To fall in love with the one you cannot ever see

by RavenShira

Summary

Having been shrunk about two years prior, Conan has to face the possibility that changing back to his old self will take a lot longer than anticipated. Hiding the truth from Ran had by now become second nature, however keeping one rather famous thief's nose out of the situation with the Black Organisation might prove to be a lot more complicated.

Notes

Disclaimer:
The Characters and World were created by Gosho Aoyama. I do not make any profit, the only reward I get from writing this, are the comments my readers leave behind.
The pictures I've inserted throughout the story are taken from the Anime. Maybe later (when I'm actually satisfied) I will add fanarts/scetches made by myself.

Relationships:
Ran x Shinichi (past to present), Shinichi x Kaito (far-off future)

See the end of the work for more notes.
Finally weekend. Not a nice one, mind you, since the weather forecast promised storm, rain and the apocalypse. But it did mean he was released from the slow process of rotting his brain by relearning elementary stuff. If he could at least read some interesting books or other stuff. But he had tried – and failed – since not only the teacher had been a bit cross with him for not paying attention (So what if he could still answer the questions simply by splitting his attention 1 to 99?), but Haibara had scolded him for his suspicious behavior and he had a three hour lecture about appearing to be a normal kid. And normal kids didn't read highschool to college class books.

So now he was stuck (mostly) with doing things either in an underhanded way, like copying books on paper (which would make it superfluous to bring a book to school, since he would have to read it if he copied it by hand) or having them on his phone (and nearly getting caught 'playing' in class and getting scolded by Ran. Right.). Or simply enduring the torture.

He was still a bit twitchy from their last run-in with the Black Organisation, however things had cooled down again and his paranoia begun to settle a bit.
The night was dark and stormy, as promised, when Conan, sitting on the windowsill in Professor Agasas house contemplated about what his life had become. By now about two years had passed, since he found out about the Organisation that had shrunk him that fateful day in Tropical Island.

Since then he had been hiding. Living his life as a child with the mind of an adult at his childhood friends - and at the same time romantic interest – home. Even now it sometimes was hard to believe, even though he saw the proof every time he looked into a mirror.

An almost soundless sigh passed his lip as he looked away from the outside, where rain was splashing against the window and let his feet dangle before he quietly slipped back to the ground. With a rueful smile to his reflection in the glass, he turned around and tiptoed back to the room where he had a futon on the floor next to Haibara's bed. The former Black Organisation member was sleeping peacefully. While sleeping, Shinichi thought, she really looked like a kid. He did know that, if Ai ever found out that he thought her to be quite cute while sleeping, the demon she actually was when awake would make his life hell.

Slipping under the cover and pulling the blanket up to his chest, he lay down on his back and crossed the arms behind his head. Two years of his life, gone because of his insatiable curious mind and reckless... no, arrogant behavior back then, thinking himself invulnerable.

Restless he rolled to his side and closed his eyes, trying to banish the almost depressing thoughts by thinking about other stuff. Elementary school was easy, but he had become fond of the kids that had so persistently burrowed their way into his heart. Even though Ayumi's crush was kind of disturbing, since she was so much younger than him, in mind and body, and despite Genta's recklessness and Mistuhikos jealousy, they had formed a close group. Dare he say it? It was almost fun to be with them. Kinda.

♥♦♣♠

The next morning began with a splash of water to his face.

“What the -?!” abruptly sitting up he found himself face to face with teal colored eyes of the smirking demon child. Oh great. She was awake. None of that normal child vibe visible anymore.
“Morning Kudou-kun.” she said, standing up and slowly walking out of the room “It's getting late.” standing on her tiptoes to put the water gun she had used on him on a shelf before adding “I thought I would help you out since you didn't get up on your own and apparently forgot to set your alarm.” Throwing one last smirk over her shoulder she was gone, while Conan was still rubbing the water from his face. Evil. Pure. Evil.

It was still relaxing to sometimes be able to lose the childish mask he had to war almost constantly, which is why he quite enjoyed being at the Professor's house. At times like this he could read or learn the things, that someone his mental age would be challenged by. It was his way to keep up with school stuff from his life as Shinichi Kudou. It was a lot harder to stay up to date and the things he could spy on occasion in Ran's books or school-notes were far and few in between. When he was still in high school, he had been ahead of his classmates. He did fear how much he time he lost would set him back.

“Ne, Haibara...” sitting on the couch and rereading 'The Sign of Four' he passed a glance at the girl calmly drinking tea while typing something at her computer “....”

“Out with it, Kudou.”

“... I was just wondering if you made any progress with the cure...” Conan mumbled while fixing his eyes to the text. It had been a while since he last asked. His eyes stayed at the same spot, he feared and anticipated the answer, so he could hear the pause in Haibara's typing, before it continued. There was a long silence and Conan almost decided that Ai wouldn't answer his question, before she spoke.

“Not much progress. I've told you before, the cure we have works. Temporary. I still need to find out the original composition of the APTX to make a final cure.”

Conan remained silent and listened to her typing, knowing that she wasn't finished yet. He didn't ask her often, that was because he knew what she would tell him since the words rarely changed. Still, from time to time he needed a reminder, to make himself believe that it was possible to return to his old life.

“The reason why I can't give you more of the temporary cures is, that it's extremely stressful for your body to change not only once, but twice in such a short time. The fewer temporary cures you take, the better, since it is very much possible that your body will exhaust itself if they are used too often.”
Another long pause.

“... I'm sorry, Kudou. It will probably still take a long time to get a final cure. The process to make the APTX 4869 took years. Years before I actually worked on it myself. The cure... will probably take a lot of time to make too.”

Giving a low hum he turned the page without really reading anything, before closing the book with a snap and setting it to the side.

“Thank you.” he said and saw her peer over her shoulder to him. Managing a small smile he shrugged his shoulder in a slightly helpless gesture.

“I just needed to hear it again.” he did know that he was reminding her of the past she would rather forget, and was kind of sorry that he brought it up again, but it did help him to hear she was working on it and hadn’t given up yet.

“Anytime.” came her almost cold reply as she turned back to the monitor.

Shaking his head he grabbed his book and left her to her own devices, before his breathing annoyed her enough to make her do unspeakable things to him.

♥♦♣♠

Later that day he found himself walking home.

After entering the apartment above the office he threw an “I'm back!” into the living room and was greeted by Ran from the kitchen.

“Welcome home! How was your sleepover?”

“It was cool! The Professor showed us a new Game. It's too bad that due to the flu the others had to stay at home.”

It was now his day to day life to play the child he was in body to the people around him. Sometimes it was confusing. It was hardest to act like a child, while on a case. There were very few instances
where he could simply show his true self. The safest it was with Agasa and Ai, both who obviously knew about his secret. His parents were rarely here, which he preferred, but he knew he could count on them. Then there was Hattori, who had also become a close friend. Even though that guy was far too honest and a bad liar to boot. Lastly there were the Kaitou Kid heists. It had actually become one of his favorite pastimes to attend, since not only could he – in a safe environment since Kid insisted on his no hurt policy – apply his mind to uncover the tricks and mysteries the magician masterfully constructed. The chase was also often interesting. Not only that, the criminal had at times helped Conan out, pretending to be Shinichi – not that he was grateful for some of these moments, but it had saved him from being uncovered - or helping catch the criminal. He wouldn't call them friends, but they weren't enemies either.

On that note, Shinichi thought, it seemed as if Kid had send a new heist note and it made front-paper news again. He couldn't help the tendril of excitement that shot through him, since the last time Kid showed his face had been almost four months ago.

Stretching his neck to read the papers that were still being held in Kogoros Hands, he found the note that was being shown on the picture and burned it to his memory, so he could copy it on a paper later. The time and date was already obvious to him, though the location and target eluded him for now.

A glance into the kitchen showed Ran at the stove, wearing an apron and humming to a melody in the radio. It made him smile to see her like this, even if he missed her terribly, he was glad to see her in a good mood. Reminding himself to phone her soon he sat on the couch and and fiddled with his notebook, where he put down Kaitou Kid's new heist note and thought about it.

When the sunlight's glory is gone,
a dove will happen to wing on,
to the moonlit, starry sky.

There is no rest for the wicked.

Well, Conan thought, nibbling on his pencil. The riddle was actually straight forward this time. Sunlight's glory gone, meant when the sun set. So. At sunset. The next two lines probably indicated the target. A dove, moonlight and starry sky. All three could also stand for the Magician thief, who probably owned a few of the animals himself, if the time where he dressed as Shinichi Kudou and became a bird stand was any indication. The last sentence... either hinted also at the target but it could also stand for Sunday, since that would be a day for rest. Normally. If a wicked thief didn't
sent heist notes to a certain poor police department and said department didn't have to get up and chase the magician around the location.

Conan leant back and closed the small notebook, he would have to look up if any interesting jewelry arrived lately. Going to his room to use the laptop would have to wait until after dinner though.

For now he was relatively sure that the moonlight magician would steal the target next Sunday at sunset. Plenty of time to get to know the location and target himself.

Chapter End Notes

A/N:
This is my first time trying to write a story. I hope I have not bitten off too much by making my first work a multi chapter fanfiction. As things stand I have a rough idea where I want to go, but to get there I have to fill in a lot in between. The first few chapters stand, but I cannot promise I won't change something in the beginning to fit some kind of purpose later on.

As I am German, there will be a lot of mistakes. I have read over it several times, but if you find some, please do point them out for me, so I can correct them. I do not have a beta for now and I'm not yet planning to get one.

Lastly: Since I don't know my update speed yet, be prepared for slow, irregular updates. You have been warned >:3

Edit 28.01.2015: Added the Picture I've drawn :) Hope you like it, and yeah i know Conan seems older but... it's been two years so he is around...nine? :)


The following week was almost too peaceful for Conan, who was used to odd circumstances leading to murder around him. It was a good, boring week, only two cases that had been easy to solve. One was a writer, who felt he had been stalked, which had been his manager that went a bit overboard in his concern about the writer. The other was finding a missing Item, that the owner had lost.

Kaitou Kid's note had kept his mind busy for two days. Having searched the news in Museums it was no wonder he had at first missed the newly arrived Jewel. The large Moonstone, named Mūṭav, that now resided in a Planetarium, basically meant moon dove. Ha, Ha. Dove, moonlit, starry sky. Yeah, right. It was so easy that he was almost embarrassed that it had taken him so long.

Right now he was standing at a window in the planetarium. They were currently on the highest floor of the building and Conan was more or less sure, that Kid would try to escape from the roof. The checks at the entrance would make it difficult for Kid to get out of the building otherwise, disguise or no disguise. From the window he had a great view of the slowly setting sun, while Nakamori was giving his usual speech to the live feed.

Looking from the sun to his watch he counted down the time still left before Kid would make his entrance, while looking at the people around him and around the treasure.

When the last rays of the sun finally disappeared, a tense silence filled the room, the officers looking suspiciously around for anything incriminating.

A low, portentous hiss sounded, followed by thick steam slowly crawling over the floor. The officers nervously looked down, unsure if the mist would have any consequences of mischief that the thief usually doled out like candy on Halloween.

Conan carefully put his hand in the substance to test the consistence between his fingers. It was simply fog from a fog machine that was hidden somewhere, so he quickly looked up again, just in time to see Kid landing on the case where the target lay. The officers that had just a moment ago surrendered the display case were now lying on the floor, mist crawling over their bodies like it wanted to swallow them whole.

“Ladies and Gentlemen, dearest fans and children!” the thief announced while standing up and spreading his arms in a welcoming gesture.
“Welcome to today’s heist!”

Conan growled, being smaller than the rest the mist was already beginning to obscure his vision, while the officers only had it up to their waist for now. But he was sure the Thief had thrown him a mocking grin, when he had added the children part. For that alone he would get the irritating thief with his soccer-ball at least once..

While Nakamori charged Kid like a bull who saw a fluttering cloth, together with several other Officers (forgetting that there were people lying on the floor, adding to the chaos that piled up around the display case), Kid crossed his arms over his chest and quickly threw them out again. A swarm of doves hid the thief and display case from view, long enough for the phantom thief to make a disappearance. Meanwhile it seemed as if the area around the display case had been coated in some kind of glue. The police that had dog-piled there had now a real problem getting back up again.

Cursing his small body Conan took off running for the roof.

He arrived quickly enough to catch his breath a bit before the thief stalked onto the roof like he owned the building. Conceited bastard.

Quickly kneeling down he prepared to kick the round leather at Kid, when the thief spotted him and grinned.

“Tantei-kun!” Conan twitched. It almost sounded as if Kid was... happy to see him. Creepy.

“My favorite little critic!” definitely happy? Confused he stopped his movement and eyed the magician, that was by now almost carelessly flipping the moonstone brooch in the air, suspiciously.

“It has been a rather long time since we last met.”

“...Isn't that because you haven't shown your ugly mug for four months?”

“My, my, does that mean you missed me? Counting the time since our last date!” the teasing voice grated on his nerves.

Still, he was not sure where Kid wanted to head the conversation, while he was in a crunched position half ready to kick a ball at his target. Since Kid was throwing the jewelry around like a coin,
he couldn't really take aim at him without risking the jewelry being thrown over the edge of the roof as well. He did wonder if Kid had calculated that when going to the roof, which meant that the thief had probably known all along that Conan was up here before him.

Which led to the conclusion: Kid had taken his time to get here, or all that Conan would have found was a hang-glider on the horizon. And if Kid had taken his time and predicted that Conan would follow him here...

“What do you want?”

That annoying smile was fixed to Kid's face, Conan would love to wipe it off as it grated on his nerve.

“What makes you think I would want something from you?”

The eye-roll Conan couldn't hide only earned him a snicker.

“Okay, you got me. Let's say I'm curious about you.”

This time Conan grimaced a little and again, stayed silent.

“At first I thought you were just an incredible intelligent child. Since I know about you, that could be explained. It doesn't explain how you came to be you though.”

“And it's not like it's got anything to do with you either.” Conan replied, his face closing off and the azure eyes becoming sharper. Why was the thief suddenly so interested in his past and how he became shrunk again?

“So?”

“So what?”

“It's not like I could tell it to someone. And I'm a curious person.”
“... is that supposed to make me pour my heart out to you...?”

He couldn't believe Kid snorted. Surly he had misheard. Okay, so he had actually kind of often heard Kid make sounds one wouldn't expect, but normally there was a reason like on the Sky-ship, when Kid had been challenged to take the Lady Sky. Where he had accidentally tickled Kid when he tried to get to his Grapple hook gun.

“And by the way, Kid... Are you sure you can afford to have leisure conversations now?” Conan asked dryly, sometimes he wondered about Kid's mental state. “I mean, the police won't be stuck down there forever, you know?”

Kid's laughter threw him off balance just as much as the jewel being thrown at him, which he barely caught. He had always been better with his feet than his hands. In the time he was busy fumbling for the jewel, Kid had swung himself over the fence that stood in the way of his escape.

“I suppose not.” the thief shrugged his shoulders, standing on the edge “Well, first they would have to get themselves out of that sticky situation... Not that they would be able to catch me anyways, but I do worry about Nakamori-keibu's blood pressure. Better not to risk it.” Conan clenched his teeth, with the fence between them he wouldn't be able to kick anything at kid, so he just opened his watch – more as a threat than anything else, since he didn't want to kill Kid by tranquilizing him and causing him to fall.

“Anyways, Tantei-kun... I will just have to keep an eye on you, to find out myself what brought your little problem on, right? See you soon” he called over his shoulder before stepping off the roof.

Straightening himself and being irritated that he fell for such a trick and let the thief escape unharmed he frowned after the white hang-glider.

“You're better off not even trying...” he sighed, not seeing the small dove with a microphone sitting behind him. Did that mean that from now on he had to watch out that this stupid thief didn't stick his hat-covered head into business that didn't concern him? Great, as if he didn't have enough problems for now.

Cradling the small brooch carefully in his small hands he made his way back to the police that were probably still running around.
After he got to the police and had given the jewel back, telling them Kaitou Kid had managed to escape yet again, his hand was grabbed in a tight grip. When he looked up he saw Ran scowling down at him. Uh-oh.

“Conan-kun! You always disappear, making me worry.” she knelt down beside him drawing him in a hug that made him blush and freeze.

“Stop worrying me so much. I know you like Kid's heists but you always do reckless stunts. Leave Kid to the adults.

Ran... Awkwardly putting his hands around her (Small, too small to encircle her fully now) he whispered a soft apology.

“It just got really stuffy in there, I couldn't see anything. So I thought I would head outside to get fresh air and Kid was there!” in the end he raised his voice in (hopefully) childish excitement and waved his hands as good as he could before Ran loosened her hug and gave him a smile.

“Oh. So that's where you've been.” She probably thought Kid had more or less handed the Jewel over to him, which wasn't exactly a wrong assumption.

Crisis averted for now.

When they headed home though, Conan couldn't but feel followed.

Chapter End Notes

A/N:
So... here is the next chapter. By the way, I'm hoping to make this a longer story, so it will probably progress very slowly. In case I got your hopes up for romance, that will still take a long time to show itself.
For now I'm writing randomly at different chapters. I actually am up to chapter 6 and working on chapter 7. I've got some of the last chapters already written out too, though, as well as a few small parts I'm hoping to integrate.
Next update will be in a week :)
Next chapter title: The crime that led to the crime
The crime that led to the crime

Chapter Summary

“It is a capital mistake to theorize before you have all the evidence. It biases the judgment.”
- Sherlock Holmes

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

He didn't sleep that well. Actually not well at all. The feeling of being followed had probably tickled his paranoid side a bit too much. Was it Kid? If so he hadn't really managed to distinguish him from the people that passed the Agency. Maybe Kid hadn't walked past at all and just kept a stake out with binoculars? Was it Kid at all? Or maybe he was just imagining being watched due to Kid's words. But he did trust his instincts and he really wasn't convinced that it was just some kind of delusion. His senses had saved him a lot of time, so he would rather trust them this time too.

Tired he went to the bathroom, eyelids at half-mast only to rip them fully open when he – in his carelessness without knocking beforehand - opened the door to a still dressing Ran. Instantly blood shot to his head and he stammered an apology while slamming the door shut again.

Wide awake now he pressed the hands to his eyes and tried NOT to think of Ran standing half naked behind the door, all the while blushing from head to toe. Normally he was really careful. He didn't want Ran to kill him when he actually got around to telling her the secret. Bad enough she had forced him to bath with her on more than one occasion.

Right now he wanted to crawl in a hole and never come out. All this was Kid's fault, because of his damn words and probably stalking.

Ran had a really nice body.

Not thinking about that. Think about … what had he been thinking about? Oh yes. Kid.

The door opening behind him made him stiffen again. Do not blush. Don't blush. You are a kid. Damn KID.
“M-morning Ran-nee-chan...!”

“Morning Conan-kun, breakfast will be ready soon.”

She didn't suspect anything. Good. Quickly going into the bathroom and closing the door behind himself, he let himself sink to the floor.

“Sheesh...” yes, she didn't suspect anything. He would be so dead if she knew.

“What a mess.”

Getting through his morning routine helped him calm down fully and return to his previous thoughts.

So. Kid probably knew he was Shinichi, since he more than once teased him by dressing up as his alternate self. He didn't know how he became Conan. That hadn't been an issue before, so what had changed? Why was Kid suddenly interested?

Frowning at his mirror image, while brushing his teeth he tried to find possible causes for the new behavior, but it eluded him. Maybe he had gotten curious after all the little instances that had piled up, the Mystery Train being one of the most prominent that had involved the thief directly. Thanks to that, Haibara was mostly safe now but it was still better not to take any risks.

Fact was, that Kid had said to him that he would try to find out on his own. That had probably been what Kid had wanted to tell him from the start and why he had put hints in his note, from which Conan had easily concluded that the thief would try to escape from the roof. Well, it wasn't like that was a new escape plan so it was rather easy to deduct or even just guess. Still, he must have known that Conan wouldn't reveal anything about the day he shrunk to him without sound reason. And Conan really didn't think Kid had any reason to inquire about his 'accident'.

Conan did know that Kid randomly seemed to check up on 'his' detectives. Sometimes he had even thought he saw someone suspicious. Since he had the Black Organisation after his hide he had become very attuned to being watched and followed. It wasn't paranoia if there were people out to get you after all.

Spitting the toothpaste out and rinsing his mouth with water, he headed to the kitchen to take breakfast with Ran, since Kogoro was still asleep in his bed.

Swinging his backpack on his right shoulder and putting on his shoes he and Ran exited the house and parted ways. It wasn't long before Conan felt the hairs on his back stand up. Once again he could feel eyes on him and tried to find (without being obvious about it) the source by using
reflections of cars and windows to no avail. Was that... Kid? Or had he incorrectly assumed that the
danger had passed and some member of the Organisation was on his trail. Cold sweat broke out but he
just hummed happily and continued walking. If it was the Organisation, they wouldn't do
anything too obvious. That would make people aware of them and they had been trying to avoid that
at any cost. Still, he got his cell-phone out and sent a quick message to Haibara 'Hey Haibara, I just
wanted to tell you I will be by later to bring your homework. Hope you feel better soon!' that would
keep Ai at home, just in case.

At the entrance of the school, he met up with Ayumi, Genta and Mitsuhiko.

“Hey guys.”

And thus, with a last fruitless glance over his shoulder, the torture begun again.

☀ K-A-I-T-O ☀

His life had become really stressful. Trying to juggle school life, shadowing the Police and
Detectives after Kid, as well as his night life and the research that came with that, was a lot of work
that left little time to sleep sometimes. And that didn't include Snake and the Organisation that was
also after Pandora.

It happened when he had checked up on the smallest member of the Task force and at the same time
his probably biggest adversary. Conan Edogawa, or who he probably really was: Shinichi Kudou.

Kaito had to admit, that any heist with Conan or Shinichi was a lot more challenging and fun. It was
rare that someone could anticipate his moves just as well as the small detective, or even force him to
change the plans he had laid out as often as the kid did.

On occasion he did look what his opponents got up to in their free time. Well. Or he played some
pranks on them for a bit while he was at it, if they were blond and stuck up and counted seconds.

Pranking Conan was practically impossible. The kid had to have some kind of abnormal ability that
allowed him to sense criminals like a radar especially attuned to them.

It...would explain a lot. Especially how one person could get into so much trouble.

That being the case, he had been following Conan, keeping his eyes off the boy and keeping quite a
lot of distance between them, since that seemed about the only way to escape the sharp eyes that
could to pick him out of a crowd, sometimes even with perfect disguise. He usually tried to keep a little distance, because seriously... that soccer ball hurt.

More than once he had been involved with dangerous people, thanks to that little detective. People with very cold, murderous eyes, ones like Snake. And it became kind of obvious that Conan was trying to find out more about them, while at the same time trying to keep his head down and not to be noticed. For the bespectacled child that was more or less normal behavior, but what he had found out about Kudou Shinichi... that didn't fit. Kudou had never been a character that would back down or shy away from attention. For the teen-detective to go so far as to hide even from his closest companions like Mouri Ran, something must have really spooked him. Since Kudou was very careful that his few adult appearances never made it to the public, and Shinichi Kudou had practically been declared missing, there had to be something he was hiding from. It was the only explanation that made sense to Kaito. And because Kudou got involved in a lot of crimes, that meant... whatever the kid had gotten into this time was a lot bigger than the usual murder case he usually stumbled across on a daily basis.

That was why he had confronted the boy about it on the roof. He had not expected Kudou to actually tell him anything, but he had been a bit uncomfortable to just start digging in his life. He did, kind of, respect Kudou and his principle to help people no matter what, even though in most cases it was already too late. And despite the difficulties he now faced because of being in a child's body.

Still, he would probably not have started to dig around Kudou's life more than necessary (you had to know your enemy so it wasn't really surprising that Kaito had tried to learn the basics of the guy... and a bit more to be able to make a credible Kudou Shinichi act..) if he had not come face to dace with those suspicious people trailing his favorite detective. Well, it did seem as if the detective had shaken them off for now, yet there had been more than one occasion where their paths had crossed and Kaito would admit to being the slightest bit worried. And he was sure it wouldn't be the last time Conan encountered them, and it could always happen again that Kid would be pulled into the action again.

And that was the reason why he was now sneaking behind the shrunken detective while being disguised.

Which was – as he had more than once thought – actually stalking now that he planned to do it excessively and on one person, for reasons not entirely related to his night job.

Was that a new kind of low for him? Progressing to other crimes besides breaking & entering, stealing and impersonating? Illegal Gun possession, inappropriate use of fireworks, vandalism... ahh... and kind of a little bit of terrorism, if blowing up a power station and causing a blackout in a big area of Osaka counted as that. Maybe he shouldn't try to list his crimes, for the peace of his own mind.
Well, he had to admit that he had been curious for a long time by now, since it wasn't exactly normal to be deaged. Okay, he had his experiences with weird stuff, when Akako confronted him, but that was a completely other can of weird that had been opened. And he had always been more of a no risk no fun kind of guy. Many magic tricks were not easy or safe to learn. You had to have a sense of adventure and be quick on your feet. Being Kaitou Kid had only made his stage bigger, his performances so much more thought through. But it was still risky, especially since he painted a big target on himself due to his confrontation with the Organisation.

Well, he was sure whatever Kudou was hiding, he would be able to find out. There was nothing worse than being unprepared. And they did have a... more or less truce to help each other out if things actually went south, so he … should be prepared, just in case, right? Right. It had nothing to do with being curious. Nope. And even if... what was it people said? Curiosity killed the cat?

Oh well... Satisfaction brought it back.

Well. Kaito thought, it had been easier in my mind to follow Conan unseen, than it is in reality.

It seemed that the confrontation on the roof had provoked this: Conan's radar was fully working.

Already he's had to change his disguise thrice, hide behind several corners and even dive behind a waste-bin to avoid being detected. It wasn't really obvious. If he didn't already have a lot of know-how in the art of spying (not only) on the teen-toddler he would have been busted. Well, that and his own instincts of fight and flight, which had on several occasions saved him by a hair's breath.

Right now he was shadowing Conan from his home to the school. No suspicious other people around, as far as he could see. At the school entrance he left the detective and high tailed back to his own school by train. He was a bit late, but that couldn't be helped and since he happened to be late a lot (mostly setting pranks up or researching for a heist...) the teacher didn't even bother to reprimand him (the last time he had tried ended with his hair bright pink, but surly that wasn't the reason...). That would probably also explain the strained face his teacher was making and the stiff, nervous expressions his classmates wore, while shifting in their seats. Oh well.

Hiding a smirk he looked out of the window.

