Haruka was pulling his wallet out when a hand got in his way and he just saw as Makoto handed the lady a bill to pay and the lady giving Makoto his change.

“Thank you.” Makoto said as he was handed his order. He then passed one to Haruka and urged him to move so the next person in line could order too.

“I can pay for my things.” Haruka said, standing there with the Takoyaki in his hands. Makoto turned to him and before answering him, swallowed the little ball he had been eating.

“I know.” He said with a smile. “I just wanted to treat you.” And then he turned around and started walking.

Haruka frowned but followed Makoto until he fell in step with him.

“Hmm… these are really good, Haru.” Makoto smiled contently as he took another little ball and put in his mouth. He munched for a few seconds and then swallowed. “If you don’t eat those, then I will.” And ate another one to make emphasis.

Haruka clutched the food closer to him and took his eyes off Makoto to stare down at his food. It did have a great smell, but with how hungry Haruka felt he supposed anything would cause his mouth to water, which was what was happening right now.

With his hunger distracting him, he rapidly took one of the little balls and put it in his mouth.

Haruka almost groaned at how good it tasted.
He forgot everything and just continued to pop each little Takoyaki ball into his mouth until his stomach calmed a little. Once he had managed to slow down, he looked beside him to the green-eyed man that was accompanying him, but he wasn’t looking at Haruka.

Makoto was eating the last of his food – seriously, how fast did he eat? He had even ordered two portions for himself! – And was looking quite happy.

Haruka then turned his attention back to his food but ate more slowly. Well, he just had two Takoyaki balls left, so he finished rather quickly.

As they passed by a trash can, they both threw away the little plastic plates in which they had eaten and then continued to walk peacefully beside each other.

Haruka liked it. He liked that the silence wasn’t tense or felt stuffed, it felt light and… well, comfortable.

It had been quite some time since he had felt comfortable with another person that wasn’t Nagisa. So even though ‘this’ was something new, it felt nice.

“They are rather beautiful, aren’t they?” Makoto’s voice cut through his thoughts.

For a moment Haruka didn’t know what he was talking about, but then, remembering why they were actually there, he looked at the cherry blossoms that were all around him.

Makoto was right, they were beautiful… breathtaking even.

The white laces had been well placed all around the trees and made it feel like if it was a ball or a fancy party.

The little lights that Haruka had noticed in the morning gave an enchanted feeling to the whole setting, because the deep light of each one of them filtered through the flowers and made it seem as if the lights were of a soft, pastel pink color instead of an almost golden nature.

Everything around them was pink, but somehow it didn’t overwhelm Haruka, it just added to the whole scenario as if it was something pulled out from a fairytale book.

“They are.” Was Haruka’s answer and he just heard Makoto’s hum of agreement as they continued walking, each with their own thoughts, offering silent company.

Suddenly there was a hand grasping Haruka and he snapped his head faster than was necessary.

“The fireworks are about to begin, c’mon!” Makoto had an almost childish excitement in his eyes as he pulled Haruka to someplace away from everyone else.

Haruka couldn’t seem to snap out of his little shock, the only thing he could focus on was his hand on Makoto’s and how big it was compared to his own.

It was also warm, unlike Haruka’s, and unexpectedly soft. He had expected them to be chapped, maybe even feel some calluses, but no, it was smooth and Haruka couldn’t help but hold his hand a little bit tighter, which caused Makoto to look back at him and smile wider.

They continued half-walking and half-jogging until they came to an almost secluded area atop a round of stairs.

When they got there, both of them were breathing pretty hard but neither of them let go of the
other’s hand.

When they were finally able to breathe normally again, they walked towards the railing that offered a view of the whole park.

Haruka had never been to the park and much less to this place, but now that he saw it from up here, he would make sure to come by again.

The whole scene looked like something out of a book, the cherry blossoms shone dimly and it looked enchanting with the lights of the little bulbs, making it seem like the trees were glowing. It was really amazing, and as Makoto rested both of their hands on the railing, Haruka just had to lean on Makoto’s shoulder as he regarded the full moon that shone above them, showering everything with a silvery light that just added to the peaceful atmosphere.

Suddenly, a bright light shot across the sky and then everything was covered with blue, purple and green as the firework exploded and the sound of the explosion resonated everywhere.

Haruka shuffled a little closer to Makoto’s body and then he felt Makoto interlacing his fingers.

At that Haruka looked up and he was immediately lost in a sea of green.

Makoto’s eyes were enchanting, the lights of the firework reflecting in the emerald orbs, making them dance and adding something almost hypnotic to them.

Unconsciously, or consciously, Haruka’s eyes dropped momentarily to Makoto’s lips, only to snap back up, but it was too late.

Makoto had already noticed – and how could he not if he was so close to Haruka’s face? – And now was slowly turning towards him, and of course by doing so, he was moving Haruka too until the both of them were standing face to face.

Slowly, and transmitting clearly with his eyes what he was about to do, Makoto lifted a hand to cup Haruka cold cheek, and at the warm contact, Haruka couldn’t help but lean into the strong palm.

Makoto smiled at this, a sweet beautiful smile that made Haruka’s heart pound a little faster.

Their hands were still joined together, and as Makoto leaned down, and Haruka tipped his face up so they could meet halfway, they let go of each other’s hands so Makoto’s hands went around Haruka’s waist and Haruka’s hands went around Makoto’s neck.

Haruka could faintly taste the Takoyaki in Makoto’s lips, but he didn’t care, because as soon as Makoto’s lips started moving against his, he couldn’t think anymore.

Makoto’s lips were as soft as his hands, but instead of being pliant and letting Haruka do whatever he wanted, they guided him gently yet firmly.

It was sweet, rich and soft, but at the same time it had a sensual undertone that made Haruka’s skin tingle and his hands tangle in the brown mop of hair, which was silky and oh so pleasant to the touch.

Haruka raised on his tiptoes to get a better taste of those lips that were becoming quite addictive and he was pleased when Makoto pressed him more firmly against his chest.

But then, the pressure on his lips diminished and the arms around him started pushing him back gently, Haruka frowned but let himself get disentangled from the taller man until Makoto gave him
one last sweet and far too short kiss.

Makoto smiled at him, and then held his hand.

“Don’t pout or I’ll have kiss you again.” He said and Haruka turned his face and buried it into his scarf as his face heated up.

Well, it wasn’t that bad of an offer, but still, he had his pride.

“I’m not pouting.” But even then, he didn’t let go of Makoto’s hand.

“Of course.” Haruka could hear his teasing smile but refused to look at him. “Sorry, my mistake.” Makoto laughed and Haruka just wanted to crawl in a hole and disappear.

Nonetheless, he let himself be guided over to the railing where they both directed their stare to the fireworks above and Haruka reclined his head, once again, against Makoto’s shoulder.

And they stayed like that, until the fireworks were over and the only witness of what had happened was the moon shining dimly in the sky.

Chapter End Notes

Edited by arawaweru :)

Hello lovely people of ao3! First of all, I’m deeply sorry for the almost 2 months without updating :( It's that this past few weeks were crazy stressful for me because of school and I’ve been sick for almost three weeks and I'm now taking antibiotics, so yeah... it's been pretty rough :(

But! I'm finally back, healthy (for the most part) and I feeling extremely guilty about not posting and making some people think that I wasn't continuing this story. So, here's my make up present to all of you who actually read this: +9,000 words of writing with me half-high with a fever and with coughing fits every five minutes xD Either way, I actually liked the end result and... Makoharu kiss, because... because I can and I wanted them to kiss, and I hope you wanted them to kiss too because even if you didn't I already made them do it :P And also, have you guys noticed that I kind of, probably, maybe, absolutely love Nagisa? I just love that little ball of energy so much <3

Sooo... did you like it? Did you hate it? Was it good, or should I just go back to the hospital not to be let near a computer until it's safe for humanity? Comments always make my day and seeing that you guys like what I write is what inspires me to keep writing so be sure to leave a lovely comment. Also, kuddos are very much appreciated ^^ Also, if any of you wants to talk to me, you can always contact me on my twitter: @ArtisitqueR12 :)
So, I'll read you next time and I hope you a lovely weekend!
Chapter 17

Chapter Summary

Makoto scanned his face for something and when he didn’t find it, he smiled sweetly and Haruka felt himself melt.

Chapter Notes

(I'm really sorry for any awkward spaces between paragraphs, AO3 messed up my format and I have no idea how to fix it).

See the end of the chapter for more notes

He was being pulled by the hand down a path he had gone over probably more than a million times during his lifetime.

The streets were familiar.

The old lady greeting him as he passed by was familiar.

The stone steps that had God knows how many years were familiar.

The little white flowers that adorned the sides of the steps were familiar.

The white stray cat that he used to pet while feeding him on his backyard was familiar.

The house on top of the hill was familiar.

And so was the smell of tea and herbs that floated around the house, giving the atmosphere a calming and welcoming feeling that Haruka had loved since the first time he had walked through the door.
The only thing that wasn’t familiar was the hand that was pulling him along.

Just as he realized that, it disappeared and he was left standing in the middle of the living room in his grandmother’s house.

He looked around and tried to see if there was anyone else beside him in the room, but he found nothing.

He hadn’t been able to see who the hand which had been guiding him belong to, and all he knew was that even though it was just as small as his own infant hand, it had given him a feeling of strength, confidence and oddly enough.... security.

Seeing as there was no one and the person who had brought him here was nowhere to be found, Haruka started walking around the house, his little feet didn’t make a sound as he searched in the kitchen, where he found nothing, and then over to the garden, where he saw a familiar figure.

Sitting comfortably and tranquil, was his grandmother.

She had her hair tied up in a bun and was wearing a very elegant kimono. Her gray hair and clothes reflected the sunlight, making it seem like she had a halo and a shining aura around herself.

Haruka could only stand there without being able to move.

Slowly, her grandmother turned around and when she saw him, her mouth curled into one of the most gentle and sweet smiles he had ever seen.

Her eyes crinkled at the corners and her eyes were almost closed, leaving only a fine line of blue visible.

He felt as if not enough air was getting to his lungs and when she extended her arms to welcome him, he all but ran and threw himself at her, burying his face in her chest and hugging her tightly by the waist with his legs across her lap.
She chuckled and started carding his hair with one hand and holding him close with the other, making him feel safe and at peace.

“My, my… Did something happen, Dear?” She asked softly.

“It’s hard…” He hiccupped.

“What? School, swimming?” She stroked his cheek, which was now wet.

“Life.” He answered in between ragged breaths. “Everything is so hard… and I miss you… I miss you so much.”

“Come now… where is my calm and serene boy?” She maneuvered him in a way in which he was sitting across her lap with his legs dangling on one side.

“I just… it’s just… it hurts, Granny.” He looked up at her and he saw her frowning down at him, before her face softened and then looked back at the garden in front of them.

“Life is never easy, my Dear.” She said gently. “You should know that by now.”

He had some flashbacks of his mother’s cold stare and his dad’s indifference.

Haruka shuddered.

“But you can’t keep living in the past.” She said while she resumed stroking his hair. “Life is so short… enjoy the warm, lively sun.”

Nagisa’s chattering and bright smile appeared before him as he listened to his grandma’s words.

“Enjoy your work.”

He saw himself and Rei working at the coffee shop as well as everyone else. It might’ve been busy and tiring, but he would be lying if he said he didn’t enjoy it.
Well, at least most of the time.

“Enjoy painting.”

All around them appeared things he had drawn along the years.

“Enjoy cooking.”

Different dishes came out of nowhere, enveloping him in a thousand different smells as he closed his eyes.

“Enjoy swimming.”

He saw everything as if he was in the bottom of a pool, everything was slightly distorted, yet crystal clear, bathed in a translucent light that bathed his surroundings and made everything shiny.

“Enjoy life.” She said in his ear and he smiled happily.

Suddenly, his grandmother’s warmth was gone and his eyes shot open. The room was dark and he couldn’t see beyond the circle of light that surrounded him.

“G-Granny?” He stuttered and shivered as a cold wind ruffled his clothes and hair.

“Let go of the past.” He heard someone say, but it wasn’t his grandmother’s voice.

This voice was deeper and it definitely belonged to a grown man. All the small hair on Haruka’s arms and the back of his neck prickled.

“Let go.” His skin prickled as goosebumps formed along his arms, the voice was close.
He frantically looked around but saw no one. Not that he could see in that utter darkness.

“Let go…” The voice continued and Haruka gave a little screech as he felt the breath of the one who was speaking next to him.

He jumped to his feet and tried to run, but his legs just wouldn’t move.

“Let go… or burn in the flames of regret.” Haruka screamed as something wet touched his neck and then the room bursted up in flames.

There was nowhere to run, the fire was all around him and Haruka didn’t doubt for a second that as soon as it reached him, it would consume him.

He backed against a corner and saw as the flames licked the wooden floor, making a slow approach, showing him what would happen to him and the inevitability and fatality of his situation.

The room was becoming unbearably hot and his throat was starting to feel clogged. He struggled to try and make air get to his lungs but the effort was too great and the flames got closer and closer by the second.

“...r..” He thought he heard someone talking, but that was impossible.

There was no one there.

“H...r…” The fire was now less than half a meter away and he could feel it already scorching his skin.

“H... ru…” He could feel tears escaping his eyes only to evaporate an instant later.

“Haru…” He closed his eyes and curled up into himself, leaving it to the fire to end him right then and there.

But the burn never came and when he slowly opened his eyes again, he was sitting down in the
middle of a meadow.

He blinked away the tears that hadn’t been able to leave his eyes, he looked around and then heard someone chuckling.


Haruka frowned.

No one but Nagisa called him that and the voice most definitely didn’t belong to his hyperactive friend.

He started walking and flowers started blooming around him. Little white flowers appeared everywhere and then his hand was enveloped by the same warmth again and he was being forced to walk.

This time, his hand was no longer that of an infant, and neither was the one who was pulling him along.

Instead it was slightly tanned and it held Haruka’s hand firmly and securely with their fingers laced together. He trailed his eyes from the hand up an arm and then to a broad back, a messy mop of sandy-brown hair greeted him, and he was fairly sure he knew who this person was, even though he couldn’t really recall his name.

“Where are we going?” Haruka asked but only got another chuckle in response. It was a light sound that made him feel secure, even if he couldn’t pinpoint why exactly.

“Why won’t you answer me?” He tried again but only got a squeeze to his hand as they continued to walk.

But Haruka was tired of being toyed around with, and so, he stopped walking.

Instead of tripping like he had presumed the other person would, he had stopped at the same time.
Just like if he had known Haruka would stop and had done so himself. Like if he could read his mind and reacted accordingly.

“Where are we?” He asked, more firmly this time.

A thumb brushed across his knuckles ever so gently before letting go of his hand and then the person in front of him turned around.

His eyes shone like liquid emeralds, reflecting and transforming the light that washed over them. It seemed like if he had the sun in his eyes and…

No, that wasn’t quite right.

It looked as if he was the sun himself, radiating warmth and gentleness that took Haruka’s breath away when he suddenly and gently smiled at him.

Makoto opened his mouth and answered.

“Why, Haru… we are in your dreams of course.”

Haruka woke up, but he didn’t open his eyes.

He was comfortable, maybe slightly sore for some unknown reason, but it was warm and all he wanted was to snuggle further into that warmth that seemed like if someone was embracing him with strong yet gentle arms.

Suddenly, he felt movement underneath him and his eyes shot open.
He had to blink a couple of times to actually be able to see something and just when he was able to discern that he was in his living room, something shifted again.