He would have to contemplate a bit more on how to find out Conan's secret. He wasn't sure if , just by following the boy long enough, he would get enough hints. But it wasn't really like he had another choice, he would have to follow Conan until he got another lead. So either the hints would accumulate and give him at least an idea how Kudou had been shrunk, or he would find another way.
The idea came to him later and he gleefully rubbed his hands. Since it was his specialty, why should he not look around that abandoned mansion in his free time one of these days. Mentally he noted that down. It was a small chance but it would maybe bear more fruits than randomly stalking Conan (not that he would give up on that just yet...).

For now though....

Kaito's mouth corners twitched.

For now he would indulge his classmates expectation and cause some mayhem...

C-O-N-A-N

When school was finally over and he parted ways with the Detective Boys, he did make a detour in hopes of drawing out whoever had been stalking him this morning.

He was definitely being followed again, he was sure of it. His instincts were very reliable.

“Conan-kun!”

With fast beating heart he turned around. And sighed. Apparently the detective boys were his stalkers this time.

“We thought you were going to Ai-chan!” Ayumi complained with a frown on her face. “It's the wrong direction...”

“A-ah.” that had given him quite a scare.

“I bet he's investigating on his own again.” grumbled Genta and crossed his arms “What are you up to again? Is it a case?”

“Even if it's a case, you can't just promise Ai-chan you will visit her and then leave her waiting when she's ill!” scolded the small girl “That's rude.”

“Uhm...” thinking fast he rubbed his head. He still felt watched. Had it been the detective boys or
was there someone else? “I was planning on buying some medicine for her before going to see her. The park is a shortcut there...”

“Ooh, I see!” at least Ayumi was smiling again “Well, let's go then.”

“Yes, yes...” great. Now he had three kids on his tail. When he was being followed by either Kid or the Organisation. Crap. He had just agreed to go with them to Haibara's house! Well, it wasn't like he could find some kind of excuse now to shake them off, they were already heading in the direction of the apothecary, while ignoring his presence. *Oh well...*, he thought, *at least there is nothing wrong with children visiting their sick friend. As long as Haibara doesn't answer the door and is recognized, it should be OK...*

Casting a glance around to try and find anyone suspicious, he turned and followed them.

The figure, plastered behind a tree went unnoticed.

♠ ♠

As it was, they never even got as far as the apothecary. On the way there, they became witness to a mugging. The kids – excited for cases as they always were – ignored his shouting and ran after the thief, so he didn't have any other choice but to follow them. If only he had his skateboard with him!

“Aw, man...” Mitsuhiko came to a stop, sweat dripping from the fast sprint. “Where did he go?”

Conan came to a stop, also out of breath and took in the surroundings.

“He probably used one of the abandoned buildings here to duck in and hide... besides that..” Conan turned to the kids “you do know it's dangerous to follow a criminal like that?! What would you do if he had taken a knife out?”

He really didn't like to be here, it was a rather abandoned part of the city, where everyone could hide out without problems. Broken glass littered the floor, as well as waste. It was not a good place for children to be.

A movement somewhere upstairs caused him to look up, just in time to throw himself on Mitsuhiko and out of the way of a brick stone.
“That bastard...!” jumping back on his feet he used the fire escape ladder that led up to the building where the brick stone had been thrown down from. Mugging was bad enough, Conan's priority – when he hadn't seen where the man had disappeared to – had been to get the children out of here quickly. He had heard about muggings happening in this area, and people who had tried to stop it getting hurt.

Now that he knew where the man probably was hiding he was not letting the criminal escape again, especially since that guy had tried to hurt one of his kids.

Getting up to where he was sure the stone was thrown, he found a lot of brick stones lying there.

“Tsk.” looking around wildly he saw an open door. However, just to enter some place he had never been before after that guy had tried to brain them with a stone was just plain stupid. That was just waiting for being hit. Not going in would mean the man escaped.

A male voice screaming ended his thought process and let him run to the half closed door, pulling it open and running towards that voice. When he ran down some stairs he saw the man that had stolen the purse slowly backing away from a woman on the floor. Her clothes were rumbled and torn, blood had gathered and dried under her body. Flies were gathering all over her and the smell of rotten flesh lay pungent in the air.

Chapter End Notes

A/N:

I'm currently a bit stuck at the 8th chapter. I hope I will get over it soon, since I haven't even written 1/4th of the story and would dearly like to get to the juicy stuff.
I do have some more small scenes and the next chapters are secured and will probably only be slightly edited before I update them on a weekly basis (so I'm safe until the end of December for now :P)
I do have a rough storyline already on paper and just need to fill in the gaps and details (which is where I have problems mostly :D)
Well, I do hope you liked that chapter and I would love to hear your opinion on it :3

A big thank you for the 2 guests who left Kudos, as well as AuraWhiteFox for being the first member to do so as well and add my story to their bookmarks ;)
"Data! Data! Data!" he cried impatiently. "I can't make bricks without clay."

- Sherlock Holmes

Even from where he was standing in shock, his mind was already processing what he had in front of him. He vaguely remembered a few days ago that she had been reported missing in a newspaper. On the photo in the paper she had long, dark (you couldn't tell the color from the black and white photo back then) hair, dark eyes and a determined smile on her face. Right now she was lying on her back, her brown hair like a halo surrounding her face. There were several stab wounds, that would explain the blood that had pooled under her. It was a bizarre crime scene, despite the obvious violence there was something almost... peaceful in the way her eyes were closed and despite the stab wounds it didn't look as if there had been a fight at all. It made the crime scene so much more horrible in Conan's eyes. This was definitely not a normal murder case.

Snapping out of his thoughts when he heard children voices he snatched his Detective Badge from his chest pocket.

“Ayumi-chan! Mitsuhiko, Genta! Stop, you can't come here!”

He could hear their voices, confused and disgruntled, unwilling to give up on a crime. But this... yes they had seen crime scenes before, sometimes even bloody. But he didn't want to expose to this sort of violence, this smell. They had never really smelled a rotting body before and he hoped they never would, at least not until they were much, much older.

“This is no joke. Please guys, this is important... Listen ... I need you to call the police and show them the building we are in. Do not come here.”

“You just want the fame for yourself again, don't you!?” Genta's angry voice was cut off when Conan continued to talk right over him.

“I'm not. You... we have seen a lot of scary stuff. This is different. Just do as I say! Please... I promise I'll explain later...” maybe it was his please, or maybe they could tell from his voice, but they complied. The cloying smell was making even him feel sick, so he got out a tissue to press it over his mouth and nose. It wouldn't do to actually sick up all over the crime scene. He was used to fresher
crimes and this smell was horrible.

“I hav- I haven't done this. It wasn't me!” Oh, right, Conan remembered, I wasn't alone, this guy is here too.

The legs of the man in question had given out under him, he was shaking all over. For a man who had been trying to brain them with stones, he seemed to have a weak stomach when he actually really saw a real crime.

It didn't take long for the police to arrive, but Conan had problems calming the mugger down and keeping him here, so he had kind of maybe knocked the guy out when he tried to run. And then he had carefully looked over the real crime scene.

Megure had a really fierce look on his face, and when Takagi entered, Conan heard something that sounded an awful lot like “Another one”

Did that mean that this was not a single murder/rape victim? The thought let Conan shudder. Was there someone around here a serial killer? It would explain the disturbing evidence he had found.

When he had investigated the crime scene on his own before the arrival of the police he had made several discoveries. The girl had to be at least several days dead, which coincided with the newspaper declaring her missing. The cause of death was probably strangulation, since the blood vessels in her eyes had burst, indicating that she didn't get enough oxygen before she died. She had marks on her throat, that would fit her tie, even though said tie had been loosened and been retied neatly after her death. Despite several stab wounds there was not much blood on the floor. The killer had probably – Conan very much hoped so – only stabbed her once she had already been dead. He hoped that the rape would have happened afterwards too, since she didn't have any signs of being held down. That she had been raped, Conan deducted from her ripped underwear that lay in a heap a few feet from here.

Looking her over once more he noted that the murderer must have incapacitated her, since there weren't any defense wounds on her body, and her posture seemed almost tranquil, if you were willing to overlook the blood and puncture wounds covering her. Her hair seemed...almost like it had been combed after her death. The way it was lying on the floor was too smooth to be natural. Also, despite rips and blood, her clothes had been straightened after the deed. Another thing that was bothering him was her make up. It wasn't running anywhere, she should have been crying, being strangled, or even dragged anywhere against her will. From this he could come to two conclusions: The victim had been incapacitated beforehand or the murderer had applied the make up afterwards, since nothing was blurred or smudgy. The missing defense wounds indicated that the former had most likely happened. That, of course, didn't rule out that the murderer had cleaned her up afterwards. The longer Conan stared at the crime scene, the more likely he found it that it was a
combination of both.

And in her hand, she held a light pink flower. To be exact, it was a Carnation. He had looked the meaning of that flower up in the internet by phone, but couldn't really link the meaning of the flower to the picture of the crime. Carnations were worn on weddings, Mother's, Teacher's or St. Patrick's Day. It wasn't like the crime had happened on one of these days, so he had looked at the meaning of the flower itself. Pink carnations were the symbol of a mother's undying love. He would keep it in mind but he doubted the girl that lay dead on the floor was a mother.

There was still something niggling his mind but he just couldn't put his finger on it.

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The mugger had been apprehended, but no one was really bothering with him. Right now Conan was sitting in a room at the police headquarters and was being questioned about how he had come about the body. It wasn't like he had much to tell, because this time the crime had happened a long time before he had stumbled over the crime scene itself. It wasn't like normal, where he had the chance to observe the people and surroundings before the crime itself happened.

Like this, it wasn't nearly enough for him to be able to find the culprit right away. And the police was making it very difficult for him to find out about the previous victims, since, to quote Shiratori-keibu 'children should leave that to the police'. Despite being helpful to the police in the past two years, no police officer would want to drag a child into an investigation if it could be helped. Especially a rape case. Oh well, it wasn't as if he wasn't used to going around the adults by now. It made the cases just a bit harder than they would otherwise be.

The only progress he had made was when Takagi-keibu had left him for a moment to get him some drinks, it was then that he had the chance to actually look inside the folder. He quickly snapped some pictures of the documents with his phone and just managed to look over a few pages, as well as see a photo of the first and second crime scene. The first one had been in a forest, the second one on a parking lot. When he heard steps he quickly put everything back in order and leant back, accepting his soft drink (why couldn't he have coffee?) with a quiet “Thanks”.

“Well, I think that will be all Conan-kun.” Takagi had adopted a gentle voice, if Conan had been a real child it would have been appropriate. As it was he only agreed and was led outside where his friends were waiting.

From their eager faces he could tell they wanted to bombard him with questions but were waiting until Takagi was out of earshot. Oh dear.
“So?” Genta had crossed his arms and tried to look at Conan with an intimidating glare. “Out with it.”

For a moment Conan hesitated, it seemed for a moment to long because Ayumi and Mitsuhiko soon joined with fierce stares. Or what they thought of as fierce.

“All right, all right. I'll tell you when we arrive at the Professor’s.”

Making a hand motion to get them to follow him he resigned. They would only pester him or get into trouble if he tried to keep them completely out. It would be hard enough to keep them from investigating, he probably shouldn't mention that is was a serial killer.

When they arrived at Agasa's house and were let in, they settled – as usual – in the living room.

“It's not so much the crime itself.” he started to explain when they slowly invaded his personal bubble, staring menacing again, “After I followed the mugger, you also heard him scream right?” pausing he waited for them to nod “That was because he stumbled onto another crime. The girl that has been murdered has been dead for several days. She... wasn't quite intact, it... something like that is hard to stomach.” Seeing flies crawling all over and seeing grubs wiggle in her flesh wasn't something he wanted them to see anytime soon. If ever.

“And the smell..”

“Whaaat? Bah, we could have totally handled that.” Genta begun to complain, but a door opening interrupted the conversation. Ai entered, carrying a tablet with steaming cups. She had a face mask on, likely pretending to have a cold. With the voice changer inside the mask she could change her voice to a huskier tone and pretend to have a sore throat.

“Don't be so hasty.” she said, her cool unflappable gaze settling on Genta before drifting over the rest of the detective boys “What Edogawa-kun did was very kind.”

“But we have seen crime scenes before...” Mitsuhiko frowned.

“Yes, however those were fresh crimes, as Edogawa-kun has explained.” she settled the tray on the table and passed the cups around “If you smell and see a rotting body once, you will never forget it.”

Conan shuddered. He wouldn't have told them in such a blunt way but it seemed to subdue them a bit. Or maybe they just trusted Ais opinion more than his own, probably because he had tried to keep them out of trouble more than once (sometimes he wondered if it wouldn't be better to just take them
with him, however he despised putting them in danger so at least he had to try to keep them from it, right?)

“It's enough that he will have to live with the image. Don't go searching for the cruelties of the world, if you can avoid it.” they would soon enough come and find them anyways, was what Conan could hear in her voice. Finally her eyes settled on Conan “It was kind of him to spare you that experience for now.”

Shuffling her feet Ayumi glanced to Conan and the two other boys mumbled a soft excuse. The depressing mood was canceled by Agasa, who came into the room carrying Game controls “So, I've invented a new game! Who wants to try it out?” Ai and Conan looked on in amusement as the children set aside their worries and cheered up almost instantly. How nice it would be if they could also return to that carefree lifestyle...

“So? Was that all there was to it?” slowly taking a sip from her cup she looked at Conan, when she was sure that the kids were suitable distracted.

“Mhh. Not really…” pulling out his phone he looked at the pictures he had taken in a hurry “It's serial murder and rape. Targets young girls or woman, brown haired, slim build.” he turned the phone slightly to show her.

“Well… for now there is not much we can do about that…” he frowned “the culprit is careful not to leave any kind of forensic evidence behind. The flowers could be a starting point maybe, he has to get them somewhere…” it was the feeling of Ai's narrowed eyes on him that made him stop rambling in a whisper and look up “Huh?”

“I meant when you sent me that cryptic message this morning forcing me to stay at home!”

Uh-oh. Right, there was that thing too...

“A… ahaha.. right... of course.” clearing his throat a bit he continued “No, I just had a feeling I was being followed. I didn't see any of the Crows though.” at Ai's frown he added “It is... kind of possible that it is only Kid.”

“Kid.”
“Yes, we had a... uh... conversation.”

“You sent me a message because of Kid.” she didn't sound impressed at all, her eyes narrowing.

“Ehr... I wasn't exactly sure at that time but... yeah.”

“Who is stalking you now.” Conan tried not to fidget. When he thought about it maaaaybe he had overreacted a bit? He was relatively sure it was Kid after all.

“.... I wouldn't call it stalking... .... yet.” if it indeed was Kid. “Since I wasn't 100% sure I thought it was safer for you to stay at home...”

“Hm.” she took another sip, all the while staring at him in her creepy, evil, scientist way. He knew that tactic. Using silence to make the person who was interrogated talkative, he knew it well. He still fell for it.

“Weeeell... it seems he... somehow got curious about my age.”

“.... Kid.”

“Yes...”

She set down her Teacup.

“So you are telling me that there is a slim chance some of them could be trailing you, although you are already almost convinced it could be Kid. Who is stalking you, because he want's to know how you..” she lowered her voice slightly “shrank.”

“Seems that way?”

“How could he even know about that!?” as always, the possibility of anyone finding out about their situation – someone who wasn't close to them like Hattori or his parents – always agitated her almost beyond reason.
“It’s fine. He’s just in a position where he got confronted with me more often and has seen me act more like myself... I think he just got curious for some reason and instead of just going behind my back, he decided to inform me that he’s invading my personal life more than he already does.” idiot thief. Clenching his fists he thought about he many times when Kid had actually had the audacity to dress up as his now 19 year old self. On the other hand, that same stupid thief had saved him on quite a few occasions. Haibara too, if they counted the mystery-express.

“It's going to be all right. We do know he's not with them, after all. Too flashy and dressed in white, not really their style.” trying to loosen the mood got Haibara to relax but at the same time she shot him one of her I-know-what-you-are-trying-to-do unfazed looks.

“.... only you Kudou-kun.” and what was that supposed to mean?!

“Well, it just means you have to be careful not to give him any hints. We wouldn't want to pull him into the situation, who knows what that idiot thief will do.” she didn't exactly seem to care much about his welfare, maybe a bit, but she was probably thinking more along the lines of him doing a stupid, conspicuous stunt that brought unnecessary attention to the two of them.

“Anyways, we probably won't have to worry all that much about it, it’s not something that can be easily discovered...” there was a silent ‘or we would already be dead' that Ai didn't have to say out loud.

“Ah. Well it's probably better if you hide out a bit longer until I know for sure. And maybe look out, that he doesn’t go snooping around here, I wouldn't put it past him and your basement would be kind of hard to explain.” and give the thief maybe a bit too much information about their situation.

Her almost gleeful, anticipating look made him shudder again. Maybe he wouldn't have to worry about that, instead he should worry about what Ai would do to the thief if he tried to enter her sanctuary...

♥♦♣♠

Later that evening, when the kids had headed home he used the chance to call Ran with his voice changer.

She quickly picked up, like always, calling out his name in an exited happy voice that made him melt just a little bit on the inside (thought he tried not to show it since Ai’s cool gaze seemed to be fixed on him) “Shinichi!” something on his face must have given him away since Haibara turned away, a Cheshire-Cat smile lingering in the corners of her mouth. Tsk.
“Yo Ran, been a while! How are you doing?” those chat's were the only way he could be near her right now.

“Mou. If you would just call more often...! I'm fine, thanks for asking. How about you? Still stuck with your case?”

“Mh, yes it's a hard one...”

“Must be if it got you stumped for such a long time..” she giggled fondly “Still... you've been missing out so much. Not only school stuff...” after that she rambled a bit on the line about her days at school and what his classmates got up to. He listened to her, making a few appropriate humming noises when they were required.

“So will you tell me? What this big case is about?”

“Ah... I can't yet, I'm sorry. As I said we are still pretty much stuck at the same place...” yeah in a child's body “And any leads we had mostly led to nowhere. It's... frustrating to be honest.” his grumbling made her sigh in disappointment. The words had to be familiar to her by now.

“Mou... If you are stuck, maybe a break would do you some good to clear your head?” she sounded painfully hopeful “You could come visit. Or go to school, if you haven't forgotten your classroom and school building by now.” it was a bit of a desperate try to sound teasing, but she couldn't quite manage to erase the longing and reprimand.

“I know.” he sighed “But I'm sorry, I can't just come and visit. Right now I'm a bit too far away.” like a few years apart “I would... I would love to come back but this case... it's pretty important...” he tried hard to keep his resentment and frustration at bay and only leave slight embarrassment in his tone. Even before he had not been bad at this, but over the past two years he wondered if his mothers acting ability had rubbed off on him more than he had thought before.

Getting uncomfortable with the direction the conversation was taking, he decided to end it for today.

“Well, anyways. I have to go now...I'll talk to you soon, again. Take care!”

“Mou, Shinichi!”
Ran heaved a disappointed sigh.

“Stupid detective-otaku. He hung up again.”

Chapter End Notes

A/N:

So, now we have another case for Conan. I'll warn you now that this case will probably take a while, since Conan doesn't have much to go on with...

As for everything else, I'm still stuck at chapter 8, though I have started to write a bit more on the later chapters, so it's not like I didn't make any Progress at all. In fact, the end of the Story is pretty much written out and will only be slightly altered later on.

The parts I'm mostly stuck is writing out Conans deductions/cases or Kaito's heists (those especially. I know next to nothing about Magic and tricks and as a scientist I don't just want to say 'it happened like that' without knowing how he really did it. Especially since Conan will probably have solved it x_x So... yeah. Stuck at planning a heist .___. if anyone has a few ideas or tipps to get me started I would be greatful...)

Anything else bothering you about my Story? Found a grave mistake? Please share and I will try my best to correct it ;)

Until next week, with Chapter 5: Extending a Hand
Extending a hand

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Going home a short while after his phone call, he arrived only to find an irate Ran chopping the ingredients for dinner. Uh-oh. She wasn't just irate, she seemed furious. Her mutterings contained 'Shinichi' and 'Idiot' and 'stupid cases' a whole lot, so it really wasn't hard to guess what was wrong. Well, it was no wonder. Over two years of waiting and all to often he ended the call with some kind of distraction or saying there was a case. Conan supposed it had been a long time coming.

“H-Hey Ran-nee-chan...”

When she looked up her eyes were spitting mad, however the look changed when she saw Conan standing in the kitchen door, wide eyed. It seemed to soften her anger, at least for a bit.

“Welcome back, Conan-kun. How is Ai-chan doing?”

“Ah... f-fine. Well, she's still sick but... she's doing better...?” he mentally gave himself a shake, he didn't like it that Ran was angry with him, however he shouldn't let him shake him so much that it affected his performance with Conan. Better let her get off some of that steam.

“Ne, ne, are you all right?” he knew she wasn't but over the two years, he had come to the conclusion that his mothers acting abilities had rubbed off on him, at least a little. Honing that ability over two years he had kind of perfected the role of a kid by now. And this was the only way he could still comfort her, since he was the cause of her feelings it was only fair if he at least tried to make it better.

“You seem scarily angry...”

“Ah.” Ran turned back to the vegetables she was cutting and probably cut them a lot harder than required, judging from the sound the knife made. He had to suppress a flinch, Ran could be very, very scary in her anger.

“It's nothing Conan-kun.”

“... it doesn't look like nothing...” his subdued voice did nothing to calm the sudden anger as the knife was practically stabbed in the chopping board.
“I said it's nothing, Conan!” her sharp voice actually caused him to take a step back. Normally she didn't get that angry at him as a child. And only in very rare cases did she drop the -kun from his name.

Since Ran probably saw his movement out of the corner of her eyes, she deflated and turned to him in regret, her voice lowering to a normal volume.

“I'm not angry at you Conan-kun.” she said, going to him and giving him a hug. “I'm sorry, I shouldn't have raised my voice at you like that. It isn't your fault...”

But it was. He was making her incredible angry, unhappy and miserable. Even now he could feel her slightly trembling, even while she was trying so hard to hide it from his childlike self. Reaching around her he returned the hug she was giving him and put his head on her shoulder. Whenever it became like this he felt miserable, but under no condition was he allowed to show it. Hiding his face like that gave him a small respite from acting, since Ran wouldn't be able to see the emotions churning in his eyes.

“Was Shinichi-nii-chan mean to you?” and all he did was lying to her face, but what else could he do? He couldn't take a temporary antidote, since Haibara wouldn't give one to him. And she wouldn't, not for quite some time. So the only times he would turn back would be for a short period, when she was testing another prototype, and even that got more and more dangerous since it stressed his body to turn back and forth. That he was willing to take it despite the risks was a testament of how much Ran meant to him, and how much he despised being forced to stay away from her.

The hug from Ran got a little too tight for comfort, but he stayed silent, willing to endure a little discomfort if it meant that Ran would cheer up at least a little.

“It's... it's not that...” now she sounded heartbroken, which was even worse than her angry spiel that had probably covered the core of her feelings.

“I just miss him, that idiot case-addicted detective.” when she got like that, the need to confess everything to her was nearly overwhelming. Only the thought of her getting hurt and killed by the Crows was steadying his iron will to not put her in harms way. He had thought about every possible way to tell her his secret, but … he didn't want her to have the same pressure on her shoulders. To watch her every word, every action concerning him, while worrying. She was too honest. And so overly protective that she would put her live in danger if there was a chance that Conan was in danger. Hattori alone was already dangerous, but Ran interacted with him on a daily basis and would have to control her every action to him. And it would put her far too much in harms way, and that was something he couldn't accept. She already faced too much danger just by being around him, he didn't want to pull her into the dirty business with a criminal syndicate. Additionally he didn't want to turn her world upside down, destroying her almost naive and innocent world outlook, where ghosts and UFOs existed. He much preferred her to be scared about those, than the painfully real danger lurking in humans.

When she released him, he could only stand there without saying a word, his throat closed up so tight that he had problems swallowing.
“I'm sorry Conan-kun, really, it's nothing. Dinner will be ready soon, why don't you watch TV or something?” her voice was trembling, but she smiled with slightly wet eyes and he nodded and left her alone. By now he knew that she needed to compose herself again, even though he hated to leave, there was nothing he could say or do to help her. Not while he was Conan.

Later that night when he came by her room, he could hear her sobbing in her room behind closed doors. For a while he stood in front of her room, a hand half reaching out as he listened to the sound that he was responsible for. Letting his hand fall, he turned and silently went to his and Kogoro's room. Sleep evaded him.

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The next morning he got up a lot earlier, after a night of not really sleeping much and feeling like the ass of the world, and made breakfast (it was not a great one, but this much he could do despite not being a great cook). Normally Ran was up before him, but he really didn't know how to cheer her up and wanted to do her some good as the little brother figure she saw him. It was also for the reason that he could head to school a lot earlier than before, thus either escaping whoever was watching him (Kid) or having more time to actually find out whom the person (Kid) was disguising as. If it actually was Kid, which he still wasn't sure yet. It wasn't like Kid had outright said he would stalk him from now on, although it was heavily implied in the 'I will have to keep my eyes on you'.

The feeling of being followed continued the next few days. Sometimes it was less strong, other times he was sure that someone was in his direct vicinity and that he couldn't find the person caused him break out in cold sweat. The only thing that kept him calm was the mantra of 'It's only Kid, Kid doesn't hurt anyone' and the fact, that he hadn't seen anyone from the Black Organisation. What he had often thought he had spied, where those white doves that kept Kid company. It did settle his nerves a bit, since it was in part a confirmation that Kid was spying on him.

… it was kind of weird that he was actually relieved that it was only an internationally known thief that was spying on him. Didn't Kid have something like a private life of his own? Right now, Conan really couldn't see it.

Still, despite his spy being Kid, that didn't mean it wasn't annoying as hell. Since he even begun to lose sleep considering that, even after the feeling of being watched ended, he still felt deeply unsettled. It must be because he just wasn't used to being studied for such a long period of time. As a child one could just often avoid the attention of others, especially adults. As a result he had lost more sleep than necessary. And he was cranky because of it. Well, maybe partly because of his last talk to Ran too.
When he got out of the house once again to go to school – this time with his skateboard – nothing stood out at all. It begun after a while that he was feeling like he was watched, so he hopped on the board and decided to skate fast using the in-built turbos. If it was indeed Kid, he would have to keep up somehow.

After two streets he stopped abruptly, watching his surroundings carefully. While trying to look as if he was looking for something in a toy-store window and he had stopped by only because it had gabbled his attention.

He smirked slightly when he found what he was looking for and just when his eyes found the reflection of the person, that person turned around and walked in he other direction. Yeah, like that would work, Kid.