Haruka tried to get up and see just what the hell was moving when he was dragged back down with a bit more force than was actually necessary.

He looked up and his heart stopped, before it started beating madly.

Asleep and with his arm around Haruka, was Makoto.

He tried to extract himself from Makoto’s arm and tried to gather his thoughts, but that only made Makoto frown on his sleep and snuggled Haruka even more.

He had Haruka pretty much like his grandmother had held him in his dream, with his arms around him and his legs over his lap and dangling on one side. They were sitting on the couch – or more like Makoto was, since Haruka was pretty much sitting across Makoto’s lap – and Haruka was pretty sure that Makoto would wake up with a sore neck since it was bending at a weird angle.

Haruka’s face was burning up and he was trying to remember or trying to come up with a logical explanation as to how they had ended up like that.

He remembered that after… oh.

Oh God… he had kissed Makoto.

Makoto had kissed him.

Yeah, if Haruka’s face hadn’t been red before, he was pretty sure it was now.

He forced himself to move on from that memory and move on.
So, after that had happened, they had stayed a little while more at the park before it got a little bit too chilly and Makoto had offered to walk him home. Haruka had accepted and within a few minutes they had been standing in front of his apartment.

Makoto had held his hand the entire time, and to be quite honest, Haruka hadn’t minded… he had, in fact, liked it.

They had stood there for a few minutes, Makoto just lightly stroking his knuckles and Haruka looking at whatever that wasn’t Makoto’s face, then Makoto’s hand had stopped and Haruka knew he was going to say goodbye.

Haruka had panicked, he didn’t want Makoto to leave yet but he also couldn’t tell him to stay. So he had just told Makoto if he didn’t want a cup of tea before he left. Makoto had looked rather surprised at Haruka’s sudden invitation – and honestly, Haruka couldn’t blame him – but had accepted with a smile and a tilt of his head.

They had gone in, Haruka nervous and Makoto quietly following into his little apartment.

He had told Makoto to go and wait in the living room while he brewed the tea. After that, he poured some for Makoto and himself and then gone over to sit next to Makoto, but leaving a considerable amount of space between them.

Makoto had lifted an eyebrow at him but said nothing of it, instead he took a cup from Haruka’s hands scooted a little closer, silently inviting him to do the same while he started talking about something he just can’t remember.

The last thing he could remember with clarity was leaning against Makoto shoulder and humming to something Makoto was saying and just before actually falling asleep, Makoto’s fingers carding through his hair soothingly, sending him into oblivion.

Haruka shook his head a little to try and clear his thoughts a little. Makoto had probably fallen asleep a while later… and Haruka had probably clung to him in his sleep and then Makoto had probably naturally reacted to that.

He did remember that Makoto had mentioned something about having siblings and how they would cling to him at night and that with time he just reacted like that whenever they got in his bed.
Sighing internally, Haruka started moving Makoto so he would let him go.

Haruka didn’t really want to wake him up, but he was starting to not feel his legs and embarrassing enough, he really needed to use the bathroom.

“Ma-Mako-to.” God, his voice was terrible. He tried to clear his throat and then tried again.
“Makoto…” That was better and thankfully – or not – Makoto started to stir a bit. “C’mon, wake up. I can’t feel my legs.”

Haruka could feel the arms around him tighten a little before relaxing and losing their hold on him a little, but Makoto wouldn’t let him go completely.

He sighed as he could feel his cheeks heating a bit… again.

“Makoto, wake up.” He tried moving him a little and as best as he could, and Makoto groaned in discomfort and made a face. For some reason, it made Haruka want to smile.

“Five more minutes… just five more…” Makoto said in a sleepy voice and trying to accommodate himself better on the couch.

For a moment his hold on Haruka loosened enough for him to get up, only to take a hold of him again and burying his head in the crook of the shorter man’s neck.

Haruka trembled a little when he felt Makoto breathing on his neck and with his arms now free, moved him more persistently.

“Makoto, seriously, how old are you? Five?” This got him a disgruntled sound and Haruka huffed. “C’mon, let me go.”

He could feel Makoto sighing into his neck before finally, finally letting him out of his arms.

Haruka quickly got up, but still careful of not hurting Makoto, and once standing he stretched his legs and cracked his back. A pleasurable sigh left his mouth. That really wasn’t a comfortable position for his back whatsoever.
He turned around and much like his last dream, he got lost in liquid emeralds that shone dimly in the poorly lit room, but still didn’t lessen the impact of those eyes.

Makoto was smiling at him from the couch, head tilted to the side, lips turned up in a lazy smile and his eyes in slits, letting just a bit of green visible, his hair was sticking in a thousand different directions and his clothes had crinkles everywhere.

Haruka had the sudden urge to take one of his sketching pads, a pencil and draw.

“Good morning, Haru-chan.” Makoto said happily while sitting properly again and rubbing his neck in a slight sign of discomfort.

“Drop the –chan.” He said in a monotone and the light chuckle of amusement he got in return made him turn his head in the opposite direction of the couch and the person sitting in it.

“Sorry.” Somehow he knew Makoto was smiling up at him but decided that it was better for him not acknowledge that and just turned and went over to the bathroom.

“There’s tea and water if you want to drink something.” He didn’t say anything else and just locked himself in the bathroom.

After some moments of just reminiscing at the back of the door and then doing what he came to do, he found himself washing his hands and admiring himself in the mirror.

His hair was in complete disarray, his clothes were wrinkled all over and he had a little white spot at the corner of his mouth of fry drool, which he quickly washed away.

But even if he looked like a mess and his back was slightly hurting from spending, most likely, the entire night in an awkward position on the couch, he felt… you could say that he was… slightly excited or happy or… something.

Splashing his face with water and then quickly drying it, he opened the door of the bathroom and went over to the kitchen.
There, he found Makoto with his back to him, heating some water on the stove and humming lightly to himself while he waited for it to be ready. Two cups were sitting on the counter and Haruka swiftly walked to stand next to Makoto.

“Ah, Haru. I thought I’d make some tea, hope you don’t mind.” He said, not looking up from the tea pot.

Haruka just hummed and Makoto didn’t say anything else.

Silence fell over them and much like the night before, it didn’t bother nor did it feel awkward, it was actually fitting and it wasn’t like Haruka wasn’t used to the silence anyway.

The tea pot chirred and Makoto quickly took it away from the fire and turned off the stove. Haruka moved away so that Makoto could have more space to move freely.

“Why don’t you go to the living room? I’ll be there in a second.” Makoto said gently while he started pouring hot water into the cups.

Haruka just nodded and without confirming if Makoto had seen him or not, briskly walked over to the living room and sat down on the kotatsu.

Crossing his legs, he looked all over until his eyes landed on the couch.

And last night’s events came crashing down on him again in the time it took him to blink.

His face started heating up and his heart pounded almost painfully on his ribcage. Images of the park, the Cherry Blossoms and green eyes invaded the back of his eyelids and he prayed to whatever existed up above that Makoto would take more than what was normal to pour tea and get to living room.

And of course because he wanted some time to think and he had no luck, Makoto appeared and handed him a cup, took a sit next to him while Haruka’s heart made a little flip.
Makoto wasn’t sitting far away nor was he specifically close, he was at a normal distance by Haruka’s side and he didn’t know if he should be grateful or just really wanted to close the gap.

Haruka frowned to himself, but nonetheless, didn’t move and just tried to get his heartbeat to slow down and his face to tone down a shade or two while he took a sip of his tea.

They just sat there with Haruka trying his hardest not to get his mind spinning into unwanted flashbacks, while Makoto contentedly sat there drinking his tea apparently oblivious to Haruka’s inner conflict.

It didn’t help that every time he blinked, he saw behind his eyelids images of pink lights or fireworks sparks.

A groan coming from beside him diverted his attention.

“Your neck hurts.” Haruka didn’t ask, he was stating a fact and Makoto just turned his head to look at him and smiled sheepishly as he continued to rub the back of his neck.

“Mmm… I guess it wasn’t such a good idea to sleep on the couch.” He said with a faint chuckle which was followed by a slight whine when he touched somewhere in his neck that must have probably hurt.

Sighing internally and putting his cup down, Haruka moved until he was kneeling behind Makoto and tried to breathe normally. This way he was slightly taller than Makoto, it was kind of nice.

Makoto, who had had his eyes closed until that point, opened his eyes and slightly turned around when he felt Haruka’s presence behind him.

“Haru…?” Makoto trailed off insecurely.

Haruka didn’t bother to answer and just made Makoto turn around with one hand while with the other he took Makoto’s hand away from his neck, only to replace it a second later with his own hands.
“Don’t move.” He said simply and he was rather satisfied that his voice didn’t let his nervousness show.

After a slight nod from Makoto, Haruka pushed back the neck of his shirt a little and started rubbing his neck, trying to get the skin under his fingertips relax and mold to his hands will.

Almost instantly, Makoto let his head fall forward and made an appreciative sound that made Haruka’s pulse pick up.

Trying not to let that get to him, at least not too much, he continued to massage Makoto’s neck and rather quickly, he noticed the amount of knots in there that just couldn’t be from only sleeping in a couch for a night.

Haruka frowned, how much did this guy do to accumulate so much stress that it would leave his neck almost as hard as a rock?

He continued sliding his fingers from side to side and then using his knuckles to add a bit more pressure in some places where it was so hard it was almost ridiculous. Makoto continued to hum or groan or just make some kind of noise to tell Haruka that he really liked whatever he was doing.

Once Haruka deemed that he had done as best he could, but not really wanting to stop, he started just caressing the hair at the back of Makoto’s neck and he heard Makoto sighing softly.

Getting embarrassed all of a sudden, but knowing that it would be really awkward if he just stopped and left, he slowed down little by little until his hands were resting in the base of Makoto’s neck.

But when he was about to completely remove his hands and stand up, bigger and warmer hands enveloped his smaller ones rooting him into place.

Makoto’s thumbs gently traced the inside of his hands and it tickled a little but he didn’t say anything just squeezed Makoto’s thumbs to a stop.

Slowly, Makoto started leaning backwards until the back of his head was resting against Haruka’s chest and Haruka hoped with all his might that he wasn’t able to hear his heart beating on his chest.
When he felt Makoto turning his face upwards, he quickly looked straight ahead and concentrated on every breath he was taking.

He could feel Makoto’s stare but he just couldn’t face him. Maybe it was because of his red face, which was kind of foolish since Makoto could absolutely see it, or perhaps it was something else, but what “that else” was… he didn’t know, and wasn’t really sure if he even wanted to.

He felt as Makoto gave a light squeeze to his right hand before letting go and not knowing what to do, Haruka just rested it on Makoto’s shoulder.

That’s when he felt Makoto’s finger on his neck.

It lightly traced the curve of his and when he swallowed, he was able to hear an amused chuckle, and even though he wanted to glare at him, he wouldn’t give in, so he continued to look straight ahead.

Two more fingers joined the first one and now Makoto was caressing the side of his neck with the back of them and when they moved upwards until they reached his cheek, he was able to feel the light scrap of Makoto’s nails against his skin and he shivered a little.

Now, Makoto’s palm was resting against Haruka’s cheek and not really being able to help himself, Haruka leaned into the touch despite his better judgement and he could feel more than see Makoto’s gentle smile, because in the little time he had of knowing him, Haruka had noticed that Makoto was one of those people who smiled more often than not.

Makoto’s palm was warm and soft, much how it had been at the park the night before, and Haruka’s cheeks dusted pink at the memory.

Then, the hand on his cheek went to the back of his neck and suddenly he was staring into liquid emeralds and his eyes widened in surprise as Makoto’s gentle eyes trapped him without any chance of escape.

Makoto scanned his face for something and when he didn’t find it, he smiled sweetly and Haruka felt himself melt.
His eyes were half-lidded, letting only visible a line of blue as Makoto caressed the back of his neck much like he had been doing just a few minutes ago.

He was very aware of how close their faces were, just one or two inches apart, and he could distinguish little specks of gold and brown swimming in the green of his eyes as well as some little, almost indiscernible freckles spread across Makoto’s cheeks and then, almost without thinking, Haruka moved his hand to cup one of Makoto’s cheeks.

Much like himself, Makoto leaned onto Haruka’s touch and his heart gave a little jump, the warm feeling on his chest spreading across his chest and leaving a kind of ache behind.

Almost as if on instinct, his gaze fell towards Makoto’s lips when he heard him letting out a soft sigh. Makoto’s mouth was slightly parted and even if he knew that neither of them had properly washed their mouths yet, he couldn’t really help himself and the ache only intensified when he finally identified what it was.

He looked back to Makoto’s eyes only to find them trained on his lips as well and he just had to lick his lips at that. Makoto’s eyes followed his every move and then they traveled back to his blue eyes once again.

Makoto let go of Haruka’s other hand and then incorporated until he was sitting face to face with Haruka, but now with their noses slightly touching and his hand was pushing some of Haruka’s hair behind his ear, only to come rest on his chin.

Haruka still had his eyes half-lidded and when he saw Makoto leaning in, he closed them completely and waited for Makoto’s lips to touch his.

However, instead of getting what he wanted, Makoto kissed his cheeks, then moved to the tip of his nose and the other cheek afterwards. Each kiss was fleeting, soft and gentle like a feather light touch that you could only feel for a second before it was gone.

Makoto rested his forehead against his and Haruka was able to feel Makoto’s breath on his lips.

It was driving him mad.
And so, deciding that enough was enough and gathering the courage he didn’t know he had, he cradled Makoto’s face on his hands and leaned in to kiss him softly.

There was no surprise intake of breath or gasp or any other of those dramatic things, but it was sweet, so amazingly sweet that it left Haruka wanting to taste more, but he had already used all of his courage to simply unite their lips, so he stood still, waiting to see if Makoto would be able to read him.

To Haruka’s surprise, Makoto actually seemed to get what he wanted and so deepened the kiss just a bit, parting his lips just barely and moving deliberately slow and Haruka could do nothing but follow his pace, follow his lips as if his life depended on it.

He wasn’t sure why but it was still not enough, but he guessed it would have to suffice…

At least for now…

They parted when Makoto gave him one last peck and before Makoto could completely separate himself, Haruka let his head drop on Makoto’s shoulder. He felt slightly dizzy and he really didn’t want to analyze the reason why.

“Thank you.” Came Makoto’s voice and Haruka just shrugged noncommittally since he didn’t what he was actually being thanked for.

He felt as Makoto rested his head on top of his for a moment before he wrapped his arms around Haruka, tucking his head underneath his chin and cradled him against his chest.

Haruka let himself bask in the comfort and warmth that Makoto offered him and almost without his consent, he snuggled closer for a second.

He gave Makoto’s arm a squeeze and he felt as the arms around him tighten for just one more moment – almost as if he didn’t want to let go – before they relaxed again and untangled themselves.

Haruka just sat there, looking at the floor until Makoto’s voice was heard once again.
“I should be going now.” He said and Haruka looked up to find Makoto already looking at him with a calm but glowing expression.

Haruka averted his gaze and just nodded.

Makoto stroked Haruka’s cheek once more before getting up and walking away. He was able to hear some rustling as what he supposed was Makoto putting on his jacket and shoes, he also heard the door open and after a moment of not hearing it close, he looked up.

There staring at him with a happy smile that could probably rival the sun’s radiance, was Makoto with his pools of green that beckoned him to drown in them.

Haruka was almost positive he wouldn’t actually mind.