Hopping on his board, feeling thrilled he went after him and rather quickly caught up.

“Ne, ne, Onee-san!” he gave her (or him) one of his 100-watt-smiles and he could almost see the 'Crap!' written in the hard to read pokerface of Kid. If he squinted really hard.

“Aren't you going the wrong way? Did you get lost?”

“Huh? Oh, no, no. I'm not lost, why do you ask?”

“It's just because of your uniform. Don't you have to head to school?” He smiled angelic and could swear that the Person – he was to 95% sure it was Kid – was actually beginning to sweat a little. He fingered his watch and saw the eyes – indigo like the thief, probably didn't have the time to change contacts or hadn't anticipated Conan getting so close – making an aborted movement to it.

“I have a free period first thing in the morning, so I was just looking around a bit...” not a bad excuse.
“Ah, so... is that Teitan Highschool you go to? Because Ran-nee-chan goes to the same school! Do you know her? She's awesome! Which class do you go to?”

“Yes, that's right. I'm sorry but I do not know your Ran-nee-san. I'm in 3A.”

The probability of the blond girl being Kid raised to 97% “Ah, is that so.” he blinked up at Kid, this time smirking “Well, you should probably head home then. You did forget to change your winter uniform for the summer one. Ran-nee-chan said she could finally change it today!”

“Wh-oh yes! I forgot about that...” bingo! 100% that this was Kid. Like hell you forgot. Kid hadn't known when the uniforms would change at Teitan High, and since Ran had her winter uniform on yesterday, and the disguise had to be changed in a hurry he hadn't had enough time to think about it and take it into consideration.

“Cut the chase.” he really wasn't impressed. Putting his hands in his pockets he dryly looked up to Kid.

“It's not that you forgot. Because tomorrow will be the day that the uniform changes for Teitan High. Besides, you turned the other direction when you saw me watching you, you reacted to the watch – which should by now be instinct to you – and ....” he grinned “You have the exact same eye color. Forgot the contact lenses?” he snorted slightly “I don't know what you hope to archieve by following me, but it's annoying.”

“Hmpf. All right, all right.” Kid slightly raised his hands in a gesture of surrender, “You got me, Tantei-kun.”

“It won't help you to follow me.”

“Maybe, maybe not. That still remains to be seen, right?”

“No.” it was no use trying to capture Kid now. There was no evidence, even if he caught him. Besides, they did have some kind of truce outside of heists.

“Well, it's not like I have any other leads that reveal your secret.”
“Ever considered that I don't want you to know?”

“Considered and decided not to pay attention to it.” came the unrepentant reply with that infuriating smirk. Conan could almost feel the vein on his forehead start to throb and a headache starting to rise. That, added to his already bad mood and the sleepless nights before made him snap at the thief.

“I don't poke around your private life whenever I please either, even if I could! Do me the same courtesy!”

“Hey, hey.” Kid looked at him a little wide eyed as Conan rubbed his eyes.

“You are stressing me out with it.” he unwillingly admitted to the thief, looking to the floor “and I have enough going on, please don't add to it.” glancing up he saw the thief watching him and obviously considering his words earnestly.

“That... was not my intention.” actually, Kaito hadn't realized how paranoid Conan was. Now that he thought about it – and that was just another puzzle piece in the mystery of Shinichi Kudou – Conan's words meant he was already at least occasionally stalked by someone, who most probably wanted to do him harm. The thought unsettled the thief.

He was right though, Kaito didn't have the right to just poke and prod around the detective's life. He had hesitated in the beginning, because of that. It was something else if it concerned a stakeout to gather info for his next heist. With that said, those were still fair game for both of them.

That being the case, it still didn't feel right to leave the little detective alone with his problem. Yes, he was sure that there were people already helping him, like that detective from Osaka who stuck to Conan like glue whenever they met up. But if Conan was really involved in something dangerous – and it had to be if the detective was being so careful not to be spotted – then it wouldn't hurt to have another person watching his back. Especially one whom no one would suspect to actually watch out for the little detective.

“Hm.” scratching his chin Kaito decided to change his strategy – which was risky, and kind of idiotic and he had to actually put a lot of trust in Kudou's sense of honor and justice – but it would at least make him scratch off the creepy stalker from his crime list.

“Well, if that's the case, how about becoming friends first and when you are comfortable, you tell
me?” looking down at the child detective he quite enjoyed the stunned, disbelieving look on the kids face.

“Huh?”

“Yeah. That's a great idea.” Kaito grinned (seemed like Kudou's brain had just fried) “Glad you think so too.”

“Wait, wait, wait. What?”

“Friends. You know, a relationship of mutual affection between two people.”

“I know what friendship is! Are you crazy?” at Kid's grin he hastily added “Rhetorical question.” Really, what was Kid thinking, proposing a stupid idea like that!

“You do know you are a criminal?”

“Details.”

“And I'm a detective!”

“Really? Hadn't noticed.”

“....”

“Okay, maybe I did.”

“You are a criminal!”

“Been there, done that.”

“Urgh. You are not taking this serious at all...You being a thief and me being a detective means that
I'm obligated to turn you in!"

“Would have to know who I am first. And have evidence...!” Kid singsonged. That guy was mental. There was no other explanation.

“I could trick you and-”

“Bullshit.” Conan narrowed his eyes. Was Kid honestly implying...

“I totally could.”

“But you won't.” Kid suddenly looked at him with solemn eyes, that Conan couldn't answer for a while. “You wouldn't try to turn me in outside a heist.” Conan didn't quite agree with that. If he actually found proof that could be handed in to the police, there was no guarantee for Kid that Conan wouldn't do it. But damn the thief for probably being right. Catching Kid outside of a heist did feel like cheating. If Kid had been any other criminal, things would be different. But during those two years Conan had seen a lot of Kid's compassion and integrity. Like when he had saved the dog of Sonoko's uncle, despite being his rival. Or pushing Genta out of the way, to keep him from harm. Returning the Memory Egg to it's rightful owner. There were many instances, but also more personal situations, when Kid had helped him out directly. Even if he had, on occasion, twisted Kid's arm a bit to get him to do his part. And more than once he had let Kid go, even if he had the means to try and capture him.

Yes, Kid really was a strange criminal, stealing and returning, hurting no one (well, except maybe the Task Force's pride) and keeping others from harm. Okay, he did a lot of things against the law but Conan was not completely innocent either, with his illegal identity. And Conan did sometimes have to vandalize a little for the greater good. Or have to break in. And maybe his 'Kick-Stuff-At-Target-First' and 'Ask-Questions-Later' wasn't all that nice of a method either but every time he kicked it at a person he was normally 98% sure it was the perpetrator. Or had another important reason, like kicking a weapon out of their hands. So yeah, maybe he had more than once kicked a few teeth loose with that stunt, but at least he was giving dentists some work to do. But he was being distracted from the main point he had been contemplating.

No, he probably really wouldn't turn Kid in outside of a heist, except if Kid really committed a serious crime. That didn't mean he had to tell the thief that. No way in hell he would tell him that. During heist though, that would be a different matter.

“... I still won't tell you.”
“Maybe not.” Kid agreed “But you will have someone who is willing to listen at least.”

Conan snorted “Yeah right. And how do you suppose I will do that. Stand on a roof and shout? Besides, it's not like I don't have other people to talk to...” even though the offer actually made him lose a bit of the anger that had build over the days that Kid had spent stalking him.

At this, even Kaito had to chuckle at the mental picture of him rushing to Conan standing on a roof like superman for a little heart to heart talk between friends. And yes, Conan did have friends that he could talk to, but it never hurt to have another ear willing to listen.

“Well, maybe you have people who are willing to listen...” Kid agreed and considered Conan out of the corners of his eyes. He had often thought that despite their differences they did have a lot in common. “… but do they actually understand?” that actually pierced Conan to the core. As much as they tried, Hattori, Haibara, his parents, he didn't think anyone could totally understand. Not really.

Hattori, never having been in this situation, tried, but in the end failed. He was a good friend, great even, distracted him when he got depressed and did his best to help him out. His teasing got annoying sometimes, but he had a very kind heart and Conan appreciated having someone who would listen to him, especially when there was a case.

Haibara, while being in the same situation he was, didn't actually have anything to return to. No, instead she seemed to prefer living her life as a child again and Conan wouldn't begrudge her that. Due to this, she sometimes couldn't understand his almost desperate longing to return to himself. While she still tried to get the antidote for him, he had once guiltily thought that she wasn't giving her all out of fear of being discovered if he should get back to his old self before taking down the Organisation. Of course, he knew that this was not true at all, knew that Haibara felt guilty about it and actually wanted to help him. And he knew that this fear was not unfounded. If he actually managed to return, he would draw attention from the Organisation and they would try to eliminate him. Intellectually he knew that it would be more intelligent to only return to his body when they had actually defeated them, but his heart couldn't seem to agree.

His parents didn't understand at all, but were willing to support him in whatever way he needed them to and he loved them because of it. Whatever he decided to do, he knew he could count on them.

Subaru-san, while knowing about him (at least Conan was sure he knew), wasn't so close as to actually have such a talk. And Conan didn't quite trust him yet to let the guy that far in his private life. He respected him as an ally and he trusted him to keep an eye on Haibara, but he still wouldn't call them friends.

There were others too, like Eisuke who was now not even in Japan (and was far too interested in Ran for this kind of talk, or Sera (though he wasn't quite sure if she really knew, just her behavior indicated that she saw more in him than a kid), as well as several deceased persons who wouldn't exactly be able to talk back. A few others like Takagi were suspicious, but didn't know about his real identity for sure and he would work to keep it like that. Thus he couldn't talk to them. It was better that way, the fewer people knew about him, the less dangerous it would be.
He had known that Kid was very intuitive and had a keen insight into humans, but his words had hit the nail on the head. Swallowing with his suddenly dry mouth, Conan added a mental point to Kid and stayed silent, unwilling to admit that the thief was right, though his silence probably already proved the menace right.

“Mah, just think about it...” shrugging his shoulders, Kid straightened his skirt (still a weird thought...) “But I can promise I'm a very attentive listener and I wouldn't judge you... well, not more than a critic deserves anyways.” the suddenly impish tone had Conan almost choking.

“Moron. Still got the problem of not being able to talk...” rolling his eyes lazily at Kid “It's not like we have all the time in the world when we meet at heists. Besides, I don't want to talk to you at heists, where I'm meant to capture you. It's not going to happen.”

“I thought I could come visit you sometimes...” this time Conan did choke and stared incredulously at Kid. Soon after that look turned annoyed and Kid quickly raised his hands in defense “Not like I did today and yesterday and.... well the days before. Still in disguise, sure, but I would make myself blatantly visible to you. How about that?”

It was not really what Conan wanted, but he was a little afraid that Kid wouldn't be offering him a better deal.

“How?”

“How?”

“How would I know it's you?” the detective sounded tired and resigned and Kaito actually had expected to be met with a lot more resistance. Kaito did kind of pity the boy a bit, he was not at his best right now, anyone with eyes could see the dark circles under Kudou's eyes, but he couldn't say he was happy he didn't have to fight the boy on it.

“Ah, let's see...” thinking fast, he looked up to the sky “How about wearing a bracelet with an Amethyst? And leaving the contact lenses out. Male. Light brown hair. Name is... ah.. Kaito Ishikawa” it was tempting to actually appear as Kaito Kuroba, but that was a bit too risky even for Kaito. Yes he wanted to try, and he would do so by showing some trust in Kudou. Not offering his hands to be shackled and walking into the prison himself. It wouldn't take long for Tantei-kun to make the connection. Besides, he didn't want to be confused with Shinichi by Ran-chan. That could hurt.
At Conan’s dry look he added a confused “What?”

“Kaito Ishikawa? Really? Ishikawa like Ishikawa Goemon and Kaito after Kaitou Kid? Could you be more obvious?” when Kaito opened his mouth Conan sighed “No, don't. Please, don't answer that.” shaking his head he cast an unreadable stare over the girl walking beside me. Kinda creepy to know it was actually a guy underneath. Note to self: Kid shaved his legs. And he could pull of the slender legs of a high-school girl.

… this was not something he wanted to spend time thinking on any further so he ripped his eyes away.

“Oh well, whatever..” he muttered “It's not like I can stop you...” admittedly, he was very curious about talking to Kid on a regular basis, even if he was anxious and hesitant at the same time because of it. Regular contact with a criminal still didn't seem all right to him. And he was still unbalanced by the strange offer Kid had made; when he had confronted the thief he had never imagined the conversation to lead to this result.

“Okay!” pumping his fist in the air Kid looked like a cheering high-school girl. Creepy.

Next thing he knew were soft lips on his cheek, a mischievous voice full of laughter adding “It's a date then!” causing people to stare and himself to flush red.

That... what had he been thinking?! Standing frozen and with his brain fried for a second time this morning, Conan wondered just what kind of evil pact he had just signed. The sound of the church bells ringing ripped him out of his stunned state, after a quick look to his watch he was left cursing and started to run “I'm late!!”

Chapter End Notes

A/N:
Well, right now I've got a hard time writing at all, because I'm at my sisters watching her cats. And anytime I try to start to write something the cat comes to me and nudges my arm. Almost deleted my chapter *cough*

Besides that, I'm still a bit stuck on chapter 8/9, makes me a bit nervous because now it's only 2-3 chapters until we get there, but hopefully I will get over it in those 2-3 weeks.

Until next time with Chapter 6: Sealing the deal!
After school he actually stopped at the gate. Yes. Okay. He had said Kid could come and visit him. And he had thought that in the next few days Kid would probably appear and bother him again. Not six hours later to get him from school.

“...” staring at the person with light brown, almost blond hair, indigo eyes and a leather bracelet with an amethyst charm dangling from it, he was kind of at a loss at what to say or do.

“Eh? Conan-kun, do you know that person?” Ayumi asked curious, looking back and forth between them. “You have been staring at him for about a minute...”

“...” slowly turning around Conan decided to take the back entrance.

“No. Don't know him. Not at all.”

“That's so cruel Conan! And I especially came from America to visit you!” twitching at the voice and familiar use of his name he turned around. How had Kid gotten behind him so quickly?!

“... why?”

“What do you mean why? Shinichi asked me to, of course.” Shinichi most definitely did not.

“He knew I was planning to return to Japan for a while and said I should keep an eye out for you, since trouble always manages to find you...”

“... really.”

“Yup!” grinning at him Conan gave up with a sigh. He had already been caught. Since when was it the other way around, with Kid pursuing and Conan trying to hide...?
“Guys, this is Ishikawa Kaito. An acquaintance from America.” turning to Kaito with his sugary 'I'm-such-a nice-kid, like-me!' smile, enjoying the way Kid seemed to twitch when he saw it and added “Kaito-nii-chan. These are my friends, Ayumi-chan, Genta-kun and Mitsuhiko-kun.”

“Heeeh, I've also heard about you from Shinichi. He said you guys solve a lot of cases and help the police, right? Wow...that's really impressive!” lay it on thick, you blasted thief. With that little praise he had immediately scored points with the kids, who stuck out their chests with smug (admittedly adorable) looks and glowing eyes.

Conan kinda wanted to kick something at Kid, for using his alter ego to archive that.

“Well, I've wanted to borrow Conan for a bit. Ah, sorry. Around here I would have to say Conan-kun, right? I will have to get used to that again...” yeah right.

After leaving the kids he burrowed his hands in his pockets and trailed after Kaito.

“So? What did you want from me?”

“Hm? Oh, nothing much.”

Conan could feel the vein start to pulse again, which he assumed would be a regular reaction to close proximity to Kid. Glaring at the thief only got him laughed at.

“Oh, come on. Don't be like that. Humor me for a bit. How about some cake?”

“I don't really like sweet things...”

Being on the receiving end of a horrified stare, he watched Kid shake his head in distress and got his hand grabbed.

“Hey!”

“Cake it is then!” dragging Conan into the next best cafe they settled at a table that was a little secluded.

“You really should consider the opinions of other people a bit more...” he did not like being dragged
around like a child, by a person who knew that he wasn't truly one.

“Well, there is also stuff besides sweet things here, I'm sure you will find something. My treat.”

Watching Kid acting like this was... strange. Too normal. When the waitress came, Conan got himself a sandwich and a water. Kid got chocolate cake and fruit tea. While Kid was rambling about god and the world, Conan was sitting there and playing with a handkerchief and staring at Kid as if he was an escaped zoo animal.

After the food arrived and there was a break in the thief's nonstop talking, Conan couldn't help himself but had to ask.

“Why are you doing this? We are not friends. We will probably never be friends. Hell, how could I be friends with someone who not only hides his face from me but whom I know to be on the other side of the law... So why?” It was impossible to form that kind of relationship between them, when he wouldn't be able to see Kid's real face. When his mind was following every movement, waiting for Kid to slip up and leave evidence, fingerprints, a hair strand, even though he wasn't exactly sure if he would turn Kid in even if he got some. Besides, it would be hard to explain where and how he got it.

And that was what was bothering him the most. He was relatively sure he would have no trouble at all turning Kid in at a heist. But outside of that he was hesitating. That meant he was already compromised. It settled ill with him to even consider not giving the evidence to the police, even if he found it.

“Because I'm curious about you. And I think we are... actually really similar to each other.” Kid scratched his chin in a nervous gesture “Besides, we do work well together if a situation arises...” but those were excuses, half truths, that much Kaito could admit at least to himself. It was strange to be so truthful. Unlike Conan, Kaito was very careful not to let anyone know about his secret, which was probably also easier to hide, because... well he was not half his size. But that also meant that sometimes he felt really, really lonely, since he couldn't talk about anything related to Kid to his friends and his mother was off touring the world.

“And I could use a friend.” he added this very quietly but was sure Conan had heard it regardless, for he stayed silent for a while, as he ate.

Looking down at his food, he picked a bit at it, stunned at Kid's honest answer.

“... You do know that if you leave evidence behind that I will use it against you.” Conan was still torn about what he would do if that ever would come to be, so this would be Kid's only warning to be careful and not let his guard down too much. He himself hadn't quite made up his mind, if Kid had any sense of self-preservation he would better double and triple check not to give Conan anything at all that could lead to revealing his identity.
“Sure, sure, Tantei-kun. Whatever you say...” Kaito shoveled a big piece of cake inside his mouth, while he curiously observed Conan. The detective seemed to be in a bad mood since the beginning and tired on top of it. Well, if Kaito was good at one thing, it was taking the mind of other people off of serious thoughts. Though he had to be careful not to reveal too much to the sharp blue eyes. Perhaps he could give Conan a little show.

Ripping his own paper napkin into pieces he attracted Conan's attention. Balling the pieces into a small ball and hiding them in his palm, he extended his hand to Conan and shot him an expectant look.

“... Really? A magic trick? Now?” Conan deadpanned but since Kid was still holding the fist out to him with an expectant look plastered over his face. He sighed and cupped his own hands under it. When Kid opened his hand, instead of a paper ball hitting his palms it was a small dove that fluttered excitedly in his cradled hands “Wah!” Okay, so Conan had been expecting a number of things, but not an animal to be dropped in his hands. Said dove was now climbing up to his shoulder and nibbling on his hair.

Kaito called his distraction a success when Mina-chan – the smallest dove he owned – managed to wrangle a smile from the child in front of him.

“So you are a magician, Kaito-nii-chan?” Well, Kaito hadn't actually planned to be but since his identity was completely made-up, it didn't really matter and it was not like Conan didn't know about Kid being a good magician himself already. He was a bit uneasy about revealing so much about Kuroba Kaito, but as long as they never met while he was out of disguise, he didn't think that Conan would make the connection.

“Jup, just an amateur though.” hr grinned at Conan's flat look. “Well, I still think we could become friends. Okay, so maybe for now we don't really know much about each other but it's not like we don't know each other at all...” and Kaito was sure that Conan also (more or less and probably would never admit to it) respected him. After all, it happened quite a few times that Conan had actually let him go already, despite not being friends. Not that he wanted to be friends to have Conan give up on catching him (though he would be very glad if the kid stopped kicking stuff in his direction), since he actually quite enjoyed the challenge Conan always presented, when he attended a heist.

Juggling the unused knife in his hand, he added “But I already know about you and you – more or less – know about me. Even if it's just talking, or having someone at your back in case of emergencies, that helps...”

“Fair enough, however your emergencies will probably be stuff I would have to report. And I have no way to contact you anyways...”
“No problem!” a small smoke-cloud appeared in front of Conan, when if cleared there was a small card with an address on it.

“No problem!” a small smoke-cloud appeared in front of Conan, when if cleared there was a small card with an address on it.

“It's an App, where we can chat. That way you can also contact me whenever...so give it a chance?” clever. It was probably coded and protected so one wouldn't be able to trace back by whom and where it was accessed from. Seemed like Kid had actually thought this through a lot.

It looked like Kid was really serious about this, and even if Conan was unsure, he had to admit it could come in handy some day. Even Conan had to grudgingly admit that they worked well together, and if they could manage that from meeting by chance he was pretty sure that they would work great together when they had actually time to plan. At least in that aspect, he could agree that Kid was a reliable partner when it concerned keeping others from harm, and for that alone it was worth it to accept the communication.

Breathing in, he felt uncomfortable but gave a small nod. “Okay...” it was very quiet and sounded unsure. He would have contact with a criminal on a regular basis from now on, which didn't sit right with him. Not yet. Nodding again he repeated louder and in a more determined tone, “Okay. Let's try it. No more stalking though.”

“No promises.” at Conan's glare Kaito just chuckled again “Well, no stalking if it doesn't have to do with my... nighttime job.”

A little appeased but not really happy Conan huffed a quiet breath and finally got to eat the rest of his sandwich. Kid, ah no, he should get used to Kaito as long as Kid was in that disguise. Kaito didn't seem so bad, even if Conan didn't really know what to talk about with the thief yet, the magician filled the silence with his ramblings and occasional magic tricks, that always served to distract Conan whenever his mind seemed to want to drift off.

When they finally parted at the Agency, Conan had to admit at least to himself, that he had actually enjoyed the meal.

“I guess I'll have to see where this will head to...”

Conan had downloaded the App Kid had given him to contact him on his smartphone. The next day
after school, he decided to take a peek. It was a rather simple design, but Kid had already posted some stuff there that had Conan question his already questionable sanity once again.


[07:57] Arsene Lupin: “Came upon a great mystery. Interested?”


[12:19] Arsene Lupin: “You know, blond looks better when it's pink.”


Looking down at the text, Conan felt himself at a loss again. How did one respond to random stuff like that? Slowly he typed a reply.

[17:04] Detective-geek: “Before I write anything.... change the name.”

[17:12] Arsene Lupin: “You are no fun at all...”

[17:18] Sherlock Holmes: “Did you give me that App just so you could state whatever random things happen during your day?”

[17:28] Arsene Lupin: “Oh come on, it's no fun to just write about serious stuff.”

[17:43] Sherlock Holmes: “You are just plain crazy...”

[18:01] Arsene Lupin: “Well, some people never go crazy... must be a sad, horrible life.”
Sherlock Holmes: “You aren't talking about me, right?”

Arsene Lupin: “Oh, you caught that? Ha, ha, you should go on and be crazy too. I'm crazy. I don't pretend to be otherwise. It's heaven! Come to uuuusssss!”

Sherlock Holmes: “I'll just pretend I didn't read that.”

Arsene Lupin: “Aww, come on. It was a joke.”

Arsene Lupin: “Detective? Don't ignore meee...”

Arsene Lupin: “I'm going to steal your phone! O_^”

Arsene Lupin: “And then I'm changing every name in it!”

Arsene Lupin: “And I will add sound to the App, so you will hear it every time a message comes through!”

- Bling -

Arsene Lupin: “There you go.”

- Bling -

Arsene Lupin: “Now you won't be able to ignore me!”

- Bling -

Arsene Lupin: “Are you there? Hello? Hello??”

[22:54] Sherlock Holmes: “Shut up and GO TO SLEEP! And turn off the sound or I will turn off my phone – or kick it in your face the next time I see you!”

Yes, Conan was quite sure now. Agreeing to Kid's stupid ideas was a sign of at least temporary insanity. And if he hadn't been completely insane back then, Kid would probably manage to drive him there quickly...

Chuckling to himself, Kaito turned the sound off again and went to sleep.

Chapter End Notes

A/N:

Okay, so Kaito is quite determined to get Conan to give this a try and now they can communicate with each other. That is the Basis I worked towards to get them to talk to each other, even if Conan agreed more because he was too tired to put up much of a fight :P

Sad News though: I don't have as much time as before, so my updates will slow down a bit. Next update will be in two weeks on the 20th December.

I am thinking about maybe doing a one-shot for Christmas, tell me if you would be interested because - as I said - I do not have much time and I'm not quite sure if I will actually get to it at all :(

Next Chapter 7: Legwork
Their strange... texting relationship (what else could he call it?) continued and Conan slowly got used to getting almost daily random updates that made no sense whatsoever. It was... bemusing. And he was still not really sure what to think about it all, it was not a situation he had thought he would ever find himself in. Well, getting used to odd happenstance was nothing new to him after all, seeing who he was right now. Although he had to admit it was a little amusing. Especially when he was bored out of his mind at school. Sometimes Kid even sent small riddles, though most were easy enough to solve, some did take him a bit longer to dissect. Conan suspected that it was Kid's way of trying to engage him into a conversation, since he was still reluctant in answering any of these texts. Slowly he was getting more comfortable with it, when he tried to forget that he was actually conversing with a criminal over phone now. Regularly. Out of his free will. Well... Kid was … okayish. Maybe. Sometimes. When he wasn't anywhere in his vicinity.

The murdered victim case that hadn't been solved yet had been on his mind every time his mind drifted off, which happened a lot during school. Since it was already keeping his mind this busy, Conan decided to follow this case as much as he could while he was at it. And since the police was – to his frustration – understandingly uncooperative about handing out any details to him, he was left with the documents that he had partially managed to take photos of or investigating on his own.

The last two crime scenes were inaccessible by now and he didn't know the exact location. However he had managed to wrangle an address from Takagi, from the victim he had found. If nothing else, this would be his starting point. To Takagi he had said that he wanted to pay his respects to that Nee-san and the police officer had believed him readily, despite Conan having never really attended a funeral from any other case before. Maybe because this crime scene was rather gruesome for a child (and even his teenage self was unsettled, having never dealt with a rape case before it made him sick even thinking about it).

School was boring as always, however Kogoro had managed to reel in some interesting, yet easy to crack cases that Conan had the pleasure to solve in his spare time.

Right now though, school was over and Conan had happily said his goodbyes to his friends, to take the train to the house of the third victim.