“Talk to you later…” Makoto trailed off before a little smirk appeared on his face and Haruka’s skin pricked.

“Haru-chan!” And with that, the door closed as fast as lighting and Haruka was left there, sitting on his living room and staring dumbly at his apartment door with the sound of laughter in his ears.

He braced his knees until his face was hidden in between his legs but he couldn’t help the little smile that adorned his face as he tried to suppress his laughter.

"Drop the -chan."

Chapter End Notes

Hello, lovely AO3 people, it's been a while!

Okay, so first of all, I want to apologize for the two months absence, but school just decided to swarm me up with work and my computer crashed (I freaked out) and a lot things happened with which I won't bore you with. But, good news! I got a brand, new laptop and school's finally over so I have more time to ACTUALLY sit down and write, so I hope I'll at least be able to update twice a month (or at least that's what I'm aiming for).

Hopefully this chapter (which by the way is the cheesiest thing I've written so far)
makes up a little for my almost disappearance. Actually, while I was writing this, I thought: "Aren't they going too fast? Shouldn't I just start with something more mellow?" but then I was like: "It's Makoharu..." Is there really anything else I need to say?

But enough about me and my nonsenical rambling, tell me. Did you like this chapter? Did you hate it? Was it good or should I have not bought a new computer? Please leave a comment to let me know what you think, because they make my day and inspire me to keep on writing. Kudos are lovely as well and they let me know that you're liking this, so you can do that as well ;) You can also contact me on twitter: @ArtistiqueR12, I would be delighted to talk to you ^^

Also as a side note, I'm so incredibly sorry about those that have been sitting on my inbox for more than a month... my Internet has been horrible and for some reason I just wouldn't get the notification on my email and I just felt so bad replying after such a long time... but please know that I read every single comment and even if it's simplest of things, I swear I feel all warm inside when I see that someone commented... so yeah, I love you guys <3

So, I'll read you guys next time and I hope you're having/have had and will have an amazing week!
Chapter 18

Chapter Summary

Makoto laughs a little louder but not less fond and Haruka’s heart does a little flip at the image of the man before him. All defined lines and crinkling eyes.

He’s beautiful.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Haruka wasn’t nervous, not the tiniest, littlest bit… really! He wasn’t!

Or at least that was what he kept telling himself while he rode the train to get to the place where he was meeting Makoto.

He was dressed in plain clothes since he had just gotten out of the coffee shop when Makoto had called to ask if he had wanted to get together for dinner and even though Haruka knew he had to get some papers sorted for the upcoming exposition, had agreed the instant the questions had been asked, which led to an amused chuckle from the other end of the line and an embarrassed silence from his part.

They were to meet just outside the train station Haruka took to get to his Academy so he wasn’t afraid of getting lost or anything.

But even though he had nothing to fear, he still felt his hands sweating and a nervous flutter on his stomach that he couldn’t quite get rid of no matter how many times he repeated to himself that he had nothing to be nervous about.

‘ATTENTION ALL PASSANGERS, WE’LL BE ARRIVING AT TOKYO STATION SHORTLY SO, PLEASE CLEAR THE PATH BY THE DOORS. THANK YOU FOR TRAVELING WITH US AND GOOD EVENING.’

The mechanic voice repeated the message twice more and with each word, Haruka could feel his anxiety grow and he gripped the strap of his backpack more tightly.

Finally, the train stopped and people started pushing in while other poured out. Haruka made his way easily and tried not to bump into anyone and soon enough he was standing on the street feeling a slight chill in the air and lamenting not bringing a sweater.

He looked around but Makoto was nowhere to be seen, so he settled down on a bench that was near the entrance of the station and waited.

He flicked his phone open to see if Makoto had texted or called him but the only thing he found was a text from Nagisa asking him to call him ASAP.
He ignored Nagisa’s text and decided to pay a closer look to his surroundings in case Makoto decided to appear.

Faces came and went as minutes ticked by but then Haruka’s stomach started to do some kind of really uncomfortable jumps when two arms wrapped around him from behind and a mop of sandy-brown hair appeared to his right.

He was suddenly very warm and his stomach felt like it wanted to do a summersault.

“Did you wait long?” Comes Makoto’s muffled question against his neck and he has to stop himself from shivering as he feels Makoto’s lips move against his skin.

“Not much.” He answers honestly.

“I’m sorry,” Makoto answers still breathing and talking against his neck, “We had a little emergency at work and my boss wanted me to take care of it.” He sounded regretful and Haruka can’t, for the life of him, understand why. “I came as soon as I was done.” And then he caressed Haruka’s neck with the tip of his nose and really? That’s just not playing fair.

“I understand.” He says simply and let himself fall back a little against Makoto’s frame. It really was kind of cold and he’d never been good at dealing with it. “I’m hungry.”

Makoto chuckleed softly and let go of him and Haruka almost called him back and not a second later feels stupid since the other man was just going around the bench to offer him a hand up.

“What are you in the mood for? There’s quite a selection around here.” He offered his palm and half a smile and that combined with the light gray suit that he was wearing were doing strange things to Haruka’s thought process so he just looked away shrugging but took Makoto’s hand nonetheless.

They stood there for a few more seconds and just when Haruka was about to ask him what he was waiting for, he feels the smooth fabric of Makoto’s suit jacket sliding on his shoulders. He whipped his head up and Makoto was looking at him with a very pleased expression and so he decided that the best course of action was turning around and start walking so his reddened cheeks had some time to cool down.

Makoto caught up to him easily enough and before he was too far away, the taller man was walking beside him while chatting as if Haruka hadn’t just turned his back on him.

“I was thinking we could get sushi? I’ve been wanting to eat something simple and familiar and I know this great restaurant that’s a few blocks from here.” Haruka could see from the corner of his eye that Makoto was watching him, so he just nods while he pulled the jacket a little tighter around himself and decidedly ignored Makoto’s radiant smile at the gesture.

They walked in silence for a few minutes while Makoto led them to the restaurant and in that short while, Haruka goes over a few things.

It’s been almost a week and a half since that day at his apartment and Makoto had failed to bring it up, not that Haruka wanted him to, it just that one would think that after his little episode anyone else would’ve jumped at the first opportunity to ask him about.

But Makoto hadn’t. He had talked to Haruka as calm and normal as ever and they had gotten together to have lunch two times since then.

They always maintained a light line of conversation, for which Haruka was grateful, but now he felt like he wanted to know a little bit more about the green-eyed man than just what was going on
at work or a last minute report he had to submit.

“We’re here.” Makoto said while lightly steering Haruka towards the entrance of a little and cozy restaurant.

He knew the place, it was where sometimes he got his dinner after getting out of the Academy on nights he didn’t feel like cooking. It was clean enough and the food was good, so he found himself smiling softly to himself when they entered and Makoto walked them towards a little table on the background.

Haruka quickly sat and draped Makoto’s jacket around the backside of his chair since he knew Makoto would pull his chair out for him (he had done it last time they went out) and he felt like it was a little bit too much.

Makoto, undeterred, just walked to take the sit opposite of him. He sat down and took a stance as if he meant business, and for a moment Haruka felt very small being at the receiving end of such an intense stare but then, Makoto tilted his head to the side and gave him one of his half smiles and Haruka relaxed.

“So, how was your day, Haru-chan?” Makoto’s eyes danced with amusement at Haruka’s frown at the childish nickname.

“Fine. Yours? And stop calling me that.” Their conversations always went like this, he giving curt answers and Makoto rambling aimlessly but comfortably.

Makoto’s smile didn’t waver.

“Pretty calm until that report I told you about. We’re about to get a contract with this big international brand and everything’s a little crazy…”

Haruka stopped listening half-way through Makoto’s explanation, not because he didn’t find it interesting (or maybe a little because he did), but because he preferred to admire the way his eyes lit up when he talked about his work. The taller man got all excited and his tone of voice changed and Haruka was mystified by it. It was the expression of man who loved what he did and Haruka really liked the way it showed in his face and his demeanor.

“…ey are little nightmares but I was just so happy to hear from them.” Haru snapped out of his trance when he realized something had changed in the pattern of their usual chatter.

“Who?” Haruka asked because he had not been paying attention and instead of trying to play it off, of course he had to go and put himself in evidence. Great.

Makoto just smiled at him as if he knew Haruka hadn’t been listening but didn’t really mind repeating himself. He probably really did know, Haruka wasn’t being subtle exactly.

“My little sister,” He said and his face and voice changed and morphed into something sweeter, fond. And it made Haruka wondered what it felt like to have a bond like that. “Ran, she called today because Ren, my little brother, was bothering her about some boy and she wanted me to tell him to stop.” He laughed softly and Haruka was able to see how much Makoto loved them and missed them as his eyes melted.

“You have siblings?” Haruka asked dumbly, since stating the obvious seemed to be something he did now. Makoto’s eyes just twinkled happily and Haruka thought that maybe looking a little silly is actually worth it.
“Yes, they’re twins, Ren and Ran.” He laughs a little like there’s some inside joke hidden somehow in that sentence. “My little torments but I love them.” And his voice goes so soft at that, that Haruka kind of want to reach out and take his hand.

“They’re just going into their teens but they still act like they’re seven and they come to me whenever they have a fight, it’s nice… even if they do tend to call me at really odd times.” Makoto laughs a little louder but not less fond and Haruka’s heart does a little flip at the image of the man before him. All defined lines and crinkling eyes.

He’s beautiful.

“And you? Do you have any siblings?” Makoto asked and Haruka immediately tensed.

“No.” Haruka answers somehow aggressively and Makoto’s surprised expression is enough to remind him that Makoto doesn’t know and wasn’t trying to pick on him.

Just as he’s about to try and make up for his snapping at Makoto, a waiter comes to give them the menu and ask if they want anything to drink.

“I want a glass of lemonade… Haru?” Makoto says and there was too much uncertainty in that one word and remorse clawed its way up Haruka’s throat.

“A beer, thank you.” He says quietly. The waiter writes it down and Haruka thinks it just for show since there are exactly 6 people in there counting them and the others are already digging into their dinners.

“Alright, I’ll be right back.” And with that he left and an awkward silence descended.

Haruka would’ve really liked to be the first one to break it but the knot that made a home in his throat just wouldn’t let him speak and so he opted for taking the menu placed in front of him and pretended to look through it.

Of course, the first one to speak is Makoto and when he does his tone is more apologetic than it should.

“I’m sorry… I just get really excited when talking about my siblings and I think I just assumed…” Haruka lifted his head a little and he’s able to see how Makoto rubbed the back of his neck in an embarrassed gesture. “I don’t know what I assumed, just… sorry.” Haruka sighed.

“It’s alright.” He says even if he knows that it was his fault in the first place and that Makoto really has nothing to be apologizing for. “It’s just… can we talk about your family?” He finished awkwardly and now he’s sure Makoto will take his things and never talk to him and leave.

But Makoto just smiled softly and understanding and Haruka asks himself (not for the first and probably not the last time), how Makoto is even real.

Makoto throws himself in a full blown description of his family and by the time the waiter comes back with their drinks, Haruka now knows that Makoto is from a little town in Hokkaido, that his parents are together and still pretty much in love, his little siblings are half of his heart, that he is the typical overprotective but still beloved big brother and he thinks that if he were to go to Makoto’s house he would be able to find his way and almost anything in it without much trouble.

Haruka ordered a plate of Mackerel with a side of rice and vegetables and Makoto some kind of intricate sushi roll that had three or more types of fish.
They continued to talk throughout dinner, their dishes arriving at some point during their conversation but Haruka was too invested in what Makoto was saying to actually notice, and so he continued to listen and Makoto looked happy enough to continue to fill Haruka in on his life and all his little adventures of when he was a little boy and the joy he felt when he got to know that he was becoming an older brother.

Haruka nodded when he dimmed it correct and made little enquiries when he became distracted and wanted Makoto to repeat something, and even though this happened a few times Makoto never looked as if he was growing tired of repeating himself.

He actually looked as if he was happy to answer any question Haruka may have had and listened attentively whenever Haruka made little contributions to their conversation and before he knew it, it was closing time and the owner was politely but firmly telling them that they had to leave.

As it was customary, he tried to pay but Makoto wouldn’t let him so taking initiative, he said. “I’m paying next time.” As they exited the restaurant.

Makoto was securing his jacket around Haruka’s shoulders but paused at hearing him talk and when he turned around Makoto’s smile was blinding.

“Yeah, okay.” And Haruka really hoped that his face wasn’t as red as he thought it was when Makoto took his hand and started leading them towards the train station.

It wasn’t all that late, but a lot of the smaller business in the area were closed or closing already and just the biggest, flashiest were still open, which also meant that the streets were a little bit deserted.

They walked hand in hand and Haruka could feel his palm sweating and he tried to tug it free, but Makoto just held it a little bit tighter and Haruka could do nothing but continue to hold his hand and tell his heart to get a grip.

They were halfway to the train station when Haruka had gathered enough courage to speak what had been on his mind since the last time they’d seen each other.

“Are you busy on Saturday two weeks from now?” He said it in what he hoped was a monotone and glancing to the side all the time. He felt a slight squeeze on his hand.

“The last time I checked, I’m all free.” Makoto paused and Haruka sneaked a peak at him, He was looking straight ahead even if a smile tugged at the corner of his lips. “Why?” Haruka took a deep breath.

“There’s an art exposition… for my university and… well, I can invite two people…” He let himself trail off before he started rambling and took a second to gather his thoughts. “So, I thought that maybe… if you aren’t busy… you’d… like to come?” That last part was uttered so quietly he was certain Makoto hadn’t heard him and he didn’t know if he was brave enough to repeat himself, and then, he was being tugged back by Makoto’s hand and warm lips were on his and he felt himself melt against Makoto’s chest.

“I would love to.” Makoto said after a few minutes of the sweet kisses he had started to associate with Makoto. “Just tell me the time and place and I’ll be there.” The words were said against his lips and Haruka just couldn’t help himself when he lifted himself on his tiptoes and kissed Makoto again before answering.

“I’ll email you the information.” Haruka said a little breathlessly and a little giddy and little
nervous but also, maybe a lot happy.

Makoto just smiled against his lips and Haruka was getting dizzy and kind of addicted to Makoto’s mouth so he pulled the taller man by the collar of his really nice, and probably expensive, shirt so that he could kiss him a little longer and a little firmer. His shyness forgotten once Makoto encircled his waist and pulled him flushed against his chest.

As the minutes ticked by, their kiss grew hotter and rough. Haruka felt like most of his blood was going south but he really didn’t want to stop kissing Makoto and his head was feeling like it was full off cotton.

All of the possible reasons why he should stop seemed to get cut off at every swipe of Makoto lips and when he felt a warm tongue tracing his lower lip, he knew he was done for and just let himself be swept in Makoto’s pace.

He could have stayed like that all night, wrapped up in Makoto’s arms with Makoto’s tongue playing with his own and his head swimming pleasantly but the need for air forced him to separate and before he knew what he was doing, the words were already out of his mouth.

“Co-come home with me?” He said panting against Makoto’s chest and his brain really seemed to have turned off because otherwise he would have never been able to say something like that to anyone.

It was probably the beer talking but at this point he didn’t really cared.

Makoto didn’t answer for a second, which seemed like minutes to Haruka but when he did, his heartbeat picked up once more and the answer was whispered against his ear making him shiver.

“Yes.”