Arriving at the home he rang the bell and a woman clad in black from head to toe with red rimmed eyes opened the door.

“Oh?” she said after she confusedly looked down and saw him standing there. Bowing a little to get on his level she kindly asked “And what are you doing here, little one?”

“Uhn...” looking at her with big, sad eyes he hesitated a little but pushed on nevertheless “I wanted to pray for Nee-chan,” he said, wringing his hands “but I didn't know where to go so I asked for
Her eyes teared up a little, but also seemed to soften. She swallowed thickly and managed a trembling smile “That's right, they said some children had found Satsuki. It's nice of you to think of her and coming here....” the door opened a little wider, inviting him to come inside “Come in first... do you want something to drink? I have some juice....”

He knew he was taking advantage by manipulating her kind and motherly nature, but such had been his life since he had been turned into half his original size. He had very quickly realized that adults just didn't take a kid seriously, no matter how mature said kid was for his age. Thus he was forced to get around that hurdle by acting the kid part. Pulling his shoes off in the Genkan he followed her inside and settled in the living room. There he could see a rather new addition of a very beautiful but at the same time ominous Butsudan, a shrine for the spirits of the ancestors or, as in this case, a dead family member.

Looking around he saw a lot of pictures of a happy teenage girl. Pictures of her at school, of her with her family and friends and at various ages. Looking the pictures over he saw one, where she was pictured with what he thought might be her boyfriend, if he interpreted the looks on both their faces right, as well as their general close stance to each other.

A glass appearing in his vision had him looking up to the mother and sitting down on the sofa, sipping the orange juice.

“I'm sorry you had to find her...” the mother said, she had composed herself in the kitchen. She was still pale and seemed stretched thin, but she probably wanted to appear strong in front of a child. He was a little sorry that he had to put her through this, but right now she was the only person who could tell him anything about the victim. And if he wanted leads to stop that guy, he would have to get more information, especially about the backgrounds of the victims.

“It's all right...” his voice tilted a little, which was probably good because while he hadn't planned it, it was weird for a kid not to be affected by what he had seen.

“I didn't get a close look at all, I just called the police to the place...” he lied and looked up to her. “They told me they would get the bad guy.” her eyes were watering again and Conan quickly looked away. He was bad with tears, had always been, except when it was a culprit. Seeing someone grieve though had always cut something deep inside of him... Looking at the pictures he focused on the first one he saw “Satsuki-nee-chan is about the same age as my Ran-nee-chan, did she still go to school, too?” distracted the mothers gaze followed his and found the picture.

“Eh. Yes, she is... was in her third year of high school...”
Now, how to get more information about the girl, without seeming obvious about it?

Putting the glass on the table he padded over to the pictures and looked at them. The mother followed him. For a moment there was a silence and Conan looked up to her after a while.

“Can you tell me a bit about her?”

“Ah... I can, wait a second...” reaching up she pulled a photo album out of a shelf and beckoned him to the couch again. Obliging, he settled beside her and looked at the pictures she showed him, that detailed the life of the girl named Satsuki Honodera.

“She loved going out with friends, especially Karaoke...” the mother said, tracing a picture that detailed the exact scene. Looking at the school uniform he could see the small logo that showed her going to a nearby university. Her friends wore the same uniform as her, except two people.

“Although she had a big row with her boyfriend this past month...”

“Her boyfriend? That one right?” he pointed at the man he had seen on a photo on the shelve.

“Yes. How did you know?” her surprised eyes looked over to him and he mentally scolded himself, but pointed at the picture “Because they are reeeaally close to each other in that picture.” it seemed to satisfy her.

“That's right... well, since they didn't get to make up he is rather torn up about it...” she sighed “He's such a nice boy too...”

“Oh. They had a fight? What did they argue about then...?”

“It... well, she didn't exactly tell me, you will understand why when you are older, but I think it was about another friend of hers... she thought he was … ah how to explain... he was romancing not only her but also another girl too.”

“Oh. That's not nice. Ran-nee-chan said you shouldn't do something like that.”
“That's right.” his childish response had elicited a small smile from her. It seemed like talking about her daughter when she was still alive did lift her depressed mood for a little.

Going through more photos he saw that Satsuki was fond of trying out new hobbies. She seemed to change from dancing, to climbing, to yoga and other activities. Her mother explained that she didn't really stick to any of those, because she became bored or distracted with other things really fast.

When they reached the end of the album the mother pointed at one of the last pictures, where Satsuki was holding a tennis racket and waving into the camera.

“She started playing tennis a while ago too, and she quickly fell in love with the sport. I think it's the first time she stuck to one activity for so long. Just before… she was so happy, because of a sprained ankle she almost missed it, but it healed just in time for her to participate in her tennis tournament, but she never came b-ack home. When her friends called that she had not shown up to the outing they had planned to celebrate her participation – whether or not she won…we called around, then told the police that she was missing…” the composure she had shown broke a little as a few tears spilled over and her breathing hitched from suppressed sobs “N-never thought … never thought this would happen…”

Feeling a little helpless he gently petted her hand and extracted a fresh handkerchief from his schoolbag, that she used to dab her eyes.

“Thank you for telling me about her…” he said, this time completely honest “I would have loved to know her before…”

“She would have adored you… But it's getting late, your guardians must be worried… thank you for listening to me going on and on…”

In the end, he left after being handed some sweets he couldn't bring himself to reject even though he really didn't like them. Well, there was someone useful for that: Genta.

On the train ride he mentally went through everything the woman had said to him, trying to find the useful pieces for the big, unfinished puzzle that the case represented in his mind. Frowning in concentration, he unhappily confirmed that it still didn't get him any further. It was hard to keep track of everything without noting it down, but after Ran had almost found one of his notebooks – which would have been disastrous – he had gotten into the habit of either stowing everything away in places she wouldn't have access to (quite hard since he lived with her but he did have a small storage at his old home, though only limited access due to his circumstances) or just mentally reviewing it over and over until he was sure he wouldn't forget a single detail. He had always been good at
remembering details, had trained himself to never forget a fact, however the years as a kid had forced him to hone that ability to a whole new level.

Tapping his fingers against his knee he sightlessly stared out of the window and compared what he already knew about the case with the information he had just received. His thoughts circled until he reached his destination and got back to the agency, where Ran was waiting with a smile and warm food.

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The next day when he went to school, looking around for any hint that Kid was once again stalking him, because he felt unsettled once more. Sighing when he found nothing to indicate the thief's presence, he put his Skateboard down and rolled to school with lazy tabs to the ground. Kid had probably just needled him a bit too much and he was still high strung from before. Sometimes he needed a bit of time to settle again, and with the Black Organisation after him, he had reasons to be careful.

Arriving at school he put his things away in his locker and greeted his small friends in the classroom. Ai was still at home, pretending to be sick, while probably sitting in the basement and doing her scientific stuff or reading fashion magazines again. Lucky her, if only he could pretend to be sick and do whatever he wanted at home. But noo, if he tried to pretend, he would be stuck in bed and Ran would fuss over him.

Half asleep, he stared blankly at the blackboard. It. Was. Mind numbing. But he was used to doing nothing by now, while working things over in his head. At home he had looked over the pictures of the documents again. If he had the chance, maybe he could go to the Professor and look at them on a laptop, which would be better than the small screen of his phone. There was still something that was trying to catch his attention. He tried to think over everything again, slowly working through the evidence and crime scene on his mental plane. The crime scenes he only knew from photos were sadly lacking. But he did search through them anyways.

Every crime scene showed a girl. They had at first been subdued by a drug – and it was rather curious to note that the method had been changed. The first had been injected. The second had ingested it and the last one had breathed it in – before being strangled. For the strangulation, there had always been something of their own possession that was used for the deed. A tie, a scarf, some sort of clothing they had been wearing.

That meant that the murderer had to have access to different drugs somehow. Apothecary, hospital, laboratories... if only he knew what kind of substances were used he could probably narrow it down.
In the reports it said that the stab wounds had been caused postmortem, just as he had thought. And the rape... that, sadly was unclear. It either happened while the victim was unconscious, or already dead.

Probably either after the strangulation or after the rape the murderer dressed his victims carefully and straightened their hair and put on make up. After leaving a flower, a pale pink Carnation, the murderer left.

No finger- or shoe-prints, no hairs, no skin flakes, no semen or blood. That guy was careful not to leave any evidence behind.

The victims were rather similar, indicating that the murderer had a certain type he went after.

For now Conan could add: Slim body, similar height about 1.70 m, long brown hair. About the same age-group as well.

Now what was it that had- “Edogawa-kun, please answer the question!”

“Huh?!?” Laughter erupted in the class because of his atypical answer. Oops.

Chapter End Notes

I'm sorry to say that I need a small break, because I haven't gotten around to write much at all. I will post the chapters I already have though, and hopefully in that time I will get my stuff sorted out and can take a bit more time to write again.

I know this chapter is mostly about the case, and you guys want to see Kaito again. Don't worry, next chapter he will shove his way into the Story again ;)

Hopefully on 3ed January: Chapter 8 - Cake at a crime Scene!
After school he made his way to Professor Agasa's house. Inside he finally got to a computer where he could look at the pictures he had made from the documents, without having to fear Ran looking over his shoulder, hoping that this time no one would interrupt his thought process.

Looking over the evidence he frowned and tried to return to the line of thought he had lost back in school. Seeing the pictures on the bigger screen didn't help as much as he thought. In the end he gave up with an unsatisfied sigh and leant back.

Mentally he checked off his findings once again.

- Different drugs (though of course they hadn't said which drugs in the report) and methods to subdue the victim. Unusual. Meant the criminal had to have access, or knew someone with access to narcotics.
- Similar victims. He would have to look into their backgrounds a bit more, there just had to be a connection somewhere.
- Different places, but not too far apart. Seeming to head more and more into the inner city, the perpetrator was getting bolder?
- Satsuki Honodera, the only victim where he had been able to look at the crime scene himself, had been an active school girl, popular, got into a fight with her boyfriend. Hobbies were Karaoke, going out with friends and Tennis. She had recently participated in a tournament after which she disappeared.

She had been drugged, strangled and then murdered and raped. If the rather untouched surroundings (the dust hadn't been stirred much) were anything to go by, she had been transported there after everything was over. That meant the murder scene was probably somewhere else.

It was just too bad that the evidence he had was incomplete and second hand. He didn't know if they hadn't included some things in the report and he hadn't managed to get all the documents photographed in time.

Closing the pictures he decided to keep an eye on the case. It was definitely serial, however he lacked information to actually do something about it, which was frustrating but the sad truth was: it couldn't be helped. The criminal made it obvious that the crimes were connected. Instead of hiding the victims, so that he could continue killing secretly, this one was trying to attract attention. One could only hope that it wouldn't take long for him to slip up and make a mistake. The earlier they got him, the less people would die. For now his thoughts were just running in circles, trying to find more to the case but not having enough evidence to get to any conclusion. He was frankly not used to that very much. The only other case that was really long lasting, was the one that had gotten him stuck in his child's body.
“Looking for trouble again, Kudou-kun?” jumping like a cat at the voice directly behind him, Conan would deny until his dying breath that he had screamed like a girl.

“HAIBARA!” pressing a hand to his fast beating heart he exhaled “Don't do that.”

“So... it's that case you stumbled over right...? Haven't found the culprit yet?” she asked, folding her arms on the back of his seat while Conan twisted around to look at her.

“Not really.... It's not like I was at every crime scene... and there isn't really much to go on to get to the murderer yet...”

“Ah... that means it's a serial killer then? Tough luck. Does he go after little girls or boys?”

Frowning at her Conan was tempted to open the pictures again to show her, because she seemed so callous about it, but when he saw her serious concerned eyes he just sighed. Hiding her true feelings again, he was slowly getting the hang on reading them. Probably.

“No, nothing for you to worry about...” or Ayumi “Still... I keep thinking that I missed something obvious...” ruffling his hair he huffed, annoyed. Well, whatever it was, it wouldn't bring him closer to the identity of the perpetrator.

“I wish there was something I could do, but I only have bits and pieces of the reports the police have gathered and only one crime scene I've seen myself. I don't have enough to even get close to a guess...” and the crime scene hadn't revealed all that much. If Conan had to guess, it was staged. While she had been murdered there, the drugging and raping had taken place somewhere else.

“Hmm... tough.” she reached out and closed the laptop he had been using “But maybe you shouldn't get involved with that case anyways. Don't you have enough problems already without getting involved with a serial killer?”

“Mah, for now it's not like I can do anything about it. It bothers me that we have to wait for another victim and hope that the loonatic makes a mistake...”

“We, Kudou-kun?” Haibara looked at him with a raised eyebrow, before sighing and turning away “You are a hopeless case. Don't say I didn't warn you off...”
Looking after her Conan decided to follow. It was no use trying to think more about the case, when everything seemed to come to a dead end.

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Several days later Conan saw a picture of a girl that fit the features the other victims. All that was being said on the news was, that the sports teacher had been found murdered and raped in a public toilet. The investigation was still running.

If that was another victim of the same murderer as the girl in the abandoned building, and the other two before, the police had probably arrived to late to stop the news from being spread by mouth. Maybe the vultures of the press had arrived even before the police. The last incidents had been kept mostly under wraps, to keep the citizens from panicking. Or other, similar incidents from happening, like a copycat emerging. That was really the last thing they could use.

In his thoughts he once again begun to compare what he knew about the case.

The victims so far were all female, had long, brown hair and about the same high and stature. It was highly likely that they were chosen by appearance. The skin tone was different though.

Not all of them were the same age, ranging from high school, to just out of school and having just gotten their first job. Ages were from 19 to 26.

It appeared that the perpetrator had gotten more and more confident. The first victim had been found in the woods, far outside the city. She had only been found several days after she had died. After that was the woman on the parking lot. Nearer to the city but also found relatively soon because someone coming by the rather seldom used parking area. The third victim was the high school girl in the abandoned building. That was in the city, even if it was more on the outskirts.

And now, if the murder of that sports teacher was actually connected to the previous murders, he had begun to 'hunt' right in the city. It meant he had refined his methods enough to feel confident not to be caught.

Pulling his hair in frustration he stared at the pictures of the reports he had secretly taken. From what he could read, the victims had been drugged, carried off to a safe place to commit the crime, then strangled. Postmortem, the other injuries had been added. They had been raped, though it was unclear if they had been unconscious or already dead during the act. It was a small, sickening comfort that the girls hadn't had to live through the nightmare, but it was still seriously ill to rape them after they had died. That meant that one possible (but not confirmed) trait of the murderer could be necrophilia. Drugged or dead, the other person was unable to reject the murderer. It could be the motive, but for now it lacked evidence and it was no use to guess more. He would keep that thought in mind, just in case.
This explained why there were no defensive wounds on the victims' bodies. Not on their arms, not even any Yoshikawa lines which they would have gotten if they had tried to resist the strangulation. Or any other wounds from fighting the murderer off. They had simply been unable to defend themselves.

Still, it was confusing as hell. Drugging, strangling, raping, stabbing and dressing them up. Why dress them up at all if you would stab them later on?

And yet the killer was so very careful not to leave even one piece of evidence behind. No hair, no skin, no blood, no semen, not even footprints in the abandoned building, though those could have disappeared after a few days.

He really wished he could just go to the police station and ask for the reports or to be let in in the investigation. As Shinichi he would have maybe had enough influence to manage that. Being a child, no one would even consider it and Haibara would kill him if he tried something that would call so much attention to himself.

A soft 'bling' from his phone had him looking up. Kid had changed the tune of the App they were using to communicate. At school he could put it on silent mode, in his free time he mostly kept the sound on. He still randomly sent texts sometimes, but had toned it down to a bearable level. Since the last time they had eaten together, he had seen Kid once more, even if only for a short time.

Taking the phone to his hand he opened the new message.

[15:46] Arsene Lupin: “What are you doing? Want to meet up?”

Considering the message and looking to the news he weighed his decision carefully.


While he was there, he could also check out that crime scene...
An hour later he got off the train with his skateboard tucked under his arm. Looking around he was able to find Kid rather easily, because the thief was entertaining two kids with simple magic tricks. When Kid – Kaito Conan reminded himself once again – looked up and broke out in a grin as he saw Conan approaching, the magic show came to a stop.

“Sorry guys, I believe my time of waiting is over for now.” giving his audience a bow and creating a small, thorn-less rose for the girl, he said goodbye and wandered over to Conan's side.

“So? Mind telling me what we are doing out here?” figures that Kid – Kaito! - would be curious about that.

“Hello to you too, Kaito-nii-chan.” he commented dryly, before turning and starting to walk in the direction of the crime scene.

“You just happened to write that message when I wanted to come here to look something up...”

When Kaito still eyed him suspiciously Conan said: “Oh come on... it's nothing bad I promise.”

“It's a crime scene right?”

“How ever did you guess...?” seeing as he was heading straight to a taped of area where police men were still loitering about, it couldn't have been that hard.

Kaito grinned and coughed once before he adopted Shinichi’s real voice “Well, considering that you recently stumbled across a case that hasn't been solved yet” Conan twitched at the use of his own voice. Bastard. And how did Kid know about that?! Oh yeah, that had been back then when Kid had still tried to stalk him secretly, right? “I thought you would be keeping your eyes out. If one considers the news...” Kid – Kaito – glanced at the newspaper stand of a small tobacco shop “You have concluded the victim being one of those previous cases and came to investigate the fresh crime scene yourself. Since you can hardly go to the police station to obtain the information.”

Having a skateboard clamped under his arm, Conan stiffly clapped his hands.

“Greaaat deductions. Maybe you should try to be a detective.” getting a mocked insulted look for that comment Kaito pressed one hand to his heart. His voice had changed back to normal thankfully.
“Why, I would never!” shaking his head Kaito stuffed his hands in his pockets “Anyways, does that mean you just called me here to be your distraction?” at Conan's slightly sheepish look he sighed “You are too cruel.”

With Kaitou Kid as his accomplice it was rather easy to sneak past the guard. Hah. Kid was his accomplice. And he was useful. Again. It made Conan wonder when he had started to trust Kid so much, that he had no problem teaming up with him. Usually there had been no other choice and maybe it was a bit mean to use Kid in this way. It still got him into the crime scene, where he carefully looked around. The area where the body had been had been marked. While Conan was inspecting everything in the toilet that could probably help or be used to indicate something about the perpetrator, Kid was making sure there was a ruckus outside.

It didn't take long for Conan to realize what he had assumed all along. The place had already been cleaned up by the police and nothing worthwhile had been found. Sneaking out just in time to see the police returning to their stations in front of the toilet. Kid appeared next to him, shooting him an unimpressed look.

“Found something?”

Unhappily Conan shook his head.

“Nothing at all. They cleaned up already, not surprising...”

“Well... you better be thankful then, because I happened to overhear a bit...” however Kid – Kaito, god damn it – had managed it, Conan looked up expectantly.

“But I don't know if I should tell you, after all you only met me because you wanted a distraction...”

… was Kaito pouting? Blinking rapidly he snorted and tried to hide his laughter by clamping a hand over his mouth. It was something you wouldn’t connect to the aloof but elegant Phantom thief Kaito portrayed at night.

“You are just ridiculous. Okay, Mr. Sweet-tooth.” Grinning up at Kid he pointed at a small Café on the side that was rather populated by people around their age. Well. Around Kaito's age. “There you go. I saw it opened recently and Ran said their cakes are pretty awesome. Since you already revealed your love for sweet and I basicly know nothing else about you, I thought you might like it.” raising
an eyebrow challenging “I'm a kid though. You pay.”

Meanwhile Kaito was staring at the detective a bit disbelieving. He had really assumed that Conan had only called him here because of the need of a distraction. Had the child-detective just said that as an excuse or had he been serious? Conan's last words had Kaito laughing out loud.

“I see. So you wanted me as a distraction and to pay your meal.”

“Exactly.” Conan's dry wit had him nearly in stitches. He had – on occasion – thought that Shinichi had humor buried deep inside. He just rarely showed it, and especially not to strangers.

“Okay then. I will tell you over cake.” when they entered the store, merrily glittering eyes wandered over the cakes lined up in a showcase. Kaito really seemed to love cakes. After selecting two pieces as well as getting a coffee and hot chocolate, they settled on a small table at a window.

“Mhh, delicious.” Kaito said, trying to ignore the shifting Conan that was watching him with big eyes. For the first time the teen-turned-to-a-child looked really like a child in his presence. A child on Christmas day, waiting for the time to open presents. It was rather cute. And maybe he was a bit mean for not saying what Conan wanted to hear right away.

“All right, all right. Stop with that look... really, I just overheard the officers talking while I waited, I was here before you and had a hunch why you would want to meet up here...”

“So, what did you hear?”

“The victim was a teacher at a sports studio around here. She was 24 years old. Apparently some high-school girls found her and reported the incident to the police.” a hand reached over and stole Conan's cup, while pushing the coffee to the shrunken detective. The protest that had begun to form on Conan's face changed to an almost reverent look and caused another spark of amusement in Kaito. So that was all it took to get to the good side of the soccer-fan? Coffee? Good to know.

“However there has been a witness this time. There is not much information and it's not really confirmed but a girl got to the officers and said she had seen two persons enter. It stood out because apparently one of them was a male, about 1,60 to 1,70 meters tall, slender build. She did not however see the face or anything else distinguishing...”

“How very helpful...” Conan sighed. It wasn't like it was not helpful at all. It just meant that instead of about 40 million people they had maybe about 20 million now. Then you would have to filter out
all the people with the wrong statue, people being too young or too old... well, it would be hard without any distinguishing marks. So for now they had – probably, because in front of him sat a person that was proof you could dress up as just about everyone – the gender, as well as an approximate high of the murderer. It could still be a female, since the 'guy' had a slender build (yeah, even he himself knew a girl that was regularly mistaken for a guy, so these things could happen!).

“Well, I got more information than you did, right?” Did Kid sound proud of himself? Raising an eyebrow, Conan couldn't help the almost sardonic smirk.

“My, my, Kaito-nii-chan... we will really make a detective out of you yet…” he really enjoyed the horrified look that spread over Kid's face when for a moment his control slipped. Or maybe it was planned, but Conan couldn't really tell (which was annoying as hell). Shortly after Kid fake-shuddered and waved his hand as if he wanted to get rid of something nasty. Conan was not impressed. At all.

“Tantei-kun, so mean... don't say stuff like that, you are going to cause me nightmares...” Kaito got a far away look on his face, as if imagining a future as a detective and – with his acting talent – managed to go pale white. He looked almost sickly like that. One had to applaud Kid for his talent.

“Just imagine, the world being robbed of another creative mind, adding one more critic to the world. Such a sad, sad fate.”

“I get it.”

“What would the children do if all the magic disappeared, because everyone became a critic? The horror!”

“You can stop.”

“Just think of all the innocent minds that your critic ways already corrupted. Those poor kids hanging around you... they have already adapted to the being as critical as you are...”

“Anytime now, really......”

“And their poor innocent minds have been polluted with it, no turning back to just enjoying the show and always trying to find out the trick...”
“..... you are not listening at all anymore, right...?”

“Sure do.”

“...” If they weren't sitting in a Cafe packed with people and breakable things he would so kick his ball at the moron in front of him. Instead he settled for trying to kick Kaito under the table. Regretfully he winced when his foot only met hard wood. Damn him.

“Oh come on, I was kidding!” did Kid really just use that pun on him, while wearing the biggest grin imaginable? Yes. Yes he did. When had he thought it might be a good idea to actually meet up with Kid in his free time and had he really envisaged he would still be sane after it?

Right... he hadn't thought about it at all, being too interested in the case as well as getting to know the mysterious person that hid behind a monocle and a top hat at night. And he had to admit, being around Kaito was easy and... the guy was.. sort of likable. When he wasn't stealing things and being smug about it.

Chapter End Notes

New chapter. I'm working on Chapter 11 right now, as well as some minor ideas I will probably put into the Story later. Chapter 10 has been a lot of fun to write!! I'm looking forward to sharing that one with you guys :) I'm glad my muse returned, I've feared I would run out of prewritten chapters before I could get anything new on paper.

Big thanks to ttcchen, who keeps me motivated with our talks (and slowly get's me to reveal a lot of my ideas. Was probably the plan from the beginning D:) and everyone who left a Review or Kudo. Much appreciated :3

As promised, this is a longer chapter. Sadly, the next one will be shorter again.

Edit: Oh yeah, forgot to tell you... Chapter 9: Woolgathering will be posted the 16./17.01.15 :)
Kid had actually brought him back to Beika, the comment that he couldn't let a child go back alone at this time had earned him a hard kick against his shin. This time he didn't miss. In Conan's eyes he had totally deserved it.

Right now they were standing in front of the Agency and Conan almost expected a flippant goodbye, a puff of smoke and Kid disappearing in some kind of magic trick. He was not really prepared for Kid going to his knees to get on eye-level with him and being serious.

“You know, Conan... I do worry about you. Promise you won't go after the man himself, should you find him?”

Blinking, because it really sounded like Kid meant it and was concerned about his well being, despite not knowing Conan very well, he took a moment to gape at the thief.

“It's not like I run after every murderer possible...” Conan muttered, but he had to admit that he was prone to recklessly rushing into situations, especially if there was still a chance to save someone. Kaito's hand on his head caused him to look back into the thief in the eyes. Those indigo eyes were frowning at him as if he was a puzzle that Kid had to unlock. It was unsettling because Kid was damn good at riddles.

“It doesn't suit you.” Conan said and was taken aback just as much as Kid, who stared at him in confusion.

Flushing a bit he added “Being so serious. Don't worry, I don't have enough information anyways.” scratching his chin he uncomfortably looked away from the eyes that were watching him.

“And if you had?” Conan's gaze flicked back to the still serious Kid, bothered about being scrutinized like that. Defiantly he lifted his head and stared rebelliously back at Kid.

“I will not take unnecessary risks, but I would never leave someone in danger alone. Not if I can help.”

Crossing his arms, he practically dared Kid to try and change his mind while Kaito looked like he had half the mind to do so, before changing his own. Giving the small detective a wry smile Kaito ruffled his head extra strongly, getting amusement from the way Conan squeaked and flailed about,
then laughed out loud when he actually saw Conan with a rather similar hairstyle to his own, even though Conan tried to comb his hair back again with a glare and the cowlick at the back of his head resisted any attempt to alter it. He should have known that the child-teen would answer like that, it was just the way he was and it was the part that Kaito liked about him, even if he didn't like the fact that due to this particular personal trait the teen-turned-child put himself into danger. And as a child, even with his gadgets, he was more vulnerable. Personally, Kaito thought that Conan forgot about this sometimes.

Both Conan and Kaito flinched when from the side of them – that neither of them had watched – suddenly Ran's voice sounded.

“Oh? Conan-kun, who's your friend?” smiling down at them, since Kid was still crouching in front of him, they both looked at her surprised and in Conan's case a bit panicked. Had she heard their conversation?
Kid and his damn poker face got up from his position and shook Ran's hand.

“Ishikawa Kaito, I'm a friend of Conan-kun's family from the States.”

“Oh! Nice to meet you. My name is Mouri Ran, Conan-kun is living with me and my dad right now.”

When Ran took the hand, Kaito – with a mischievous look in Conan's direction, leaned forward and pressed a chaste kiss on Ran's cheek.

“Nice to meet you too, Ran-chan.”

If looks could kill? Kid would be dead. Twice over. At least his poker face prevented him (mostly) from showing the pain he felt when Conan pinched him and twisted his fingers sideways in revenge. One shouldn't take his cover of being from the US too far. And a certain someone should keep his distance from Ran, instead of being overly familiar with her.

Ran meanwhile had taken a flustered step backwards, an uncertain smile on her lips. With a look at Conan's death-glare, Kaito chuckled (secretly delighted to get a rise out of the stoic detective again) and apologized “It's a habit from the US, I'm sorry, that was a bit rude, right?”

And that was how Ran now knew about Kaito. And since he was a family friend of Conan's, she immediately invited him for dinner. Which is how he had been stuck with the guy for a lot longer
than he had first signed up for.

The character Kaito made up from scratch was well made. Being a family friend already made him much more trustworthy, so in the future Ran wouldn't be as worried if Conan said that he was around Kid. It also explained how he knew quite a bit about Conan – and Conan was a bit creeped out that Kaitou Kid knew his favorite meals (he had wondered how Kid had known he liked coffee at the cafe before but hadn't wanted to question his luck...). He just hoped that Kid would be careful not to say too many things that could be related to Shinichi Kudou, since Ran definitely knew him a lot better than the criminal 1412.

Well...Kid had the time of his life, trying to weasel information about his, that is Conan's, stay at the Mouri's. Conan tried to intervene but Kid was... fucking good at getting around him. Well, at least Ran was just as happy, even if it was more or less at his expense.

“So...” Kid said, a smile almost breaking his face “... that guy really just ran inside the girls-only bath side?”

Ran giggled while reaching for the rice “Yes, I heard it from the Professor later on.” shaking her head in rueful amusement she added “He's just like Shinichi in that aspect. When he sees, hears, or – would you believe it – smells trouble... he just runs there. And no matter what he sees, if it isn't related to the crime...” smiling fondly in the distance she seemed to gather her thoughts quickly while blushing slightly “Well. Shinichi that is. He's a detective, so whenever something happens he always has to get to the bottom of it...”

“Ah yeah.. I think I've met Shinichi...kun once too... is he your boyfriend?” sneaky bastard. He totally did that on purpose just to see them squirm.

Kaito couldn't help it, seeing Conan try to suppress his own flush after listening to Ran praising his real identity, he couldn't do anything else but tease him. Him and Ran. It was in his nature after all!

“Ahh, it's not like he is my boyfriend really!” Ran tried to explain quickly, but was only coloring more while trying “We are just childhood friends.” Conan begun to kick in Kid's direction, trying to get the thief to change the topic but hissed when Kid – having anticipated that move – pulled his legs out of the way and he only hit the chair leg instead. Wincing he pulled back for now.

“Well...” she was embarrassed “I haven't seen him in a while anyways...” and that was why he didn't want to remind her of that topic. Kid had probably not known, but … Ran, the last few times he had called... they often got to this topic. And Conan saw how it made her all miserable and depressed. He knew of course that avoiding that conversation was not making it better but he couldn't meet her. The
good mood was by now hanging on a thin thread. Glaring at the thief hard he decided he would have to do something, before bad turned to worse.

“Ne, ne, Ran-nee-chan? Going back to the topic before, can I come to your next Karate tournament and cheer you on?”

“A-ah... sure, you don't have school that day anyways... oh but the stands are going to be full... will you be okay with Sonoko?” urgh. It just had to be Sonoko, right? Nodding happily and swinging his feet he agreed with a cheery “Uhn!”, while Kid looked at him as if he was totally spooked by Conan's act and would break out in rashes if it continued. It was all Kid's fault anyways, so he would have to deal with it. For Ran, he played the being a kid part up extra strong, it often helped to get her mind off of serious thoughts. When Ran looked at him though, he had a politely interested expression plastered over his face and continued to ask her about Karate-related stuff.

This time the kick hit the target. He felt vindicated when Kaito winced slightly.

When they said their goodbyes later that evening and Ran was out of earshot, Kaito turned to Conan with a put out expression on his face.

“Do you have to be so violent, Tantei-kun? If you continue like that you will probably cause permanent damage to me...” pouting didn't work quite as well when you had to look down at someone.

“If you can't take a hint, what else can I do but make it obvious? Besides, I think someone once said that pain is a powerful motivator to learn.”

Looking up to Kaito, who was now ready to go, he sighed.

“You know... while your disguise is rather good, it does have some flaws...”

At Kaito's curiously raised eyebrow he added.

“I'm looking forward to how you will explain your existence to Hattori,” and Haibara, but he didn't want to put her in the spotlight for Kaito to sniff around. It was probably better for his well-being if
he stayed clear of her.

With that he shoved a rather stunned looking Kaitou Kid out of the door.

Chapter End Notes

Okay, so this was not a really Long chapter, I know. I'm not sure yet how to explain Kaito Ishikawa to Heiji, if he actually Shows up. Because... well he knows that Conan doesn't have Family in the states, so how could he have a Family friend? One that Heiji has never heared about? Yeah right :P
I'm actually thinking about it, if I can somehow add him to the Story, but still Need a good idea. So cheer me on!

Other than that, I've not gotten around to write much, if at all in the past two weeks. Work got busy, my sisters birthday, and day to day stuff is filling my days.
I do hope I get to write some more, or I will have a Problem with posting Chapter 11 D:

Tell me what you think about the Story so far.

Next chapter, again, in two weeks on 30./31.01.2015!

Chapter 10: Join me for a wild-goose chase
care to guess? :P
The next two weeks went past in an almost blissful peace. Or as Conan thought: it was damn boring. Even Kogoro was complaining about the lack of work, which was actually something that had surprised Conan for a moment.

In this time he hadn't seen much of Kaito, though they did write a lot. Kaito more than Conan, but the thief managed to pull him in quite a few conversations, despite the detective's reservations about the contact.

He now knew that Kaito Kid wasn't yet working. That meant his age was – just as he thought – between late High-School and university, just like he himself. The first thing he had noticed was that Kid liked sweets. Especially chocolate seemed to be an addiction to him, which would explain where the endless energy was coming from. From previous occasions he had deducted that his mother was or at least had once been, the Phantom Lady (was being a thief just in his genetics?). It wasn't surprising that Kid was doing magic tricks as his civilian identity as well, since Conan was sure the thief had to start young to get as good as he was and it would be strange to hide that hobby, since he must have trained a long time before he became Kaito Kid a few years prior. That meant he had to have contact with magicians at an early age, magicians willing to indulge and even show him some tricks. Likely someone close, like family or a family friend.

What he hadn't known was that Kid liked to tinker with stuff, thought he should have guessed it. Someone had to repair that hang glider and other stuff he broke on his heists. He could also handle chemicals quite well, but it seemed baking on his own caused explosions or something... unsightly. He wasn't quite sure but he had made a mental note to never let Kid bake something at his place. Just in case.

It were only a few little things he had managed to draw out of the thief, but it made him seem a lot more... real. And human. He was not sure he liked getting closer to Kid, but felt drawn at the same time. It was disconcerting, but in secret he had to admit that he had been struggling between being annoyed and fond of the thief for a long time.

He himself had been reluctant to part with information of himself too. For one: He was a private person. And for another: He didn't want to give Kid more information about himself, so that the thief could dress up as him even better. No need to help perfect Kid's Shinichi Kudou disguise.

But he had let slip a few facts. That he wasn't really a morning person and liked coffee, or that sometimes he just wanted some peace and quiet, away from the mayhem that usually seemed to follow him. Or that he liked to isolate himself for a weekend to read a new book of one of the detective series.

In a particularly morose mood he had even admitted that sometimes it was... tiring to act the child all the time.
He was surprised how easy it was to confess stuff, that he normally kept to himself, by writing. A lot easier than it was to tell someone in person. After he had revealed that to Kid, he had been more careful not to let even more past his barrier. And that was probably why the majority of his texts after that day had been useless drivel about his day, and that nothing was going on, and how useless going to elementary school again really was.

Maybe his consistent complaints of being bored to the gentleman thief were at least one of the reasons why there was another announcement for a heist so soon after the last one. Well, actually the time had practically flown by, as it had been about a month since the last heist.

Right now Conan was sitting in front of the TV, having scrambled to get his notebook and pen to accurately write the notice that had been sent down. While he could have remembered it, sometimes it was good to write stuff down. Especially since Ran wouldn't get suspicious about a Kid heist notice, knowing that Conan enjoyed taking part in the hunt.

Or... he had. Right now he was a little... confused about how to handle that. Maybe not confused because if Kid thought that he wouldn't give his all just because they had been talking a little, he would get knocked over by his loyal black and white leather rather quickly. But he had gotten to know Kid a little better, it felt... strange to go to a heist, as if the line that had always separated them had become a little blurred. Kaito – Kid, he reminded himself because he had to keep those two apart (he had a new insight on how Heiji must feel calling him Kudou or Conan now. It sucked.) - was actually really nice. It made Conan itch with curiosity about why exactly he had begun to steal. When they were together, it didn't seem as if Kaito … Kid was inclined to steal anything from his surroundings, so he was at least not a kleptomaniac. So why had he taken up the 8 years previously abandoned phantom thief's job? He could have surly made a name of his own. That he hadn't done exactly that, indicated that he had somehow been connected to the first, maybe even learned under him and that was why he was able to even make Nakamori-keibu believe he was the same person.

Not that it was hard to deceive anyone of the Task-Force (save maybe Hakuba, but even there he wasn't sure. Hakuba was just too focused on one idea and unwilling to mull over every possibility, allowing for more mistakes to happen).

But all that was only conjecture on his side.

Mulling over the new riddle he now held in his hand, he rather quickly had the target and (because he knew where the target was) location. The time needed an extra minute to contemplate, but the riddle was rather straight forward in his opinion.

“Yosh!” looking up he saw Kogoro pumping a fist in the air “I, Kogoro Mouri will lend my aid to Nakamori-keibu once again!”

Looking at the display that Kogoro made while flexing muscles at … well air, he sighed. It seemed Kogoro was bored enough to try and get involved himself, that would allow Conan to get close to
the Task-Force without having to invent a reason for himself. Weighing his options he decided to allow Kogoro to run rampant this time. It was a Kid heist and there was not much damage the older detective could do. He would probably stick to Nakamori, throw out a few ridiculous theories of his and allow Conan to do whatever he wanted to do. Perfect.

Hopping from the sofa he quickly slipped on his outdoor clothes, grabbing his phone and a pen and waited for the drunkard at the door.

“Tch. Brat. Where do you think you are going, hm?” Kogoro muttered unhappily in his direction while pulling on his own shoes.

Widening his eyes for effect he stared at him aghast for a moment before replying “But... Ran-nee-chan is not here...”

“So what?”

“She won’t be here for dinner either because of her Karate-Club...” widening his eyes a bit more he added in a small voice “She said to get dinner together!”

“Tch.” unhappily Kogoro waved Conan to follow him and the child grinned behind the adult's back. Score. Not even Kogoro wanted to explain to his daughter why Conan had gone to bed hungry.

Happily he trailed after the older man and thought for a moment to text Kaito but refrained. If the thief didn't manage to gather enough intel about Conan being at the heist, he deserved whatever was coming for him. Conan had no intention of making this any easier on the thief, by giving him freebies. Keep private life separate from work.

Looking at the Task force preparations he sometimes wondered how they managed to do anything at all. Nakamori-keibu's voice could be heard about everything else. People were rushing about with books or pulling their hair in front of computers.

So... maybe the riddle wasn't so straight forward for others.
Blinking he took in the whole scene with bemusement, gaze flickering from the male alpha posturing that Kogoro and Nakamori took part in, to the general chaos around the office.

Hurriedly he took a scared step back towards the wall, because otherwise he would have been mowed over by an overly enthusiastic Task Force member.

This... zone was a safely hazard.

Especially for kids half the size of an adult. He didn't even seem to register for some people here.

The door next to him opened with force, that slammed the door against the wall hard enough that there must have been some damage left behind.

“Yahoo!” a female voice greeted cheerfully, and Conan watched – and had to do a double take – as someone who closely resembled Ran entered the office with a stack of Bentos piled in her arms.

Suddenly half the office clamored around the girl, it was like it was feeding time in a zoo.

Conan barely escaped with his life intact. What was going on with this division?!

Suddenly the girl looked back, outside the door, “Kaito? Hey, Kaito, where are you?” looking left and right she frowned and picked up some more Bentos from the ground, but didn't seem to miss whatever person had apparently gone missing. If she was shrugging it off like that it was probably safe to assume it happened a lot and Conan put it out of his mind.

 вокруг K-A-I-T-O

Around a corner Kaito was taking some deep breaths. That had been damn close. If possible he wanted to avoid meeting Conan with his real identity for now.

It had been somewhat of a shock to see the small child detective in Nakamori-keibu's territory.

Well, he had anticipated Conan coming to his heist. He had not thought Conan would come to Nakamori’s office at once, just half an hour after the news spread word of his notice.
Maybe he had underestimated just how bored Conan really was right now.

The past few weeks had allowed him to see sides of Conan that not many got to know. His - admittedly reckless - offer of friendship had been a spontaneous idea, that he hadn't really thought through all that much (while he had plans, he just worked better on his feet, adapting to a situation).

He had actually not thought that Conan would honestly be interested in it, he had seen that the detective's agreement had more to do with his lack of sleep than his willingness to get to know Kaito. Even now, they were both very careful what to reveal to each other. Because their situation was not exactly ideal for a trusting relationship to form. They trusted each other... but only in certain situations, trusted that the other wouldn't want innocents to get in harms way, to do their best to help in a crisis. Trusting each other with personal details about their daily lives? Not that much.

His offer had crossed the lines that had separated them as thief and detective. But the more he got to know Conan, the less he was inclined to break it off. He really liked the child-detective, and yes, he was worried about him. Some of Conan's comments let him peek at the current mindset he was in, the pressure he had to act under. He had not thought about it much, but Conan had now - and had been for two years - acting as a child, without many people finding out about him.

Kaito was sure Tantei-han was in the know, but he was in Osaka and Kaito doubted he really understood Conan's situation. He might sympathize, but he had not been in that situation and did not understand.

He himself was unsure what said situation was. All he knew was, that Conan was hiding. And there were some bad people after him. The situation reminded him a lot of his own, except that he could continue to live his civilian identity's life in peace, while Conan had to watch Shinichi Kudou's life slowly fall apart due to stagnation of not being there to live it.

Hattori probably knew about the whole situation. Conan's parents probably too. But other than that? He suspected that the Professor that lived next door to Shinichi Kudou's house might be involved (no sane person would give a normal child shoes that would make anything placed in front of the detective's feet a missile with enough strength to kill people and keep going, not to mention all the other gadgets Conan had.)

And while he was curious, he had decided that for now he would wait, try to get Conan to trust him and be let in on the secret willingly, instead of digging for everything himself. He had probably set himself up for a wait of years, but as Conan had said: he had not gone around digging more about Kaito's civilian identity, and he wanted the same courtesy applied to him. That much Kaito was willing to do, because he did respect Conan, as an equal, a rival and eventual friend.

Still, there had been small things that Conan had revealed.
He had not been surprised that Conan was well read, loved detective novels and mysteries. Duh.

What he had almost not believed was that Conan had also read Maurice Leblanc's Arsène Lupin. He had goggled at that bit of information for quite some time. Even more so when Conan had actually complimented the book.

Afterwards he was not that surprised, but still...

Another piece of information was, that Conan liked classical music. He didn't exactly have a favorite instrument, though he did say he quite liked the violin. One of his favorite pieces was Amazing grace, because of fond memories he had not further explained.

That was not to say he didn't like other music. He had admitted to liking Two Mix, and a few other bands, but had also said that he was not really following the news actively and mostly got to know something new due to Ran.

Pushing himself off the wall, he put in an earpiece, that was connected to the microphone that Aoko had brought in with her Bentos.

Absentminded he listened to whatever was said in the room, while heading to a vending machine to get something to drink.

Since most of what was said was useless, because they hadn't yet managed to find out anything (but Kaito was now more straining to hear the voice of a child anyways), he continued his previous line of thought, while sipping on a soda can.

Sometimes, and Kaito thought that maybe Conan himself didn't quite realize it himself, the words the small child sent him were dripping in sadness. Or loneliness. At those times, Kaito tried to distract the trouble-maker with jokes and riddles and sometimes just ridiculous stories, even if he actually felt the urge to go over and kidnap Conan and show him how beautiful the world still was. Because Conan seemed to forget that sometimes, between murders, blood and gore.

It was weird- no, strange! It was strange but he felt... close to Conan. Closer than many others in his life, because while he could live rather peacefully during daytime, just like Conan he couldn't show his full character. Because, by now, being Kaitou Kid was as much him as being Kuroba Kaito. And not being able to tell his friends, lying to them... that put an invisible barrier between them. Sometimes it made him feel isolated. Like standing outside and looking through a window into a living room, seeing a family gathering.

It was rather strange, not only did Shinichi Kudou look rather similar to him, they could also relate to each others circumstances. Maybe that was why it was so easy to dress up as Shinichi Kudou (well... that and it was hilarious to see Conan's reaction).

His attention was piqued when he heard the high tone of Conan's voice in the middle of those gruff voices that he knew from the Task Force. Putting a hand to his ear he tried to shield it from the noise
in his surroundings and press on the earphone to hear better.

“Ah-le-le-~” Conan's voice was weak, but to be heard at all he had to be near Nakamori-keibu, whose Bento he had bugged.

“Damn brat! Give that back!”

“That's Kid-sans notice, right?!” he sounded like an excited child. There was a crash and some loud cursing.

“Hey brat! Put that back!”

“Yeees.” some low muttering could be heard, none of which should be said in the vicinity of a child. Kaito's lips twitched despite himself, but since no one was around it was all right.

“That's strange...” some minutes later the child-detective once again said, his only answer was a grumpy grunt, probably Nakamori again.

“Look at the title, Kid doesn't normally make statements like that just for fun, right? Join me for a wild goose-chase?”

“So what?”

This time Conan sounded a bit frustrated, probably because he had to lead someone around on the hand for something that was quite obvious to himself.

“Well... why a goose? Why not a pig? Or an elephant?”

“Because it's how the saying goes. That's why.”

Kaito would love to see the detective's face right now. Sometimes you had to hit Nakamori literally in the face with the meaning of some of his riddles.
“Yes.” this time he sounded a little impatient, though he covered it quickly by adding “Right. I knew that.” the thief didn't know if he should pity Conan, or award him a medal. Because despite being waved off and more or less ignored, he stubbornly tried again some minutes later.

“Uncle Kogoro!” his voice was raised, so he probably wanted to be overheard.

“Say, say...” Kaito could imagine Conan pulling at Kogoro's sleeve to get his attention “Do you think we can go to the Haido Art Museum soon? Ran-nee-chan was talking with Sonoko-nee-chan that there is a new exhibition... they have some cool jewelry boxes, some even play music! And some have strange forms, like eggs. Oh, I think she said there was even a goose-egg with pretty jewels ...”

Okay, that was literally hitting them in the face with his target, but Kaito couldn't be annoyed about it because Conan had tried to be subtle about it. Right now Conan's ramblings got drowned out as the Task Force's attention focused on the innocent words and the office descended in chaos. Nakamori shouted orders, his underlings rushed around, doors opened and closed. Wait... doors? There was only one door and it lead outside.

Taking a peek around the corner he saw Conan just gaining his balance after stepping out of the room. Wiping his bow and looking deeply traumatized by the action within the room.

But soon after, he whirled around, looking left and right, searching...

Kaito ducked back around the corner and cursed in his head. Right. Conan's freaky radar-like ability of knowing when he was watched or where a crime happened. Better to keep a distance and not raise unnecessary attention, because he just knew that Conan would know who he was the instant he saw him. If Conan could easily find him when he dressed up as a girl on a street, he would undoubtedly know it if he was Kaito Kuroba, who looked a lot like Shinichi Kudou. There were only so many people with nearly the same face after all.

Small, nearing steps made him freeze. Then in a fit of inspiration he plastered himself to the ceiling and pressed his eyes close. He was air. He was not even here. And he was definitely not watching Conan, so don't look up creepy little all-seeing detective. Weeell. If Conan looked up, it would be interesting to find an excuse for what he was doing right now. Meditation?

After some tense seconds he could hear the steps come around the corner, then the rattling of the vending machine as a soda can hit the ground, then the steps retreated.

Feeling dizzy, he allowed himself to breathe again. Close shave. Better get out of here and listen
from afar, where he wouldn't run risk of being discovered.

Chapter End Notes

On good notes: Still getting ideas for this Story :D So don't worry, it will continue

On bad news:
I've reached the end of my pre-written chapters now. Real life just got busy and I will have to switch to irregular chapters from now on, instead of posting it every two weeks :
(Sorry about that. Annoyed at myself (}$/_- ▬)
I've already written a lot of Scenes for later chapters, I just need to connect them slowly to the beginning ^^

Chapter 11: A merry chase, update date still unknown, but I do hope you will enjoy it when it finally Comes out!

P.S.: I added a picture I drew myself in chapter one (///”)
The heist would take place at the Museum just two days after the notice had been sent. Conan thought that this was a rather short timed notice, which was a bit unusual for the thief but okay.

The whole day he had been a bundle of nervous excitement, checking over the building plans and surrounding area. Since this was near Beika, he knew the area pretty well already, but it couldn't hurt to refresh his memory. He even paid the Professor a visit for some...extra stuff.

He had also checked weather reports and other relevant information about the heist, before he went with Ran and Sonoko to the heist location. Thanks to Sonoko, hours early, which suited him just fine because that way he could sneak in and see what Nakamori-keibu had added as security.

He rather thought that Kid was probably already there too, albeit in a disguise, setting up whatever tricks he needed to succeed.

After assuring Ran he would be with the Task Force and thus safe from harm, he was allowed free reign and ran past a few of the members that even started to greet him. Huh, just showed that he had been at a few heists too many if the Task Force was warming up to him. Normally they were rather close knitted group, outsiders like he himself or even Hakuba had a harder time to fit in. Not that it bothered him either way, because it was not like he could count on the Force to help much (more like the opposite most of the time), but it made it a lot easier to get in.

Once inside he took his time to look around, assessing people walking past him. It didn't rain, but there was a strong wind. While not impossible, it would be hard to escape via hang-glider.

Slowly he looked around, checked the staircase and some rooms where it seemed likely that Kid had set up something to escape from.

Smirking he went down the stairs again. Now how about he made Kid's night a little bit more difficult? Just because they were exchanging friendly text messages did not mean that he would go easy on the thief. At all. No, actually it meant Conan would have to step up the game a bit, just to make it very clear that Kaito – Kid, he had to remind himself to call him Kid! – should not expect less than the best from his rival.
Shouldering his backpack, so that it was hanging on one shoulder, he got to work. And he was careful not to be seen on security cameras too much. Wouldn't do to warn Kid of his plans.

Satisfied with his work he finally trudged back into the room where the goose-egg jewelry case was standing in a display. A grumpy looking Nakamori shot him a dark look, but didn't object to his presence. It wouldn't do to try and set anything up where the Task Force could disturb his plans. It made it too easy for his plans to fail, which is why he had set them up at just about every escape route possible. Except the roof. And one other path. He was pretty sure that Kid wouldn't try the route over the roof, the wind was too unpredictable and strong. The other path would take too long to set up, at least before the heist but he was pretty sure if necessary he could arrange something later. Maybe. But if Kid wanted to escape through the sewers, that would probably almost be punishment enough.

♠ ⌂ ♠ ⌂ ♠

Entering the big room where the display case was surrounded by police officers, Conan let his gaze trail over the persons inhabiting the room. Almost all of them were of the Task Force, but a bit away on the side and wringing his hands was the owner of the museum. Next to him judging from the looks, a subordinate. Conan let his eyes wander over them, looking for something out of place but dismissing them shortly after. Pressing his lips together in a firm line he decided that there were just too many people. Like always. Nakamori-keibu didn't seem to learn, instead trying the same thing (dog-piling) over and over again in hopes that someday it would work. With Kid's disguising talent it wasn't very likely.

Speaking of Nakamori... Conan found the man with some reporters, and rolled his eyes at the – by now – all too familiar scene. Namely: Shouting into the cameras.

*Right...* Conan thought with a sigh, *Nakamori is doing his ritual speech again.*

Rolling his eyes to the ceiling he kind of amusedly wondered to himself if Nakamori made these speeches to motivate himself or if he really believed it.

“Ahahaha.” Conan muttered dryly. He had been at enough Kid heists to actually know the words and actions that preludes that event by heart now.

“AHAHAHA!”
“I will get you this time, Kaitou Kid....”

“I WILL GET YOU THIS TIME, KAITOU KID!” Nakamori shouted into the reporters camera and then went on with insults and other disparaging descriptions of the phantom thief.

Conan's gaze was attracted to a shaking officer that was standing a few feet from him, obviously trying to hold in his laughter at Conan's more or less accurate performance. Embarrassed he hastily coughed, raised his arm and looked at his watch, while heat rose to his cheeks. Counting the seconds.

7

A tense silence begun to spread as the designated time of Kid's arrival crept closer.

6

Dropping his arm, he instead counted the seconds in his mind, preferring to watch Kid appear and dissect his newest flashy entrance method.

5

4

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1

Just in time, because as he reached zero there was a cracking sound and some hissing and the display case was surrounded by pink smoke, thick and cloying. Conan didn't have to guess that its effect wasn't only to hide what was happening, but also to knock out the guards. The four thumps that could be heard, before Nakamori began yelling the roof down (again) was more than enough proof
for him. Even then, the small disturbance of something stirring the smoke up, causing it to spiral and
billow to the ceiling even faster (probably caused by someone’s cape while jumping up, if Kid had
come from above the smoke would be pressured to the floor instead) was enough to indicate Kid’s
timely arrival.

As the smoke dissipated, the white-clad figure was slowly being revealed rising from his crouched
position on the case, dusting of invisible dust-specs.