Chapter End Notes

So... I'm alive...
First of all, I want to say I'm so sorry, school was just crazy and then collage came into the picture and before I knew it had been over a year since my last update and I can't tell just how bad that makes me feel.
Then again, I also want to thank anyone who still wants to read or continued to follow this story even though it's been so long.
Lastly, I want to promise that I won't let it be this long ever again before I update (I even have most of the next chapter done so it should be up in a few days).
Again, thank you sooo much for reading and I hope you're having a good week!
Chapter 19

Chapter Summary

It took no more than five minutes for the both of them to go under a peaceful and happy sleep.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

The train back to his apartment couldn’t have taken more than 15 minutes but if someone would’ve asked Haruka how long it took, he would’ve said a century.

A sense of nervous, anticipatory and aroused energy was boiling below his skin and every brush of Makoto against him only made him feel hotter by the second and when the doors of the train opened, Haruka wasted no time taking Makoto’s hand and started walking a little bit faster than necessary to his apartment.

The gentle chuckle he heard from beside him and the squeeze that he felt on his made him calm down a little, but then the two fingers that pressed against his pulse point and the thumb that rubbed the back of his hand made his heart jump again.

The streets were almost deserted by the time they made it to the street in which Haruka’s apartment was.

It was even chiller and Haruka unconsciously borrowed further into Makoto’s jacket and hold Makoto’s hand a little tighter.

Haruka actually managed to climb the stairs like a normal person and not take them three at a time and before he knew it, they were in front of his door and his mind was filling with anxiety and he started questioning what the hell he was doing.

He had one hand on the key and the other just beside the knob, but suddenly he wanted to just get inside and tell Makoto that he would see him another time. He didn’t know what had possessed him to ask what he had and now embarrassment was washing over him in drowning waves making his breathing quicken and a type of nauseous feeling coming over his tongue.

He was just about to turn around and tell Makoto off, when the taller man’s arms wrapped around his middle and a pair of soft lips laid a gentle kiss on the back of his neck.

Haruka let out a shaky sigh and melted back into Makoto’s comforting warmth. He felt a hand wrapping around the one he had on the key and then turning it, and his entire body felt so weak, that he just let Makoto push the door open and then slipping them inside.

He was able to react enough to take out the key from the door while they were passing by but then he just let it drop when he felt Makoto closing it by pressing his back to it. His arms never left Haruka, and so they closed the door with the little momentum of Haruka falling back into Makoto’s chest.

The soft thud of Makoto’s back hitting the door sparked something in Haruka and he turned around
the arms enveloping him and he sought out the green-eyed man’s mouth as he raised his arm to tangle them in sandy brown hair and arching into the feel of arm wrapping around his waist pulling him closer.

The kiss was lush, deep and sensual.

Makoto’s lips were silky soft and his tongue was playful. He would nip and lick at Haruka’s lips, tugging little needy sounds from Haruka’s throat and in turn Haruka would pull at his hair and Makoto seemed to like that if the groans he let out when it happened were anything to go by.

They stayed there for a few moments. Makoto pressed against the door and Haruka pressed against Makoto, their hips rubbing small circles against each other, lips not parting for more than a few second before diving back in and heartbeats beating frantically.

In one of their little pauses for air, Makoto took advantage and started leaving small, nipping kiss along Haruka’s jaw and neck.

The blue-eyed man just tilted his head back to give him better access and then trailed a hand down to a broad shoulder while he tangled his other hand further onto the others hair.

Makoto had one hand in between his shoulders blades, tilting him down, and another on the small of his back making its way lower by intervals.

Haruka could feel lust traveling through his veins and fogging his brain, simmering below his skin and sending his senses into overdrive. His brain felt disconnected from his body and this is what he had wanted. Not to think, just feel and if this is what he was getting from just kissing and a little bit of rutting, he couldn’t wait to find out what it would be like to have Makoto inside of him.

The thought made a keening moan scape him and Makoto sucked specially hard at a patch of skin near his collarbone when he heard him and Haruka needed to get them naked because yes… that’s what he wanted, needed right now.

Makoto on top of him, erasing and filling his empty spaces for at least a little while. Hard and fast or…

“Fuck…” Haruka said when the idea of riding Makoto filled his brain. He wanted that, he really, really, really wanted that now that he thought about.

He untangled his hand from Makoto’s hair and then with both hands pushed him forward until they could start walking backwards to his room and Haruka was undoing the know on Makoto’s tie.

“C’mon…” He empathized his words with a tug to Makoto’s tie and flinging over his shoulder and working on his shirt onehanded while he discarded Makoto’s jacket from his own frame. “I want to ride you.”

He looked up just in time to see Makoto’s eyes darken until only a fine ring of emerald was visible and the sight was familiar somehow, but then Makoto was trying to get out of his clothes and getting Haruka out of his own and moving them rapidly towards the bedroom that he had no time to dwell on it.

They were both topless and Haruka was fumbling with the zipper of his jeans when gentle hands stopped his hastened movements. He looked up to find green and iridescent irises staring back at him.

Without braking eye contact, Makoto starting slowly undoing his pants and dragging the fabric of
his boxers down with it. Haruka felt the drag of fabric against his skin but Makoto’s eyes wouldn’t let him look away and so everything he could do was stand there while Makoto laid him bare.

When his pants hit the ground with a soft noise, he stepped out of them and then notice that Makoto had apparently been able to take his clothes off without Haruka noticing.

He lifted his gaze when Makoto tipped his chin back by cupping it between his index finger and thumb and then they were kissing. Not hurried and messy like before, but sweet and slow and Haruka felt a tug in his chest at the gentleness with which Makoto was treating him… like he was someone worth taking his time with, someone worth spending his time on.

Haruka lifted his hands up and pulled Makoto closer by the shoulders while burying his fingers on his hair once more.

Makoto made a pleased sound and encircled Haruka’s waist with his arms and then tentatively trailed one hand a little lower to one ass-cheek until their hips were flush together, finally having skin on skin contact and the feeling of Makoto’s cock rubbing against his own made a little whine escape his mouth and the kiss to deepen into something more sensual and lustful.

Pushing a little against Makoto while trying to continue kissing was a little challenging but when the taller man got what Haruka wanted, he started moving too and soon they were on Haruka’s bed with him straddling Makoto’s lap and doing some rather enthusiastic rutting and kissing.

Makoto’s hands were on Haruka’s hips and they were warm and big and wonderful and Haruka wanted them to leave bruises on his pale skin so he could watch them and remember once this was over… and he was going to stop right there before his mind decided to take a left turn.

He trailed one hand over Makoto’s right shoulder and marveled at the broadness of his back and had the sudden urge to leave a mark… and so he dug his nails a little harder down the taller man’s back, not enough to tear the skin but enough that he knew that there would be red, angry lines were his hand was moving down.

Makoto hissed and kissed him harder, pulling him flushed against his chest and digging his fingertips on his backside, so Haruka thought it was safe to assume he had liked it.

Haruka smirked against Makoto’s mouth and sucked on his tongue. He pushed inside and licked and nipped and explored every little crevice in Makoto’s mouth until he felt intoxicated with the taste.

He felt a callused hand wrapping around his cock and he felt the air leave his lungs while he tried to stifle a moan.

It was Makoto’s turn to smirk and then he was taking them both in hand and stroking them strong and slow, his movement smooth because of the combine pre-come that had been gathering at the head of both of their cocks.

He let Makoto stroke them a little while but stopped his movements a little later when he felt the muscles on his abdomen contracting and the heat in his belly rising with a familiar pull.

“S-stop…” He said shakily and the movement immediately ceased and Makoto was looking at him with uncertainty. Haruka just shook his head and signaled for Makoto to move a up until his head was resting on the pillows before kissing him again, the blue-eyed man still straddling his hips. “I meant what I said before,” Haruka said against his lips and looking into the green eyes he was starting to like perhaps a little bit too much. “I want to ride you, I want you inside me when I
come.” He whispered without looking away from Makoto’s face.