“Why, hello my dear Task-Force...” Kid smooth voice wasn’t raised, but cut through Nakamori’s
bellows as easily as a hot knife through butter. In his left hand, he quite casually balanced the
bejeweled goose-egg, while his right made a grand gesture to the rest of the room.

“And ankle-biters.” Conan felt his hackles rise at the mocking new nickname for himself, because
who else could Kid mean other than the only child in the room that was definitely loosing any
height-challenge to anyone else around? One didn’t even need to be very intelligent to guess that one,
because of the thief's challenging grin in his direction, though it was half hidden by the Gas-Mask
that Kid now slowly took of. It seemed to be some kind of unnamed signal for the police to charge
forward (Conan winced at the thought how those poor sods that were lying unconscious on the floor
would feel tomorrow, because no Task Force member seemed to give them any thought while
treading all over them), trying to reach Kid before he disappeared.

Huffing out an annoyed breath Conan waited, because no way he would participate in that spectacle
and get the living daylights kicked out of himself for his trouble. Sure enough, in the chaos it was
easy enough for Kid to disappear, using a disguise (Conan wondered if anyone was sparing the
goose-egg any thought, because as delicate as it was... dog-piling the person who was almost
carelessly balancing it seemed a very, very bad idea). While watching carefully, he could barely see a
person extracting himself from the pile, slithering sneakily out of a door. A-ha!

The smirk on Conan's face grew, and like a bloodhound on the scent he slipped out of the room and
begun running. Judging from the building plans he had previously studied, he knew exactly where
Kaitou Kid was headed to.

When he attempted to pick the lock in the basement, his lock-pick got stuck.

Really stuck. It took him almost half a minute to pull it out again, and when he did, he stared at it in
bewilderment. It was... okay, something was sticking at the front. Frowning he pulled it off, and
sniffed it carefully. Ehr... strawberry?

“What the...” leaning down, he switched on a little flashlight and shone it into the keyhole. And
“Who the hell put chewing-gum into the hole?” Kaito cursed under his breath, there was no way he would get that sticky pink mess out before someone found him down here. The owner would probably have to get a new keyhole now anyways.

“That would have been me!” the cheery, sweet, and innocent little boy voice washed over him, causing him to stiffen wide eyed. Ohhh... he should have known. But really, who would have guessed that Conan would do something like that? On second thought, the little kid did kick his ball around hard enough to dent metal doors, so maybe it was not actually as surprising as he first thought. With all the trouble Conan seemed to attract to himself, he had probably caused, or had at least been involved in as much property damage as Kaito.

“I don't know whether to be proud or horrified. I think it's my influence that tarnished your sense of justice... vandalism, Tantei-kun?” slowly straightening himself he looked over his shoulder, raising an eyebrow as his mind worked. Was this the only door with a sticky mess inside the keyhole? He hoped so, but feared that the opposite was the case.

A small tread of excitement unfurled in his belly, like always when Conan came to a heist and made the game suddenly so damn interesting that Kaito always wanted to prolong it – despite it being rather dangerous with the child detective's mind working against him. Already his mind was planning other routes of escape.

“Don't be dense. As if I would ruin perfectly good locks like these, of course it's reversible.” Conan rolled his eyes a little, but didn't mention that even if the Professor hadn't invented that mess on accident, he probably would have really used chewing-gum.

Slowly Kaito sized up his opponent and lightly dusted off his knees a bit with a few brushes of his hands, as if to shake off some invisible dust on his impeccable suit before turning fully around to face his biggest (and at the same time smallest, Kaito thought with a withheld smile) threat. Conan was standing on the stairs, his chest rising and falling a little faster than usual. He probably had run to catch up to Kaito, his small legs a disadvantage at following him. One hand resided on his belt, ready to release the ball of doom at any given moment. His eyes were sparkling, the excitement barely hidden behind the thick rimmed glasses caused Kaito to grin openly in return. Maybe even a tad mockingly. It seemed to fan the flames inside of Conan's eyes, making him even more determined. Kaito had been unsure if Conan would even show up, their new... relationship made it hard to guess how the detective would react. The thief had to admit, if Conan had not shown up, he would have been... disappointed.

But one look in the eyes of the child, no, the eyes of Shinichi Kudou told him that he shouldn't plan on Conan going easy on him. If he had to look at the situation, Conan was actually making it even harder than normal. It was almost as if Conan was challenging him, telling him that if Kaito didn't
bring out his best game, he wouldn't only get a ball-shaped bruise, but handcuffs on his wrists, too. It seemed that just because of a few texts and their getting to know each other, didn't mean that Kaitou Kid got any free passes. Not that he had really expected anything else from the detective, but he was still somewhat glad, that he could count on Conan.

In response he let a challenging grin form on his face, if the substance was removable, it was probably due to something else that made it reversible. Something fluid most likely, as otherwise it would be hard to dissolve the mess in the keyhole. His gaze trailed over the child, searching for something out of place.

As if catching his thought a slightly alarmed look appeared on the small detective's face and he hastily added “I do not have it with me, it's hidden and I will not tell you where, so do not even think about doing a body search or whatever else you just thought off.”

“Hmmm...” Conan almost took a small step back, because for a moment that didn't sound as if Kid believed him and Conan did not want to be subjected to a body-search by Kid.

“Well, whatever.” casually Kid stuck his hands in his pockets, which didn't make him less dangerous in Conan's eyes. Because now he couldn't see said hands. And who knew what the thief had stowed in those pockets of him.

“Still, it's so nice of you to join me, Tantei-kun” Kaito continued, a Cheshire-grin forming on his face “Or are you just here to deliver Nakamori-keibu's words once more? You do seem to have a knack for imitating him when the occasion calls for it...” his chuckles echoed in the empty stairwell.

Flustered Conan realized now that the shaking officer, that had overheard his words in the beginning must have been Kaitou Kid in disguise.

Irritated at his oversight, he pressed the button and released the ball, Kid's eyes widened a fraction (barely seen because of the top-hat but he did flinch back). Like always the standstill between them seemed to morph into a flurry of movements. Kid pulling his hands out once more, Card gun (how had that fit into his pocket?!) at the ready, while Conan ducked down to activate the static energy of his shoes. Taking aim, he precisely kicked the ball that took off like a rocket towards Kid, who ducked out of the way, barely keeping his hat on with his other hand. Grinning Kaito pulled himself up to his full height victoriously, taking aim at the detective that had nearly taken his head off once more. The disturbing smirk that was still on Conan's face made him pause. It was pure instinct that made him duck again.

The ball that had speed past before, ricocheted at least five times behind him, before coming back. With vengeance. And when it came back and he had ducked out of the way once more, Kaito saw with horror that it hit the stairs in front of him, altering his course and sending it right back into his face.
With a rather undignified curse he threw himself out of the way of the projectile, heart hammering in his chest. And as if that wasn't enough, he had to roll out of the way and pull up his cape to escape the needles Conan had sent just at the place where he had landed. Just how far had Conan calculated this stunt?!

Well, if one thing was certain: He really shouldn't let Conan set the territory. It was abundantly clear he had anticipated Kaito's escape route and planned ahead. But damn … the detective was a genius for not only calculating the damn footballs path, but being able to kick it just right too.

Deciding not to play to Conan's rules any more than he already had, he quickly shot two razor-sharp cards, making Conan dance out of the way in almost practiced smooth movements. Now Conan was frowning, concentrating on not getting cut by the sharp edges while he was slowly being herded out of the way, growling all the while under his breath and always trying to find a way to block Kaito off once more. But while Conan had only one ball, Kaito had a lot of cards. Still, it took him longer than he would like to slip past the child detective, throwing another smoke-bomb down when he dodged past, before disappearing around a corner.

After the second chewing-gum locked door Kaito's patience was wearing a bit thin.

After the third he had Nakamori's men trailing him too.

After the fourth he decided to switch tactics and try the roof. Once there, he took a break, while sighing in dismay. Way to windy to use the hang-glider escape and he had not thought that his other escape routes would be blocked this effectively. At least he got a good look at the jewels under the moonlight and knew by now that they were not the one he had been searching for.

Unhappily he decided to take the next best method: The sewers. And Kaito was not happy at all about using them. It was a pain to get the suit clean again (not to mention the smell).

And as if reading his thoughts once more, who did he meet down there?

“Fancy meeting you here Kid. So nice of you to join me.”

Why was he once again at a place of Conan's decision... right now Kaito just wanted to go home.
Needless to say, he did manage to escape. But his dignity was a little dented by football-shaped bumps. Because Conan apparently could now reload or had a spare belt.

Chapter End Notes

My first heist. It was oh so much fun to write but god damn was it hard, too. I've actually just finished after pulling an allnighter because of it (dear me... it almost 5 am *cough*)

But I could hardly wait to share it with you guys! There will probably more heists (but I don't know if I will go into Detail again like I did with this one...) I've got plans for some post-heist stuff I hope to bring, so it won't be the last. Tell me if you liked it or not please, I'm rather nervous about that part...

Well, other than that... I'm not sure when the next chapter will come out. I'll just promise to continue, but I've used all the prewritten chapters for now and will post whenever I finish a new chapter and I'm happy with how it turned out.

Leave me a comment! They motivate me a lot and sometimes even give me some new ideas to go on! \(^(*)≥\omega\leq/)
His interaction with Kaito after the heist had been hesitant, but after seeing that the thief was actually more pumped up and didn't really change how he approached Conan, he felt himself relax again and actually... yes, they seemed to get on better. It seemed as if both of them approved that they would separate private from business. Since before the heist that had been a point in their relationship, that seemed to be an invisible barrier standing between them (or the giant tiger in the room that you tried to ignore), they had now a better idea what they were getting into.

Not to say that Conan didn't still find it surreal to meet Kaitou Kid outside of the heists, and no matter how he tried to separate them, he wasn't one to deny reality and Kaito was Kaitou Kid.

It didn't help that Kaito Ishikawa was also a 'magician' and thus rubbed the true night-identity in Conan's face whenever he so much as pulled out one of these flowers he seemed to have stowed in an invisible black hole beneath his clothes. That was one thing that boggled Conan's mind. He could find out the most complicated tricks, but finding out where Kaito actually carried his supply of roses around?

And he had tried. He even went so far as to *hug* Kaito once, earning him a completely scared look as if Kaito feared for his sanity (or feared he had finally broken Conan's sanity, which was more likely...), but nada. Nothing. Well, it had been worth it for the face that Kaito had pulled.

Short of stripping Kaito out of his clothes and examining them... well, not even Conan was *that* extreme, no matter how it bugged him. Especially since nowadays there was even the occasional dove that appeared. It was driving him mad, but he would not succumb to insanity and jump Kaito and rip his clothes off. It would give a totally wrong impression.

Never mind all the other tricks he tried to pull. Or no. Not tried. He just did it. And he made a spectacle out of himself whenever he so much stepped in front of more than five people, three kids or a single woman. Which was pretty much all the time (especially since Conan was often followed by at least 2 kids, if not 4).

“Amateur Magician my ass.” Conan mentally frothed. While yes, the tricks were all very simple, it almost seemed as if Kaito just couldn't help himself. Magic tricks were like breathing air for him.

Or maybe he was teasing Conan. And driving him completely nuts was a byproduct.

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When Kaito had arrived at home, smelly, tired and way later than he had planned, the first thing he
did was take a shower and soak the suit. He had contemplated sulking a bit, since the heist had not really been that much of a success and he had to leave the goose-egg behind (when you decide between going for a third round with Conan if you didn't need to, or finally getting home, the decision hadn't been all that hard). But eventually decided against it. His tentative friendship was too new and he didn't want to damage the little progress he had made. Decision made, he grabbed his phone and contemplated writing to Conan. Finally he sighed and decided to use something his father had once shown him.

[00:29] Arsene Lupin: “?”

He only knew that his father had a rival. Back then he had thought it was a fellow magician, but now he wondered. He was curious about how Conan would answer, because that single question-mark could mean a lot between them.

What's your stance now, after the heist?

Do you still want to meet up?

Will you come to future heists, following me, trying to catch me?

Are we okay?

After several minutes of no answer he sighed. It was probably too late for Conan to be up and about. He hoped he would get a message in the morning.

Stretching his slightly sore muscles after the workout he had gotten during the heists he finally dressed in his pyjamas and crawled into his bed. He was asleep in seconds.

[01:03] Sherlock Holmes: “!”

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It also seemed as if Conan's holiday was over. More often than not Kaito got replies like 'solving a murder case right now, ttyl' or 'someone just dropped in front of us, gotta run'.

It made Kaito a little uncomfortable. He himself wasn't involved much in any murder cases (despite trying to hunt down the murderers of his father), so hearing about how regularly Conan got involved in random killing sprees was a bit of a shock to the system. He had of course known that Conan got involved in a lot of trouble, but it seemed as if murderers just got much more active if Conan was within range to solve their deeds.

Still, sometimes Conan's very, very morbid humor showed, like when Kaito had gotten this message
'went on a scavengers hunt with the kids. Found a dead body. Pretty sure we won.'

Another occasion went like this:

[15:55] Arsene Lupin: “What are you up to, right now? Wanna do something together?”


[15:57] Arsene Lupin: “... why are you writing back when you are face to face with a murderer??”

[16:03] Sherlock Holmes: “Had phone at hand from calling the police. And was just about to kick the flowerpot at his head. Problem solved, I'll still have to wait for the police but after that I'm free. Where do you want to meet?”

Heart-stopping messages like this really weren't good for his peaceful daily chaotic mindset. Really, Conan would someday manage to do something (and probably be the only person who actually could do it), that would turn his hair prematurely grey. It was a novel feeling for him.

And then there had been the outing where Conan had hugged him! Kaito had no clue what had possessed Conan to do that, but hugging was something friends did so that was progress right? Right. At least their interactions got a lot more comfortable now, after his heist. It seemed to calm Conan down to reestablish where they both stood, even though Kaito was very determined to win Conan's friendship fully and not do a half-assed job by being complacent with the status quo.

Which meant he would probably more than once have to shake Conan's view of their relationship, before he got to that point. To rush things would only cause problems though, so Kaito was prepared to take his time (he could be patient. Sometimes. Maybe.), especially since it would be all too easy for Conan to get real proof of the connection between Kaito Kuroba and Kaitou Kid. Best to ease him slowly into getting to know each other, than risking having to plan his breakout out of a prison.

And if he got an itsy bitsy impatient, he still had Lady Luck to count on.
It took several weeks for another victim of the serial killer to appear. This time, the police didn't have a chance to suppress the information. The girl had been found at a public square, the reporters had swarmed there before the police had even gotten around to taking the body away.

Conan actually didn't see the news this time, instead he found out because Megure-keibu and his subordinates Takagi and Sato appeared at the agency to ask for advice from Kogoro. It was a lucky happenstance, because this would allow him to actually see or hear more of the case and thus maybe get another lead. Especially since his mind seemed to be stuck on that case anyways, might as well use the chance and be productive.

Still, as a kid the adults did try to keep him out of the investigation. Sensible, if he had really been a kid, frustrating because he wasn't and had to make do with glimpses (when he brought the tea), and eavesdropping with his earring phone (while leaving his phone connected in the other room).

Which was still better than nothing, but it did sometimes rankle him that he had to go through these methods at all. It was a bit exhausting to keep dancing around the officers and lead them slowly to the evidence that was more often than not so obvious to his eyes. It had been a lot easier back when he was Shinichi and could simply lay down his deduction. The next easiest method now was using Kogoro, since it was basically the same, just with no recognition on his part. And with the added strain of making sure no one actually found out.

Anyways, the newest victim had been found in the early morning by some college students who usually came past that way. At first they hadn't even realized she was dead, just thought her to maybe be drunk and only when they got close did they realize that she wasn't breathing anymore. This time the aggressor hadn't stabbed her to death at least, which gave the girl a – to an untrained and passing glance – completely normal appearance. Except for the no breathing part. And the unnatural stillness. And probably a lot other give-aways that normal people often oversaw, like the pallor of the skin, the discoloration at the fingernails, the unnatural pose of the body since the muscles couldn't sustain a raised position. The dryness of the lips – though that had probably been covered by lipstick if the criminal followed pattern and had once more used cosmetics after strangling his victim.

It was... a little strange, because this victim derivated from the usual norm. Not only had she been found in a very, very public and obvious place (it was a bench!), she didn't even show any of the brutal and violent signs of the last victims.

The criminal was getting bolder. Did he want public attention, or had he gathered up his courage to go 'public' with his deeds, maybe as a challenge to himself or to challenge his pursuers?

Sighing Conan absentmindedly bid the police officers goodbye and entered the room he had been banned from during the discussion. Discreetly he gathered his phone and looked if some of the documents for the case were still on the table. After seeing nothing and after getting a rather dark look for his lingering from Kogoro, he decided to head out.

His way at the beginning was rather aimless, wandering the streets in the afternoon sun with his skateboard pressed under his arm and his thoughts running wild. Then, as if hit by an inspiration all of a sudden, he put the board on the ground and jumped on. With lazy tabs to the ground – because he could and wasn't in the mood to scare other people out of his way by using the speed function.
The crime scene was a little further away, but with a little bus-drive, easily reachable.

The section was still taped off, but since it was a bench he didn't need to get past the police officers this time to see the crime scene. As he suspected, there was not much to go on. The bench was even covered, probably to hide the tape that would mark where the victim had been sitting.

Slowly Conan let his eyes wander around, taking in the surroundings.

The criminal was indeed bold. Not only was this a very busy area in the morning, with lots of passerbys, there was also a bakery and other small shops and cafe's that would open very early.

Getting himself a drink at a cafe he slowly trudged around. Trying to get a feel for the surroundings and watching the people here.

His phone vibrated in his pocket and he pulled it out.


And he choked on his drink as he almost got his drink through his nose.

Coughing he ignored the stares he gathered with his display and stole a napkin from a hot-dog stand.

[16:36] Sherlock Holmes: “Are you shitting me?”

Because Kaito could pull off the white suit rather well in his opinion, and anyone else would probably look absolutely ludicrous in that getup. And here Kaito was telling him he couldn't pull off a normal suit?

[16:37] Arsene Lupin: “Black is just not my color. It makes me look... pale. And it's boring.”

Conan goggled his phone for quite a while, not exactly believing he got into a discussion of suit colors with an internationally known jewel thief that paraded around in a white one regularly.

[16:39] Sherlock Holmes: “Are we really having a discussion about color preferences? Like girls?”

He sent that message rather wearily, then added another one.
[16:40] Sherlock Holmes: “What do you need a suit for anyways?”

And then, after realizing he might stretch their relationship a bit with that question a bit too much, he added another.


[16:42] Arsene Lupin: “I don’t mind! (\(´ ` ⌈ \)\)) Feel free to ask away! Anyways, there is nothing wrong with asking a friend for help, is there? I need it because my mother insists. It's for a wedding of her friend and I just have to attend. So: Suit. Suggestions??”

Somehow this felt wrong on so many levels that Conan stopped in the middle of the street and had to apologize when someone almost ran him over. Deciding it was probably safer to sit down somewhere on the side he selected a bench in the shade and put his board on the ground.

[16:45] Sherlock Holmes: “How about going in white?”

[16:46] Arsene Lupin: “It's a wedding! I can't steal the brides show! Well...”

Conan regretted his words and hastily replied before he gave Kid any more unnecessary ideas.

[16:46] Sherlock Holmes: “Okay, no white. Got it. No white. You do know that I actually don’t really know what you look like, right?”

[16:47] Arsene Lupin: “You know enough I think. Don't try to change the subject. \(^{3} \bigcirc / \) “


Really, how should he know. He usually wore his school uniform, at least he had when he had been Kaito's hight. And if not he had not often worn a suit.
“Still boring.”

Startled Conan looked at the person standing almost behind him, leaning against a tree.

“What- I thought you were trying on suits!” besides, why were they writing when Kaito was standing almost next to him?

“I did.”

Urgh. However Kaito had found him, he wasn't sure he wanted to know. But being in his presence was headache inducing even without that question plaguing his mind.

“No you didn't. There is no suit shop around here, I looked.”

“Bah, you think I need a store?” Kaito eyed him as if he had failed at a basic test in math, which was a bit insulting. He was good in math. Then Kaito tipped against his own head “I tried it on with imagination. Why would I want to visit a smelly store when the weather is as fine as it is now and I could have Ice-cream instead?”

“....”

With a cat-like jump, Kaito was sitting next to him an leaning back, stretching himself out in the sun-part of the bench, while Conan eyed him as if he was an asylum-escapee.

“So... how did you find me?” Conan asked, after the silence stretched longer, and longer, before he went back to his people watching. He wanted to know why the criminal had selected this place. But for that he would probably have to revisit the place during the night, which... would be problematic in his current appearance.

“Wasn't really all that hard. Saw a new victim to your case and just waited for you to arrive.”

“....”
Was he that predictable?

“I do not see any Ice-cream in your hand either.”

Kaito hummed, then opened one eye and grinned at Conan “Ice-cream alone is boring too, that’s why I was waiting for you. Took you long enough.” Standing up and stretching he added “I’ll get them, you save our seats.” without waiting for Conan to nod – or say he didn’t want ice-cream because he disliked sweets – he disappeared and Conan just sighed. Typical. Leaning back he just enjoyed the peace and lively atmosphere – despite the taped up area next to him.

Suddenly a chill went through his body and he froze, his breath catching in his lungs. Quickly he looked around - as discreetly as he could - searching for the source.

On the main street a Porsche 356A with a license plate spelling A48-69 smoothly slipped into a parking lot.

With his heart pounding Conan watched out of the corners of his eyes as Gin and Vodka exited the car and slipped into the building they had parked in front of.

It had been so long since his last lead to the Black Organisation, that he couldn’t let this chance slip past. Standing up and gathering his skateboard he looked around for any sign of Kaito, but couldn’t find him anymore. It was probably for the best, he didn’t want to pull Kaito into his business with the Black Org.

Swiftly he crossed the street and contemplated the car for a second, but Gin was just too careful and had as of now always found his bugs rather quickly. Why he didn’t change the car altogether was a mystery for Conan, but as it served him well in spotting the criminal, he wasn’t about to complain.

For now he intended to find out just what the Black Organisation was planning inside that building.

Determined he stepped forward and took a look at the sign that described who or what occupied the office-building.

For all he knew it could be anyone that was listed there, or no one. They could be just meeting a single person. Or planning to install bombs all over the place again.

Taking a deep breath he looked through the glass doors, before stepping through and entering the building himself. Not noticing the indigo eyed person with two ice-creams watching him disappear
the building with worried eyes and discarding the food to follow.

Chapter End Notes

Okay, I've just finished the 'first part' of my Story. And now I'm getting the Organisation involved.
I've finished that chapter a lot faster than I thought I would, but you can really thank Nayru for that, who keeps me really motivated to write more with our talks and her (?) own Story you really should check out!

Besides that, I hope/think the Story will now progress a little (?) faster. Maybe. Or maybe not, because I have so many random scenes floating around and have to put them in somehow. We will see.

Haven't started Chapter 13 yet, but I've got a gerneral plan I think of what to write. Hope I will find the time because now I'm very, very tired and got to work tomorrow!
See ya! *(¬∀´* )☆
Chapter Summary

"'I think that you know me well enough, Watson, to understand that I am by no means a nervous man. At the same time, it is stupidity rather than courage to refuse to recognize danger when it is close upon you.'"
- Sherlock Holmes

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

Conan tried to stay inconspicuous. It was a little frustrating that he had lost sight of the two men when they had entered the building while he had still been crossing the street, but they couldn't have gone far. A quick glance to the elevator showed him that it was still moving, and since there were only a few people milling around in the lobby, he hoped that it was Gin and Vodka in the moving elevator and not some random strangers. If he really didn't find them, he could still head out again to bug the car, however he was weary of using that method again. Gin was far too cautious and the last time he had found the accidentally placed bug on Mizunashi Rena's shoe sole... well, it had almost cost Kogoro his life, if not for the quick action of his FBI-friends.

He had really no wish to cut it that close again, and placing the same bug on Gin's car would probably bring back memories of that incident. While Kogoro had hopefully been cleared of suspicions, Gin seemed to be the type that would rather shoot 5 more people down than miss the cockroach on the floor. Or, if that was too much work, simply bomb the whole building. Twice. To be sure.

If possible it should be his last resort, and maybe he could use the bug better to overhear whatever meeting the Organisation Members were conducting here. Or prevent them from bombing yet another building. Or both.

Seeing the elevator stop, he entered the second one he had called and selected to stop two levels down from where Gin and Vodka had – hopefully – gotten off and proceeded to rush to the stairs to jog up the last two levels on foot.

His heart was pounding and he very carefully looked around the corner.

There was no one. The shrunken detective was a bit disappointed, but it had taken some time to get up here and it was no wonder that Gin and Vodka had not waited around or started a conversation where they could be overheard. It would have been nice, but it was (as so many things connected to the Black Organisation) of course too easy.
Slowly and a bit reluctant, because there was not a lot of cover if Gin and Vodka suddenly stepped out of a door, he entered the floor and looked around. Big milky glass doors were on both sides and Conan took a quick look at the signs besides the doors.

His blood froze in his veins and he had to swallow several times.

Laboratories. Research facilities.

It didn't have to mean anything. Maybe Gin and Vodka were not even here. It could be a coincidence.

Medical research labs. And biochemical research. Genetic research, biophysical research. It seemed a lot of research collaborated here.

What was this place? And how did it connect to the Organisation? Or was there just another person that was loosely connected to the Organisation like Suguru Itakura?

His heart was pounding like a rabbit's, but he knew he was getting ahead of himself. It would not help him to speculate, for all he knew Gin and Vodka weren't even on this floor. But this was the first time he could remember finding the Black Org connected to something like this, and he had a gut feeling, a terrible gut feeling that this wasn't just another random location. It was only his instinct, but it was a strong feeling of dread, that made his senses almost hyper aware. It might be important. And anything connected to the Organisation was worth looking into.

With nothing else he could do without arousing suspicion, he tried to memorize the names of the doctors that were spelled out on the signs.

1. A. Furitsu
2. K. Ogawa
3. S. Sugiura
4. H. Yanagida
5. H. Mitsuda
6. S. Hashimo-

A shadow appearing behind the milky glass made him automatically turn to the door.

1. T. Nakayama
2. F. Yamagiwa

His eyes widened and his heart stutter to a stop. Fuck. Someone was coming.
Stumbling back he searched wildly but in vain for an escape. It would take too long and be too suspicious to scramble back to the stairs. He wouldn't make it in time without being seen and there was no place to hide him, since the walls were bare and even if he could have hidden, it would seem even more suspect if he was hiding and later found.

The buzzing sound of the door opening concurred at the same time a fabric was falling over him and a hand suddenly gripped his own.

“Really, Ayako!” bewildered he stared up at the woman holding his hand. What the...? Wait... - he looked down at himself - What was wrong with his clothes?!

“I thought I had lost you! Didn't I tell you not to run around, what if you had gotten lost. We still need to get two more levels up.”

Okay... what the... hold on... what?

It was just such a sudden turn of events that his brain seemed to ground to a halt for a moment, before realizing what was happening to him right now.

In the end, he didn't need the amethyst bracelet to figure out who was holding his hand, and why he was suddenly dressed like a girl with pig tails.

Still being in a kind of shocked and scared stupor, he absolutely didn't protest as Kaito-turned-woman dragged him to the staircase.

He also didn't really need to turn around to see Gin standing there, watching them with his cold, cold eyes, because he could feel the stare like icy pinpricks all over his back. He could hear Vodka's questioning voice 'Aniki?' and he would never forget the voices of those two. Could probably pick them out of hundreds.

Still, when they disappeared inside the stairwell he could see the man out of the corner of his eyes silently watching them. They went further up, instead of down, but he didn't resist, right now he was just relieved to get out of the situation. Kaito's hand was warm but firm and when Conan finally tried to extract his hand the grip tightened to an almost uncomfortable level.

Swallowing he chanced a glance at Kaito, who was still every now and then scolding 'Ayako'. Was the thief angry? He had kind of up and left and if the thie- if Kaito had seen him following suspicious people and had come after him and had literally just saved his ass, it wouldn't be very surprising if … whatever Kaito was to him, his rival-friend-something were angry.

Conan himself didn't dare to speak yet, because he could not make his voice high like a girls without his bow-tie and didn't want to raise even more suspicions if Gin managed to overhear.
They used the exit two levels above and stopped, Kaito was watching the stairwell for a few minutes, then after deeming it safe, dragged him further up to the roof.

The door was closed but Conan was not surprised that the lock didn't hold even half a minute against Kaito's skilled hands. When the door closed behind them, silently, Kaito turned to him and crossed his arms.

“Explain.”

When Kaito had followed Conan, he had not exactly been sure what was going on. Why had the detective suddenly decided to up and leave? What was so interesting about the building he had entered?

A quick overview of the signs on the outside of the building didn't really give Kaito any clue, but he could see Conan standing near the elevators and waiting. Kaito took quick notice of the level Conan seemed to find interesting, then entered the empty stairwell. He had other ways to get up there fast and something seemed suspicious about what was going on here. Conan looked serious. Something was going on here and Kaito wanted to find out just what.

A good thing he usually had quite a few useful things with him. His Card-Gun and Grappling hook for example. It was always useful to be prepared, especially if you had trigger-happy enemies with guns, like Snake.

The Grappling hook would now help him to climb the staircase fast.

That's where he found another surprise when he almost ran into Conan who rushed up the stairs on surprisingly quiet feet with a determined expression. Kaito ducked into the shadow of the stairs and watched Conan climb two more levels, while he slowly and carefully followed. Seeing Conan press himself to the wall and carefully look around the corner showed that the detective also thought whoever he was following was dangerous, when he tried not to be seen even in his child form.

The question was if he knew those people, which meant a shitload of trouble because as far as Kaito could tell Conan solved the cases, and most if not all of them in a way that didn't leave the criminals free to run around. Because either Conan had not been able to convict them (which meant intelligent criminals able to hide away the evidence of their crime from the child detective), or that this was something bigger than Conan alone could handle. Or maybe it was someone Conan had brought behind bars years ago (unlikely since Conan only existed for about two years and anyone from before would be hard pressed to 'remember' Conan being the cause of any conviction), that had been released recently.

Or maybe Conan had just a hunch and had followed someone on a whim, but with how careful he seemed to be not to be seen (instead of playing the child and maybe just acting as if he was lost), Kaito dismissed that option quickly.
The possibilities made Kaito's head swim, due to Conan's... freelance working he made a whole lot of enemies, though most criminals would probably rather target Mouri-san as they thought he was the reason of them being caught. There could be some lowlifes who wouldn't have a problem taking revenge on Mouri-san's 'protege'.

Well, one thing for sure: Conan was stalking someone. Carefully. After looking inside the floor for a while the child's body relaxed a little, but Kaito could still see a frown marring his forehead. Slowly he crept a bit further up when Conan entered the floor and looked around. He had an uneasy feeling about the situation.

Now he was pressed against the wall, just like Conan had been a few moments ago and used a small mirror to discreetly watch Conan. For once the child detective didn't seem to realize he was being watched. First the child studied the doors, then the signs. All of a sudden he froze for no particular reason that Kaito could discern. He was just standing there while his face lost what little color it had, eyes flickering over the signs, his mouth opening in a silent but shocked 'Oh'.

Whatever Conan had found had rattled the little detective good, that's for sure.

And then Kaito could see a shadow clearly forming behind the milky glass door behind Conan. When Conan noticed, his complexion went from shocked and pale to frantic and grey.

Whoever he expected to step out of the door, should very clearly not see the child-detective in the corridor.

Without any second thought Kaito jumped out and let his instinct take over, which ended with him being a rather plain, forgettable woman and Conan in... uh. Oops? Girls clothing and pig-tails. Right. He had carried those around for a... reason. That had probably made sense to him before, but right now he was just glad he had something in Conan's size. No, it hadn't been because he had wanted to prank Conan. Silly reason that. (But totally worth it, if he could run fast enough to escape Conan's ball when he recovered his belt.)

The door opened and Kaito's mouth just spewed out some nonsense while his mind lagged a little behind trying to process everything. More than process, it was like one of his heists where his attention split itself to keep the Task Force, the detective's, the fans and literally everything around him in mind. Just in case he needed to use one of them or could gain a chance to set them against each other to create as much chaos as he could to escape. Right now his mind tried to find as many details about the man that had opened the door. With nothing more than a passing glance he could discern several things, which could be attributed to his eidetic memory. It was useful in heists, that's for sure.

Right now his passing glance at the man caused him to perceive his distinctive traits, from his look (silvery long hair, black clothes,dangerous) to smaller details like the very well hidden gun in his coat, or the package of cigarettes in his pocket (graceful predatory movement, intimidating cold stare,
threat).

The black-clothed man's stare raised the hairs on the back of his neck. Whoever that was, he was not a friendly, concerned citizen. Not waiting around any longer he dragged Conan back to the stairs, trying to get as much distance to the silver haired criminal as possible without seeming suspicious. His flight instinct was blaring at him. Two floors up was something child related, a child doctor or something, so up the stairs they would go. Child things were good when you had a child with you. Especially one that looked a little sick right now.

Once there he stopped for a moment, watching the stairs with hawk-eyes, before pulling Conan the rest of the way up to the roof, where he felt a lot safer than anywhere else right now. The door was hardly a challenge and once they were out in the fresh air he closed the door as silent as he had opened it. Only then did he turn to Conan and let a little of the worried anger that had gripped him when he had seen Conan about to be discovered show.

“Explain.”

For a moment Conan silently stared at him, he still seemed a bit out of it, but then his shoulders sagged a bit in relief but also in resignation. Then they hunched, as if he was trying to hide or prepared himself for digging his heels in. Kaito rolled his shoulders and let his hands drop, adopting a more open body language. Conan's quick look showed that the child-detective realized what he was doing, but since Conan relaxed a bit Kaito allowed a small smirk to travel over his face. Seemed like that trick still worked, even if Conan was aware of it.

“There is not much to say....” Conan hedged carefully, looking at Kaito with an unhappy frown. To get more on Conan's level Kaito sat himself down on the floor, legs crossed and an eyebrow raised. He had time.

Snorting Conan looked down and startled, then glared at Kaito while he removed the hair ties. And stared, because... were those hair extensions? Okay, that made...sense? Or not.

“And you better return my clothes.” Conan added, but the dark, embarrassed flush was very, very satisfying.

“I'll consider it.” Kaito grinned smugly. Conan's hand twitched towards the non-existent belt. The thief could feel his grin widen, this could be fun, so he added a happy “Later!” which made Conan glare harder but without his belt or watch or glasses or anything, there was not much he could do about it right now. Which would be mean, if Kaito hadn't personally felt the small teenager's dangerous gadgets in person several times.

Huffing Conan crossed his arms, looking a lot more like he was pouting than the probably intimidating body-language he was trying for. Kaito carefully kept his poker face, because Conan still had his feet. And he could kick. Even without his shoes.
Finally, after a silent staring contest, where Kaito just contently laid back against the door, Conan huffed again and moved to sit beside him.

“Fine you nutcase. And later you can explain why you felt the need to carry around child-sized girls clothes and hair extensions.” the phantom thief froze a second and opened his mouth but Conan cut him off “And I do not believe in coincidences.”

“Uhm...”

“...”

“...”

“It's not what you think?”

“...”

“Stop staring at me with those judging eyes!”

“If it was not for what I think it was, then I might start to suspect you for kidnapping children or being a pedophile.”

“...”

“...”

“... okay. Maybe it might have been for fun purposes I won't further explain. Stop trying to derail this conversation.”

“M-hm. That's what I thought.” Conan sighed, crossed his legs, then realized he was wearing a skirt and quickly folded the legs beneath him with a glare that dared Kaito to laugh. He wanted to, really, but hey, there was always time for that later. Laughter and photos for blackmailing purposes.
Conan sighed, and Kaito's attention refocused on the child.

“Okay. That guy is a criminal that might have something to do with my... how did you say it?”

“Height-challenged status?”

“Right, that. An-”

“Limited perception problem?”

“... right.”

“Lower viewpoint situation? Being a little small-scale? Revisiting childhood memories...?”

Conan sighed again and rolled his eyes in exasperation, but Kaito could see some tension leaking out of his frame. Score.

“Do you actually want me to tell you anything or do you like the sound of your voice too much? Don't let me stop you if that's the case. Go on.”

“I don't mind sharing the spotlight during daytime.”

Conan's flat look just seemed to feed Kaito's grin, as it seemed to grow even wider.

“Okay then. Yes, the guy is dangerous. And he has to do with me being shrunk.” the detective looked down at his small hands in his lap.

“Do not try to look into their business.” Beseeching eyes found the magician's own. “They are dangerous.”

“They, Tantei-kun?”
From the scowl Conan had not wanted to let that slip, even if Kaito had seen the second person half hidden behind the silver haired one.

“I do not want you to get involved, Kid.”

“Hm.”

“I mean it. Those guys are of the type shoot first, bury the body and forget the face. It's better the less you know, and if you keep out of their way.”

“Like you?” Kaito was not very happy with that and Conan growled at him. Which was somehow more cute like a kitten that didn't even know how to extract its claws yowling at a tiger.

It made Kaito want to give Conan cat ears. And whiskers.

… He would remember that thought for later. (And cat tail!)

“Okay, okay. Easy tiger.”

Conan looked away, uncomfortable and Kaito almost sighed. So much for loosening the mood with jokes.

“Okay. For now I won't do anything.” clearly Conan didn't like the 'for now' part, the way he was looking at Kaito, but aw, shucks! Too bad for Conan in that case because Kaito sure as hell would not promise anything more.

“I would rather you stay out of it completely. You do not know what you are getting yourself into.” At this, Kaito almost did laugh. Because he already had suspicions and he might know better than Conan thought. But as he did not want to get Conan involved in his mess, he did not mention it. If he knew Conan right, the little guy would jump right in and make himself a home there, no matter that he was camping in a snowstorm already. And the tiny detective didn't need to look for more trouble, as he had enough following him around.
“But thank you for helping me out. It would have been bad if he had seen me.” Conan much preferred not to be seen all too much by Gin, as it would be less likely to be recognized then.

“Sure, any time.” for now Kaito was okay with not being told all there was to it. It was obvious that Conan didn't want to say more, and Kaito wasn't willing to press the issue if that meant breaking their tentative bond of friendship. And he was pretty sure he could convince Conan otherwise, given time and determination. He was charming like that.

“Now... I think I promised ice-cream. And here is as good a spot as any.”

With a snap of his fingers Kaito had his two Ice-cream cones in his hand and held one out for Conan to take. The detective had a strange expression on his face that puzzled Kaito a bit.

Meanwhile, Conan felt the strong urge to bash his head against a wall. Where had Kid hidden ice-cream cones on his body without it melting?! It was mind-boggling! More so than roses and doves even, because. Without. Melting.

Chapter End Notes

I admit: This chapter was horrible to write. Horrible. I don't think even the heist has given me so many Problems.
I hope I didn't disappoint, because the confrontation was rather short and Gin didn't even say anything ^^

Well, I've tried to write this update fast since I've got some impatient reviewers and didn't want to leave you guys hanging, wondering what was Happening.
I've got some new Ideas that make more sense about how I will continue this Story (as before I only had a rough draft that will have to adapt to the Details I'm adding into the Story)
Secret Musings and Headless Dolls

Chapter Summary

"You may remember the old Persian saying, »There is danger for him who taketh the tiger cub, and danger also for whoso snatches a delusion from a woman.«"
- Sherlock Holmes

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Due to their talk Conan had almost completely forgotten about his outfit. It was only when they actually left the building – sneakily – and bid each other goodbye that Conan actually seemed to realize he was still wearing a skirt and hollered after him to give his stuff back.

It had been totally hilarious and worth it. Kaito had waited until later that night to return that belt though. Just in case.

One thing for sure: This wouldn't be the last time he would put Conan into a costume. It was like playing with fire, you just couldn't help yourself, but want to! Besides, without his gadgets Conan was as dangerous as a newborn kitten, a hissing and spitting ball of fluff.

He had never thought that being with Conan or Shinichi could be like this, that they actually had a chance to become really good friends. The more he was around the detective, the more he wanted them to become friends though, and it seemed to be heading in the right direction for now.

When they met at a heist before, all he had seen were vindictive pleasure, confidence, smug victory smiles or shock, grumpy glares and snarky comments, whenever he managed to get the better of the two of them. And while yes, he had never seen Conan as overly serious and obsessive (like certain blonds), Conan had managed more than any other to ruin his carefully laid out plans. He could laugh about it now, but at the time it really hadn't been funny. Especially since in the very beginning he had thought he had been thwarted by a pipsqueak wannabe detective. Well, the wannabe had been cleared up pretty quickly, it had not taken long for Kaito to be clued in that just because it was a child, said child was still a detective. But having a rival 10 years younger than you just wasn't good for the ego, even if it was kind of fitting for KID to have a rival that suited the name. The relief he had felt when he actually learned that the child wasn't really a child had been enormous, but he also had a very vindictive trait and didn't like being bested. Or tricked. Which was one reason why he had deeply enjoyed Conan's face when he had shown up as the boys alter ego.

It was fascinating to be around Conan now, when he let down his guard a bit. He had a very dry and sarcastic humor, even that horrible soccer-ball wasn't so bad when it wasn't aimed at your head.
Especially since it was one of the only times where Conan really looked like the child he was portraying on the outside. It seemed like the soccer ball was a similar addiction as magic was to Kaito. The pleasure of kicking that ball around seemed to relieve any tension that usually haunted the boy's steps. And even Kaito had to admit that Conan was damn good with a ball, even though he didn't have much enthusiasm for the sport. Even less after getting to know Conan. Wonder why.

Suddenly he had found a much different, even softer side to the detective, one he wouldn't really have guessed at when he had only known him from afar and through research through papers. In the papers he had found Kudou Shinichi to be rather arrogant and distant. And maybe he had been, but whatever Conan was facing by being turned to a child had cured him of that rather quickly. Maybe it was because he probably had to ask others to open the door now. Or needing a stool to reach the sink.

But seeing the small child stop to help a cat out of a plastic bag that had looped around the felines neck, even though he earned himself a few scratches while trying had been one of the many eye opening experiences. Of course he had known that Conan was animal friendly, he had after all cared for an injured dove during the Memory-Egg case. But that caring seemed to carry over to other people, children, adults, even criminals. It was... a little humbling to see Conan caring about strangers like he had known them for a lifetime. It gave Kaito a whole new view about just why Conan was often seen so serious, having seen as much as the little detective did while still managing to hold onto his strong belief in what's right and wrong.

He was also polite, not that he had expected different from Tantei-kun. And always willing to help others, no matter if it could be detrimental to himself. On a few occasions he had met Ran and gotten to talk to her a little more, not much but he did get her talking about a few cases, which he of course knew that Conan had been behind solving them.

Still, there were many sides to Conan he was getting to know, now that they met each other more often and outside of heists.

A sharper one as well. Which had surprised him, because he had always though that Conan was coming after him with everything he's got during his heists, but witnessing Conan solving a murder case had been eye-opening. Not that Conan was going easy on him, but he was not as serious on them as he could be on a murder case.

It also showed just how close he was to the police force, especially division One. Kaito shuddered to think just how many cases Conan must have stumbled across in the short two years he existed to know them that well already, that they didn't seem all that surprised to see Conan at the scene anymore. Instead they seemed resigned, as if Conan being on a crime scene was par for the course.

He remembered how it happened clearly. It had been a hot afternoon and they had been minding their own business, when suddenly a woman screamed. Kaito couldn't even react fast enough (and he was always quick on his feet!), because it seemed that as soon as the scream sounded, a switch had been flicked in Conan and he had dashed off, so swift and nimble because of him being so small
he could wiggle though the crowd a lot easier than Kaito. Besides, Kaito wasn't really sure if he wanted to be on a crime scene, when he didn't even have any papers on him. He hadn't gone so far as to forge papers for his Kaito Ishikawa identity, because he hadn't thought it necessary. Which in hindsight was a little stupid, when he was running around with Conan who attracted bad luck on a daily basis.

A woman had been stabbed in a toilet of a park garage.

Watching Conan, Kid couldn't help but appreciate the mind hidden away in the child's body. Conan commanded the adults around him like he had a script written before and now only had to pull the strings to get his puppets to dance to his tune. It was utterly fascinating, that Kaito couldn't take his eyes off him.

This mind... those sharp blue eyes... this was Shinichi Kudou, his brilliance shown even when hindered by a child's body. This was the man that cornered Kaito on a regular basis, when normally he had no problems making others do what he wanted them to. They were similar in that regard, yet different.

Still, it made him yearn to actually see Shinichi in action one day, or even have Shinichi in his real body at one of his heists. He was sure that would be a challenge to remember.

And then Conan's eyes suddenly sharpened. It was a look that Kaito hadn't ever really seen on his face, a similar one but not quite like this one, probably because Conan had never thought his actions warranted it. It reminded Kaito of whenever Conan figured out his tricks, or got to know whom he was disguising as. Seeing the gaze flicker between points, probably hints Conan had connected and just for a second he saw that intent gaze pass over him. Anyone who would look past the glasses and see that look wouldn't see an innocent child. That was Shinichi Kudou. And it was a look Kaito never wanted to see directed at him, since even a passing glance nearly made him step back. Sharp, angry, determined. That was a powerful intellect, compressed into such a small and almost innocent form.

Was this how Shinichi looked like, when he was on the trail of a criminal?

That gaze was dangerous. Like a predator you couldn't hide from, and it made Kaito shudder. Astounding how such a small human being could emit such an oppressing sensation, just by turning those clear blue eyes on another person. The glasses derailed that effect a little bit, hiding the startling gaze behind the light-reflecting lenses. Kaito doubted that anyone who did not already know about Conan's situation would figure it out, because by now Conan was very, very good at playing the innocent kid.

Suddenly he was glad that he had never provoked the detective to go after him with that kind of intent, like Conan followed real, violent criminals. Because anyone who was watched like this, was being torn apart, dismantled and analyzed to the last atom in their body. A scary thought. Even
scarier if it had been Shinichi Kudou with his eyes unhindered by those thick rimmed glasses.

But there was still a small voice inside him, that stirred his unease. All too often it seemed as if Conan willingly tried to keep the weight of the world on his own shoulders, to keep others from experiencing the pain it brought.

But who actually looked out for the now shrunken detective that was suddenly struggling with the much greater weight his small form could barely support?

Who had Conan's back, when he was plunging ahead? Because from where Kaito stood, that back seemed unprotected. And lonely.

Kaito didn't like it. And what he didn't like, well... that just needed to change.

C-O-N-A-N

When Conan got the chance to actually talk to Haibara in private, it was several days after his run in with Gin and Vodka. He had not been able to help himself and had returned to the location two more times, one time going so far as to go up to the floor again to take a few quick pictures with his phone, before quickly scurrying off before anyone saw him lingering around.

He had dreaded telling Haibara of the encounter, because he had been a bit too reckless and could have exposed their secret, if not for Kaito's quick handling of the situation. And he was grateful to the thief for that, if it hadn't ended with him in a skirt. He could hardly believe he had almost forgotten it – that would have been hard to explain to Ran.

But still, right now he was standing before Haibara, squirming under her wrathful stare.

“Come again?” she practically hissed, her arms crossed over her chest. It shouldn't be possible for her to be so intimidating, but somehow she managed it, even in child-form.

“I said, I've seen Gin and Vodka.” he wanted to step back and cower under the table, no matter if anyone would call him a coward for it. He would dare them not to do the same in his position.

“And followed them.” because other people didn't have to rely on her to get their old body back, which meant playing science-subject. And if Haibara was in a bad mood, she would poke and prod him with even less mercy than usual. The last time he had annoyed her she had been vindictive and had taken so much blood that he had been unable to move, without feeling dizzy. And then the cruel
girl had put a radio on the other end of the room, in a shelf he could only reach on a stool (which meant balancing and not swaying from blood loss) and started 'Barbie Girl' in repeat. Just out of reach. The headache had been his last problem, but the damn song got stuck in his head for the week that followed and he had the strange urge to behead any doll or puppet or barbie he came across, no matter if it was in a shop or Ayumi-chan's toys. He wondered if that was the start of going mad before a killing spree. Even if his killing-spree would only include any dolls that crossed his path (He already could see the headlines: 'The Serial doll-beheader attacks again!' 'Another unexplainable massacre found: Shopkeeper fears for life after finding his ware missing heads'), he was still a little worried about his mental state. Besides, it would hurt his image if he was ever found ripping innocent doll heads off. He could hardly explain it (And pointing fingers saying 'She made me do it!' would probably not help his case, child body or not.).

“Why would you do something like that?! What if they see you and make the connection?” Right now she was leaning closer and closer and her finger stabbed him in the chest several times, making him wince. She had a very pointy finger. Perfect for poking torture actually.

“It's all right, nothing really happened.”

“Nothing happened?! Nothing happened!!” she nearly screeched and her angry gaze was kind of targeting his throat, her hands suddenly seemed a little more claw like as she gripped and unclenched her hands as if she was just dreaming about wrapping them around his appendage. And squeeze. Hard.

Just to be sure he hunched his shoulders in defense and scooted back a little. Maybe he could still hide under the table. He would, dignity be damned, if he did not have to get past her first. It would be much, much easier to defend himself down there. Hopefully.

“What do you know?! You... youuuu....!” throwing her hands in the air she stomped around the table and grabbed the tea cup sitting there, hands shaking. Of suppressed desire to kill him or fear of discovery Conan couldn't discern. Both didn't sit right with him.

“I... I got away without being seen...” he hesitated, cringed when he decided to tell her the truth instead of keeping it a secret.

“Well, I was seen b-” the teacup shattered. Startled he jumped up, but Haibara had only dropped it and stared at him pale as a ghost.

It made Conan feel a thousand times worse, so he plunged ahead.

“I was a girl!”

“...”
Haibara blinked at him stupidly, which was a first and which he would enjoyed seeing in any other situation. Right now though he felt blood rushing to his face at such a quick pace that he felt a little dizzy.

“N-not... I mean... Oh god, it's not...”

“Come...come again?” embarrassed beyond anything else he had experienced since he had taken a bath with Ran at the beginning of being Conan, he let himself plop down on the couch again and buried his burning face in his hands.

“That came out wrong. That came out so, so wrong. No, I'm not a girl, no. I didn't mean, it... no. Just... no.”

“Make some sense, Kudou-kun...” it seemed that at least his outburst had calmed down Haibara considerately, because she kneeled down and picked up the biggest pieces of the teacup now.

“I... kinda met Kaitou Kid and he just...” Conan waved one hand, the other still over his eyes “Poof.”

“...Kaitou Kid dressed you as a girl?”

Miserably Conan nodded, just wanting the situation to be over. Without explaining anything.

“So. Kaitou Kid... just so happened to have clothes in your size with him and just so appeared where you just so met some Organisation members.” she had crossed her arms in front of her, looking decidedly unimpressed. The tapping of her foot said that she required an explanation.

“...” well shit.

It took some time and he more or less stumbled through his explanation. And he was not sure how but Haibara just managed to weasel things out of him and twist them to her own liking. How was talking over a Chat-App flirting? They did not flirt. It was... manly mocking. Or something.

And their meetings were not dates. Even if there had been ice-cream. Just two frien- ... riva- ... acquaintances meeting up.
After she had made him into a spluttering mess, she had the gall to say “I was joking,” which sounded more like she only said that to appease him. He had fallen to sullen silence then. At least she seemed to accept he would not tell her more about Kaito (and he had not mentioned that name, nor Ishikawa, preferring to stay with Kaitou Kid), and being happy about the thief not knowing of her existence yet.

When she went to get a new cup of tea, he thought he heard her say “Gives a new meaning to the Kid Killer now...” but choose to ignore it with an eye-roll.

“Anyways... as I said, there were research labs. I've noted down the names I remember, but I only studied the names across the hall...” he said unhappily.

“I've only got to see two names where they stepped out from.”

He reached into his bag and extracted a paper, reluctantly. When he had gotten over the shock of being face to face with his enemies and Kaito pulling him out in a slightly degrading way, he had noted the names down before his mind could muddle them up.

“I have no idea if the other lab has anything to do with whatever they were doing there...” and he hesitated again, looking at the paper before he slowly slid it onto the table towards her.

“Would you look at the names to see if any of them seem familiar?” he hated to involve her, knew that she despised thinking about her time in the Organisation and by doing so, he was reminding her of all of it again, especially her sister's death. If it could be helped, he would spare her. But she had declined the offer to go into the FBI's witness protection program, and choose to stay here. While he would try to keep her out of danger as much as possible, she was one of the only allies he could rely on, who knew his situation intimately. And she feared the Organisation far more than he did, since she probably knew far more about their cruelties than she would ever recount to him.

She looked at him, a calm and cold expression that seemed unreadable. After an eternity she picked the paper up and put it in her pockets.

It was answer enough.