Makoto’s face flushed a little bit more and Haruka couldn’t help smiling fondly for a second before kissing his lips gently and then stretching to get to his bedside drawer to look for the lube and a condom.

Makoto followed his movements and started softly trailing his hands up and down his sides while Haruka rummaged around and they didn’t stop even when he was sitting right against his straining erection, although his hands did hitch in their movement and his breathing got a little bit shallower.

Haruka could feel Makoto’s cock rubbing against his backside and he really couldn’t wait to have it in him. So he didn’t waste any more time and slicked his fingers up and reached behind himself, parting his cheeks and reaching to his entrance.

He teased himself for a moment or two, conscious that Makoto was watching him, before taking pity on them both and finally breaching past the ring of muscle.

Haruka moaned lowly, he had been doing this a little bit more than he’d liked to admit and that made it a little bit easier and he was met with little resistance and so he pushed another finger inside himself, feeling the stretch a little more and the scissoring them in and out, relaxing his muscles for a smoother stretch and when he was able to find that spot inside himself he let out a half chocked moan that made Makoto dig his nails on his hips and he grinned down at the brunet.

Makoto was looking at him with a look that could only be described as predatory. His generally gentle eyes that looked like liquid gems were now almost black with how big his pupils were and the little slit of green still visible, was as hard as emeralds and they pierced Haruka with such an intensity that he couldn’t help but let out a startled sound as he added a third finger and sank down back onto his fingers.

He worked himself a little harder and faster and it burned but he had never wanted someone to fuck him as much as he wanted Makoto to fuck him in that moment and so he hurried a little and before long he was pulling his fingers out, without being able to stifle a hiss at the loss, and slicking Makoto up fast and the aligning that beautiful cock of his with his entrance.

Haruka dragged it out, sinking down slowly and taking his time, as much to let himself adjust as to be able to feel as every inch of Makoto entered him.

His thighs were burning by the time he sank down completely. Makoto’s balls resting snuggly and tightly against his ass and the iron grip the taller man had on his hips was sure to leave marks and Haruka was feeling lightheaded at the prospect.

He could feel the tip of Makoto’s cock nudging lightly at his prostate and the teasing feeling was making his nerves sing under his skin. He wriggled and squeezed around the length inside of him and was rewarded with a strangled whine from Makoto.

Haruka set a slow pace. He lifted himself mildly fast and then when only the head of Makoto’s cock was inside, he would sink back down impossibly slow and Makoto would look up at him the strain as plain as day on his handsome face, communicating the want for Haruka to go faster to fuck harder but Haruka would just smile down at him, squeeze hard as he sank down and then his eyelashes would flutter shut and Haruka would continue his torturous pace.

Haruka loved this. He liked this type of honey-thick sex that could go on for as long as he wanted making him sink in a deep haze of arousal, drowning in a sea of infinite pleasure as the minutes ticked by and it only served the purpose of building anticipation.
He knew that the longer it lasted the better it would be when they both shattered, he wanted the intensity, the numbing effect of coming after dragging it out for so long to the point of hurting in the best of ways. He wanted to be able to feel this for days, to give them both a mind-blanking climax that would leave them panting and fighting for breath after it was punched out of them and they couldn’t remember or think about anything but this.

“P-please…” Makoto’s strangled voice made him open his eyes, which he hadn’t noticed he’d closed, and looked down at him. “P-hng-please, Ha-Haru… I-I-I need…” His tone was broken and the raw want and the bids of sweat adorning his face and trailing down his throat made him look so beautiful Haruka felt the a familiar itch on his fingers that made him want to leave whatever he was doing and just grab some paper and sketch him so he could preserve the picture in front of him forever.

But that would be cruel, not just to Makoto but to himself as well, and he noticed just how hard he was. He was aching and Makoto wasn’t bearing much better the strain lines were even more defined now, the veins bulging on his arms and neck and the color high on his check, contrasting with the golden of his skin and the green of his eyes, his muscles were contracted to the point of breaking and he knew that he couldn’t deny him any longer.

“Ha—ugh… Haruka!” Makoto screamed as Haruka took momentum and started a pace fast and hard and relentless.

His legs were screaming at him and he knew he wasn’t going to last, his rhythm was getting erratic and from this angle he was hitting his prostate every single time and Makoto had thrown caution to the wind and was pushing his hips up as soon as Haruka started sinking back down and then they were lost.

They had been dancing just beside the edge for far too long and within a couple of thrust in which Makoto pushed up with all his might and Haruka squeezing down and going down as hard as he could.

Haruka was distantly aware that the high pitched, needy sounds that were echoing back at him were actually coming from him but then Makoto hit his prostate head on he was coming, hard and mind-numbingly amazing and he felt as Makoto came inside him, how he stilled and how they both threw their heads back and let out screams of each other’s names.

For a few blessed moments, his back arched and his body convulsed with rivers of pleasure as it coursed through his body, leaving a tingling sensation that hadn’t quite vanished before another was coming and he was fighting to get oxygen on his lungs even when he didn’t really want it.

He wanted to stay like this, with Makoto buried to the hilt inside of him and the smell of sex thick in the air and his pulse thrumming so loud in his ears he was everyone in the building could hear him.

Of course, the world didn’t really minded what he wanted and slowly and reluctantly, he started to come back from his high and into himself. It felt almost wrong land after being suspended in such a pleasant state, but he was starting to really feel the burn on his ass, as well as on his legs and his back was starting to hurt from how he’d been bending.

His breathing was still ragged and he closed his eyes for a few moment before slumping forward and onto Makoto’s chest.

The brunet was faring not better, but when he felt Haruka had landed on him, strong arms enveloped him and started running gentle hands up and down his back while they both tried to get
under control.

They stayed like that until the sweat on their skin cooled down and Makoto pulled out with a wet sound that sounded way too loud and lewd in the peaceful aftermath.

Haruka felt how Makoto took off the condom, tied it and then threw in the bin by the corner of the room. He also felt how he was cleaning them both up, since Haruka’s come had landed on him and then smeared all over their fronts when Haruka had slumped down.

He almost wanted to protest because he was going to have to wash that, but he felt too tired and too sated and Makoto was warm and petting his hair once he was done and he really couldn’t find in himself to berate him for trying to get them as clean as possible without having to get out of bed.

And the bed really was too narrow for two grown men to sleep in, but Makoto arranged them so Haruka was half-lying on top of him with his arm wrapped around Haruka’s waist and Haruka’s arm around Makoto’s middle and their legs entwined under the covers.

Haruka was comfortably resting his face on the curve of Makoto’s neck and Makoto’s face was buried in Haruka’s neck and Haruka thought that he had never felt so comfortable or warm or safe with anyone.

“Stay.” He said simply, almost too quiet into Makoto’s collarbone and the arms around him hugged him a little bit closer and he sighed happily.

“Of course.” Came the gentle and just as quiet response from above.

It took no more than five minutes for the both of them to go under a peaceful and happy sleep.

Chapter End Notes

Hello, me again! This was really just smut but I felt like I owed something after disappearing for so long so this is part two of my apology, so hope you enjoyed that :)

I also wanted to thank everyone who commented on the last chapter, I was so happy and shocked to see that some of you actually were still here and I can’t thank you enough for that <3

Also, this is not betaed therefore all mistakes are mine so if you notice anything please let me know so I can fix it, thanks! :)

Well, I hope you’re having a good week and I’ll read you on the next chapter!

End Notes

So there you have it, the first chapter. At first I wanted to do it a bit shorter, but before I knew what was happening I had written over 3,000 words... Well, I got inspired I guess. As you probably noticed by now, English is not my first language, so any corrections and
critics are welcome ^^ I swear I tripled checked this, but I have the feeling I missed something, so please if you notice anything please tell me so I can correct it. Well, I think I will be uploading once or twice a week depending on the response I get, oh well.

Until next time! ^^

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