At the same time he pulled the laptop nearer to him and searched for the laboratory names he had seen on the signs. He had looked at them before, and the names, as well as pictures of some teams were on the websites. He printed them out, while Ai watched him silently, her teal-colored eyes shadowed and lips pressed together.
“I don't know, if they are connected to the Organisation they might not use their real names, but maybe you will... recognize one of them on a picture.

“They wouldn't be so careless...” it was a sentence he had heard all too often from her and he sighed. He knew how careful those bastards were, but even their lucky streak had to end someday.

“I know it's probably for nothing, but not every member can be a... ghost. They must have members funding them, I mean, they even got a helicopter once. And all those weapons, the bombs... it's too excessive, that can't be easily financed. Of course there are other ways of getting money too... but it's still a chance that we might be on to something.”

She stayed silent, then nodded once, firm and determined and he couldn't help but smile at her.

Chapter End Notes

I'm very sorry it took so Long to post the new chapter. I've actually not really found the time to write much at all, due to real life being busy.
I actually wanted to write more, but decided I would rather post this now instead of editing it at least 5 more times and hopefully I will get on with the Story now.

I think the next few chapters should be rather important plot wise, so it will probably take a little more time again for the next update, because I'm undecided which points I want to cover first.
Again a very big thank you to Nayru, because she provokes me to write more :P
Without her this chapter would have remained in my sole posession for a few days *cough*weeks*cough* longer ^^

And a very big thank you for everyone who gave me a Review and continues to read the Story!
It happened on the way back from school. Really, Conan should have been prepared for it. He
should have. But since Kaito hadn't bothered him without sending him a text message beforehand in
those past few weeks of more or less regular contact, it had slipped his mind. So when an all to
familiar person appeared in front of the group, Conan stopped walking and thought with dread: Oh,
please no.

But yes. One Kaito Ishikawa was standing in front of him, grinning like a loon that had just won a
years worth of chocolate. Great.

Haibara took an instinctive step back, and then slid a bit behind him, clutching at his arm and digging
her fingers in. Ow. Nails.

“Conan-kun! There you are, I've been waiting... oh, hello again!” Kaito smiled at the detective boys,
then seemed to see the little red-head hiding behind him “Oh? I don't think we have met before...”
Kaito seemed genuinely interested, while the detective boys were eyeing him in suspicion, casting
glances at the frozen Conan and the unconcerned stranger.

Okay. So they were apparently doing this. Taking a deep – resigned – breath, wincing as the nails at
his arm were digging even deeper, he calmly introduces everyone. Again.

“Haibara, this is Kaito. Kaito, that's Haibara Ai, another classmate. You already know the rest of my
friends...” the detective boys greeted Kaito with caution, the last short meeting had apparently not
been enough to warm them up to Kaito. Or maybe it had to do with how much trouble they usually
found on a normal afternoon and any stranger was a possible murderer already in their eyes. They
grow up so fast...

It seemed that Haibara at least took notice that he wasn't all that worried about the guy, so she finally
let him go. Discreetly he rubbed his arm to get the blood flowing again.

Meanwhile Haibara was coming out from behind him a little and blatantly stared at the stranger. He
knew she was studying the thief, and probably felt a little unsettled. After a moment, she innocently
widened her eyes a little and asked “How do you know Edogawa-kun...?” and Conan winced.
Because... yeah. Not cool. This was so not cool.
“I'm a family friend from the US...” Kaito said, seemingly not noticing Conan's frantic widening of his own eyes, nor the subtle shake of his head. Yeah. Definitely not cool. Because Haibara was slipping behind him again, crooning an innocently for strangers, but to him obviously threatening “ohh..” way too near to his ear. Fingernails were digging into his arm again. It was a silent threat and a promise of a talk later on. Conan blinked. Why did he always get into these situations. Conan was sure it was entirely Kaito's fault. As always.

Kaito didn't seem to realize the byplay, or was just not showing it. It was hard to say with the thief, who was a master at showing exactly the emotion he wanted to show on his poker face. Right now he was happily chatting with the rest of the Detective Boys and had actually managed to get them to open up. Not that it took much. With only a few magic tricks he had them wrapped around his finger. Little traitors.

Haibara though... well, she played the innocent little girl. He did see Kaito cast a short glance in her direction every now and then. He was after all a first class actor himself and Conan wouldn't put it past him to realize something was different with Haibara. As for Haibara herself... well, right now he wouldn't be surprised if she actually had a very accurate suspicion who exactly Kaito Ishikawa was. Not after telling her about the incident with the Organisation and Kaitou Kid's involvement.

Finally they came to a cross road and Ayumi headed off with Genta and Mitsuhiko. Conan bid them farewell, stating that he would accompany Ai home. Which he did.

It was awkward. Kaito was trying to lift the mood and get Ai to talk to him, or make sense of her, while Ai did her best innocent and shy girl act that had Conan watch her in horrified fascination. He felt like a barrier between the two and was not sure at all how to translate between the two persons without letting either identity slip. While both sides wanted him to reveal more of the opposing site. It was horrible. When had this become his life again?

It was a very twitchy Conan that delivered one Haibara Ai to her doorstep and shuffled under her heavy, demanding gaze that seemed to promise horrible interrogations as soon as they were alone together in a room next time. Somewhere in his head he could hear the tune of barbie girl start up again and cringed. He did not know what to make of Haibara's satisfied face when she closed the door, but he thought it was her sadistic side showing her superiority over him. Evil.

He was not running. He was just doing a strategic retreat and if he had to pull Kaito on his hand to get him to walk faster, it was only because the thief was a menace and would get lost otherwise.
“So... Haibara Ai?” Kaito asked with a raised eyebrow. Conan only made a noncommittal grunt.

“Nice friend you got there...” another grunt. He was so not talking about Haibara. Who knew what torture-devices she would inflict upon him the next time if she thought he was a tattletale. Either this, or she would demand a hideous pricy handbag again, that would suck him dry on money for months.

“... something I should know about?”

“No.” at Kaito's disbelieving stare he shrugged uncomfortable and deigned to reply “It's not something you should concern yourself with. And it's not my place to say anything to you about her.” he frowned at Kaito “You are better off not sticking your nose in her business. Don't bother her, please.” while Kaito seemed to be a little insulted at the later – he was a gentleman thief after all – he did seem to contemplate his words. For about three seconds.

“So... is she your small girlfriend?”

“...” his aghast look just made Kaito chuckle.

After a while Kaito seemed to get the message that Haibara Ai was not a topic Conan would speak of. Except to warn him not to do something stupid. Well, he hoped Kaito did get the message, because he was very sure that getting on Haibara's bad side by... searching her underwear-drawer or wherever Kaito crazy brain would think something was hidden from him, was a fast way to hell on earth. It was for his own good, really. If he listened, which Conan kind of doubted.

Besides the rocky start, they did manage to make themselves a nice evening. At one point Kaito had somehow conjured up a football for Conan, that he was gladly kicking while Kaito fed some pigeons and both of them were exchanging snarky comments and veiled insults to either thieving business or detective lifestyle.

Okay, maybe you could call it friendly banter. Maybe.

At one point he had to call Ran to tell her he would be eating outside and Kaito would get him home.

He also found out something new about Kaito during dinner: he loathed green beans. How he knew that? Easy.
They kept popping up on his plate in small puffs of smoke, that were irritating itself but even more so since it was another mind boggling magic trick that drove him nuts. Kid was doing it on purpose. Conan swore he saw the damn thief smirk in the reflection of the window, but when he snapped his head around to confirm it, Kaito was picking at his food with an almost serene expression. It didn't help that he didn't like green beans either! His muttered “If you don't like green beans, don't get a meal that has them aplenty.” was ignored with a blinding smile and a comment about how he needed his vitamins to grow. Never before had he ever felt the childish urge to build a catapult out of eating utensils until this very moment. Just for the satisfaction to actually pelt the annoyance in front of him with the green ammo that kept appearing in his food. He was halfway through his imaginary construction when the vibrating of his phone dragged his attention away. Frowning he glanced down at his phone and frowned when he saw it was Haibara calling him. Shrugging his shoulders slightly he accepted the call and brought the phone to his ear.

“Hello?”

“Kudou-kun. Come over.”

Blinking again he listened to the beeping sound as Haibara had immediately hung up on him after saying her piece.

Well, okay then. Conan had the uncomfortable feeling it had something to do with the Organisation. While Haibara was often curt, especially towards him, her voice had a tense quality to it. Besides, with him having just recently asked of her to look into the research labs, it was even more likely.

Looking up at Kaito he contemplated what he could say about the ten second call.

Well... not much.

“I'm being summoned.” by the devil, as Conan jokingly thought “Gotta go,” getting a raised eyebrow in return, he huffed “It's something I asked a friend to look into.” at Kaito's still curious countenance he scowled and pointed a finger in his face “And you are not coming. Don't even think about it. I mean it, I will put a ball through your face that the grey matter will have to be scraped off of it!” after making sure Kaito looked suitably scared (a bit too much to be real but you take what you get) he pointed two fingers to his own eyes, then turned the gesture over to Kaito. He ignored the terrified comment about psychotic children uttering death threats to innocent ears.

“I mean it. I'm watching you. If you so much as get into my vicinity? It's death by ball.”

Kaito's innocent grin did not help matters at all, if anything it made Conan even more suspicious. He had a feeling this would not go over well.

♣ ♣

It didn't take long for him to get back to the Professor's house. Even though he suspiciously looked...
behind himself every now and then. At this point he wasn't sure if he was just overly paranoid or if Kaito was actually following him. Well, he had told Kaito he would call him later so he could bring him back to Ran's place (because explaining otherwise would be awkward), but he couldn't help but suspect the thief was not following his advice.

Haibara opened her door rather quickly, and Conan did not hesitate entering. Pulling off his shoes he turned around and studied her. She was pale, her eyes a little wider than usual and her hands held a little shake, that she tried to hide by forming fists.

Instead of going straight to the point he decided it would be best for her to calm down a little first. It didn't seem urgent, because she had let him remove his shoes in peace. That meant something had unsettled her. Which probably had something to do with the Organisation.

“Tea?” he asked her, reining back his impatience, and she nodded, turning around sharply and stalking off to the kitchen. Without further ado he trailed behind her, and while she made hot water he scoured the cupboards for two cups and sugar. While he carried it into the living room, he coincidentally left Haibara some time alone in the kitchen to compose herself.

When she came back, she seemed more or less her normal self, except a little paler than usual. Maybe it was the evening light.

She poured the tea into the two cups, then set down the teapot and sat down. Carefully she pulled one cup towards herself, cradling it between her fingers and staring into the cup as if it held answers.

Conan himself felt uneasy but tried to be patient. Silently he waited and sipped at his tea, while he occasionally looked over the rim of his cup to see what Haibara was doing.

After a few minutes she opened her mouth, rasped and cleared her throat.

“I... looked it over.” she said and hesitated, her fingers now clenching around the cup, until her bones showed white.

“And you were right. I... I found something I think.” she swallowed and looked up to him. When their eyes met he saw the raw emotions she usually buried deep within herself. Regret, self-loathing, shame, grief, darkness, sadness, despair. So many negative emotion, all left over from her own time as a member of the Organisation.

“It's not so much the names but-”
A little rustle from the window made both of them snap up. Faster than Conan realized, Haibara had
a gun in her hands and a shot fell, followed by a heavy 'THUD' as a body fell to the floor.

It happened so fast that Conan for once couldn't do anything more than gape in disbelief.
That disbelief turned into horrified realization when the action finally got through to him.

There was a person lying on the living room floor, not moving after being shot.

A very familiar person.

That had fallen down from the window sill.

He felt cold, as if his world was swaying from side to side and his throat was desert dry. The
realization hadn't taken more than a few seconds, and he had already half risen from his seat, before
he hesitated. Unusual for him, but somehow...

He needed several tries, before he got a word out "Did.." he cleared his throat again, his voice was
raspy "Did you just... kill him?" even now his voice wavered. He had more than once thought
Haibara would kill him (especially in the beginning, but who could blame him. Two words:
Hospital. Gun.). But after some time, he found that the possibility of her doing something like that to
be utterly unrealistic. To see her draw a gun, a gun that had been hidden *behind the sofa cushions*
just seemed... surreal. But not impossible, which was why his mouth suddenly seemed to imitate a
desert. It was only his firm believe that Haibara wouldn't just simply kill another human being, not
anymore and not now, that was keeping him from rushing over and applying first aid. Besides, it did
not yet smell of gun powder or blood. And no blood was gathering under Kaito's still form.

Haibara was tucking the gun back under the pillow and stood up. Giving Conan a haughty look she
sauntered over and pushed the body - Kaito - over with a foot "Don't be ridiculous.” she answered
while she smirked down at Kid who stared up with wide, but very much alive eyes “I just put him
out of commission.”

Kid's eyes were wide open. And he was breathing. Whatever he had been shot with must have been
able to put down an elephant if how fast it was acting was any indication. At least he was still
conscious, though if that was something good still remained to be seen.

Because Haibara was looking down at Kaito with a glint in her eyes that would have sent Conan
running. And Kaito couldn't move.
For a second he hesitated. He should help Kaito out...

...  

Nah.

After all, he had warned him.

Which was why he stood without a protest to grab the feet when Haibara mentioned him over, ignoring the betrayed look he was given from the thief.

When they had settled him in the torture chamber – aka laboratories in the cellar – Haibara left him. Conan winced, he knew what was coming.

“I pity you. Really, I do.” he said. Seeing a stray lock hanging in Kaito's face he reached out to brush it aside (he knew it was torture when you couldn't do it yourself), but hesitated at the quick flash of panic that stole across the thief’s face.

It would be easy to rip off the disguise. Take fingerprints, DNA or whatever else would please him, but right now Conan thought Kaito would get punishment enough. And somehow it would feel like cheating to find out Kaitou Kid's identity this way. And there would be the little problem of explaining where the evidence came from.

Reaching over the last of the little space between them he tucked the hair behind Kaito's ear and tried to keep the fondness he felt for the thief at bay. He was just relieved Haibara hadn't killed him for real. He was not getting fond of the magician.

“I tried to warn you to stay away from her.” he said mock seriously “you have only yourself to blame.” He gently patted Kaito's shoulder pulled back, looking to the door when small steps could be heard coming back.

When Haibara carried the CD-Player in and put in the CD, Conan allowed his lips to twitch. When it wasn't yourself in that position, it was funny. A little. Besides, that way they would make sure Kaito didn't hear any more of their discussion. They could hardly just throw him out while he as paralyzed, so this would have to do. Besides, Kaito did deserve it for invading his privacy like that.

Without protest he followed Haibara out, leaving Kaito to the torture of listening to Barbie Girl on repeat. It would be some time before Kaito would be able to move and shut off the music himself.

After that, Haibara and himself settled in the living room again, closing the window before any more uninvited guests decided to show up.
After that Haibara seemed to pull herself together, her face a stoic cold mask that he knew now to be false, but which seemed to be her way of dealing with the information.

“I looked through the information you gave me. It’s not much, the names were a deadend. But I followed your advise and looked the research institutes online. I … found pictures.” She had taken a paper that she had printed out before and tipped her finger on a mousy-looking, glass-wearing older man. Conan thought he looked around his forties or fifties. He was rather plain looking, the kind of person one would forget in an instant if you met him by chance.

Frowning he looked up.

“What about him then?”

He wondered at the shuttered look Haibara was giving him, her lips pressed together but slightly trembling.

“He was…” she seemed to struggle finding the right words, or uncomfortable talking about her past. “He worked with me. In part even trained me. Worked on the APTX 4869, long before me but after my parents. He was…mainly working on testing it on humans.” Her eyes got a wet sheen, but she refused to show any more of the horrible memories that were probably plaguing her.

“This man works for the Organisation. He's not a high ranked member, but he's loyal and ruthless. If he's there, and as you said Gin and Vodka were around... it is very likely he is still working on it. The drug.”

He didn't know if he should be happy to have a new lead or dreading what was yet to come. One thing for sure: He couldn't pull anything off without assistance. Haibara left for a short time, letting him mull this information over in peace. He sat cross-legged on the sofa, the print-out in front of him, while his mind churned. The tips of his fingers pressed together as he tried to look at his new lead from any possible angle. He was... impatient. But his time as a child had gotten him to curb his recklessness. A little.

Besides, any dealing with the Organisation needed careful handling. And a shitload of luck.

Already a plan was forming in his mind. A crazy, dangerous plan. One that could just work because of it. And sadly, that one needed time. But if it worked out...

Elated he sprang to his feet, he knew what to do, where to start, and the sooner, the better.

Five minutes later he sighed as he looked down on his phone again. Finally gathering his courage, he let the line connect and waited. A cheerful woman took the call, sighing again because what he was
planning was insane he finally interrupted her.

“Hey mom.” rubbing his eyes he continued “I need your help. Your's and Dad's.”

When this phone call ended, he felt giddy with elation, yet tired beyond measure. Rubbing his eyes he looked at the clock on the wall, but got distracted by a crash from downstairs.

…

Right.

He might have forgotten about Kaito.

Needless to say Kaito was not amused.

Neither was Ran when Kaito finally got around to deliver him home.

Chapter End Notes

Finally got around to finish this chapter.
I'm having a horrible time right now, so I can make no promises for when the next chapter is going to come out. It could be a week, it could be months or if I'm feeling particularly bad even longer.
This story is basically still on hiatus, as I don't want to get peoples hopes up for a fast update. I will continue to work on this story when I can, but real life is a mess at the moment and I'm not sure when... or even IF it will get better. My situation sadly changed drastically and this story is suffering because of it.
For another, I have to admit that at the moment I lack the will to write much at all. I've already had about half of this chapter finished before, which is probably the only reason why I got it ready after two months, but I am unsure about the next chapter in many ways.

A question for all: Do you want to get to the romance stuff faster, or do you like the extremely slow build up I've got right now? I do have some scenes that would wreak havoc with my story, but would get a bit more romance into it at the same time (Yes, you can blame Nayru for getting me to write some of that. Or thank her? She's mucking up my story! But I kinda like it.)

And another big thank you for anyone who gave me a review and especially for pamellka for trying to cheer me up. I hope you liked the new chapter!
It was Ran's big day. The karate tournament was selecting participants for the national championship, which Ran wanted to take part in. To say she was excited was an understatement, but she was also determined to get her place in the tournament. The only shadow on the horizon: Shinichi's absence.

She had needlel him endlessly on the phone to try and come and watch her, but it was simply not possible with his current situation. He had said to her that Conan would film it and he would watch it later on. She had accepted it after a while, unhappily and it had left him disgruntled, because he would have preferred to come as himself too. It had probably been too long since they had last seen each other, but when he went over to Haibara, she had been totally unimpressed by his reasoning for yet another pill (which he had already anticipated and was not surprised by, but he had to try, right?).

So right now he was talking to Ran, keeping her calm. Not really that hard to do since Ran was not a sore looser. It hardly mattered anyways because she was also very confident in her chances of winning, as was pretty much anyone who knew her. Conan pitied anyone that was put before her and thought differently because of her delicate stature. When he left her Sonoko was with him. She had made a big banner for her friend and had another classmate (bullied) into holding the other end of it. There were also several other classmates, that Conan hadn't seen in a while but avoided talking to. Once upon a time they had been his friends too, but life went on and on and now he recognized their faces but they seemed strangers after two to three years being absent from their lives. He tried not to dwell on it, but the hollow feeling still wormed it's way inside himself, a reminder of how his life had changed and how time was still passing and Shinichi’s life stood still, stagnant as if time had been put on hold just for him while everyone continued on with theirs.

Shaking those thoughts off, he clutched the camera to himself and decided to find a good place to watch and film the tournament as he had promised. He had to admit that he himself was a little excited for Ran, he could hardly keep himself from puffing out his chest when he looked over and saw Ran in her white martial art suit tightened by her black belt. It was ridiculous to feel proud of her but seeing Ran in action was always fascinating to Shinichi. As long as it was not used against him. He had often wondered how such a fragile looking girl could have such deceptive strength hidden in her slim form.

Checking the battery status and settings on the camcorder he dodged around people, before letting his head snap up when he felt eyes settle on him. Checking the crowd he frowned, then tried to look discreetly behind himself.

Just behind him a high school girl with long black hair and wine-red eyes. She was also really, really pretty.
And she was also staring at him, so it must be alright to stare back. Really pretty. Why did his head feel like it was stuffed with cotton candy?

Conan was shaken from his observation when another girl ran up to the dark-haired beauty and pulled at her sleeve.

“Akako-chan. Come on...! The best places will be gone if we don't hurry!”

Shaking his head confused he stared almost open mouthed at the copy-cat Ran that had just appeared beside nameless-beauty. Which seemed to attract the attention from the girl to him.

“Oh!”

Hey, that was the girl from Nakamori-keibu's office! His daughter! Had he really been so distracted that he had only now realized that? Conan frowned, it wasn't like him to be so slow on the uptake.

“You are that little kid that's always getting into that thief's way!” she sounded absolutely delighted “Conan Edogawa, right? Aoko knows you!”

She knelt down to him and now looked a little worried.

“You are not lost, are you? It's such a huge crowd. Are you here to cheer for someone?” Conan mutely shook his head before nodding and looking around again. He could still feel someone watching him and it was not the girl that Aoko named Akako-chan.

“Ran-nee-chan is in the tournament, so I'm cheering her on. I wanted to find a good place to film it.” holding up his camera he widened his eyes to seem more childish. The dark haired girl... she unsettled him a little, now that he was not looking at her anymore. It made him more cautious to keep up his appearance.

“Aoko's and Akako-chan's classmate is also participating, how about you come with us and we watch together?”

She offered him her hand and hesitatingly he accepted.
Kaito was in a predicament. He was balancing three drinks, for Koizumi, Aoko and himself. But just as he was about to join his friends, a small pipsqueak appeared in his field of vision and now...

Now he was stuck. He couldn't show himself in front of Conan without exposing his identity. Aoko would mop him if he didn't bring the drinks. Koizumi would... well. She was unpredictable. Curse him probably, but it's not like that was new. He could handle that, but Aoko's kicked puppy-dog eyes? Or maybe she would get out one of her stupid f-f-finny somethings. He couldn't risk the ankle-biter getting to know about that particular tibit of knowledge.

It was not fair. Why did the world suddenly work against him? He was a devoted follower of Lady Luck, when had he fallen to misfortune??

And that was how he was now stuck with Hakuba of all people. With three drinks. And Hakuba was raising an amused I-know-what-you-are-up-to eyebrow at him, trying to keep an awful smirk at bay and failing horribly.

Seemed like next week would be pink-hair-week for a certain detective.

“So, whom are you hiding from now, Kuroba-kun?”

Kaito pondered if he should make a try for rainbow colored instead. Showing nothing in his face he shoved a drink in Hakuba's hand, the detective fumbling around to catch the cup before it landed on his feet. Pity.

“I got... lost.”

“Sure you did.”

For now he settled to sipping on his drink and keeping a subtle eye on the area where a bespectacled child was squished between two females. He was not sure he liked Conan going near Akako, but wouldn't risk exposure just yet. Maybe he should prank Conan too for forcing him in Hakuba's company. However unknown it had been.

As it was he was enjoying the tournament and was once again astounded at Ran's skill. And very, very glad that she usually didn't use it against certain thieves. Dear god, dodging her would probably be a bigger challenge than dodging Aoko's mop. And hurt more if he failed.

There was just one moment that their eyes seemed to connect and Kaito thought he could detect... something in her eyes. Recognition? Hope?

He almost cursed when he realized that somehow his appearance had distracted her for a moment. He saw her take a hit to her shoulder and stumble, but she caught herself and managed to get a defense up again and retaliate. Leaning forward a little he frowned, she was keeping her shoulder covered. Had she been hurt?

He could not be sure from this distance, but when the match ended with her being the victor, she looked back at him and her face fell in disappointment.

He almost winced at the realization that from that distance he could be easily mistaken for Shinichi Kudou.

♠ ♠

Conan had seen her take the hit and had almost jumped out of the seat. He could clearly see that she had been hurt and was keeping her shoulder immobile while finishing the match with a kick. Still, he could see her rubbing the spot she had been hit, rolling her shoulder and wincing in pain. She was lucky that it had been her last match and thus she was finished for the day, or else she would have to bow out because of her injury. Right now someone was looking her over and talking to her, and Conan decided to say his goodbyes to his company and return to her because he was worried.

Rounding the last corner he skidded to a stop in front of her. She was sitting on the bench and smiled up to him, one hand at the shoulder.

“I did it!” she beamed and he couldn't help but grin back.

“You were awesome!” he told her sincerely but his gaze was drawn to her shoulder until she let out a huff.
“It’s not that bad and it really was my fault for getting distracted during the match. I’ll have to see a doctor to be sure I’m fit for the next tournament, but it’s fine.” she assured him with an easy smile, that made something relax in him. He knew she wouldn't lie to him about it. Besides, Ran was kinda horrible at lying or trying to keep something secret.

Plopping down next to her and putting the camcorder to the side he swung his legs “What was it?” at her inquiring gaze he explained “What distracted you?” his curiosity was piqued even more when she flushed a little and avoided his gaze “Ah... nothing really. I thought... ah... I thought I had seen... someone.” her shoulders slumped a little and she winced at her careless movement.

Still. Unsure if he should ask more he looked at her. Who could have distracted her during the match was a question that was burning inside him but... he had the feeling that he wouldn't like the answer. So he stopped prodding her and instead chattered about Aoko-san, bringing a smile back to Ran's face.

☀ ~ ★ ~ ☀

The tournament was over and Ran was almost glowing as she had been selected to participate in the national championship. Not that Conan had thought she wouldn't but seeing her this happy was contagious. He had however insisted that Ran go to a doctor to see to her shoulder, not in the least feeling guilty over acting more childish and scared that his Ran-nee-chan was hurting. She had folded like a badly built house under a hurricane.

That's how they found themselves in the waiting room of the Beika hospital, waiting to be called. It didn't take long for the doctor to show up and to beckoning them into the room. Blushing when Ran begun opening her blouse she quickly looked at the rest of the room. Noting the pictures on the desk and waiting, while the doctor examined the injury.

After an inspection the doctor said it was probably a sprained shoulder. From what he could see with a quick look at Ran's partially exposed shoulder, he had to agree. A slight swelling and discoloration showed the area of the injury well enough.

As of now, they couldn't do much. Ran got a shoulder sling and orders to take it easy for the next two weeks. If possible the injury should be cooled with ice.

☀ ~ ★ ~ ☀
About two days later he was finally able to make up some excuse to Ran to disappear for a whole weekend. It was horrible to have to wait for so long but he could not rush into a research facility of the Black Organisation without any preparations. As of now, Conan was on a little two-day trip with his parents, at least that's what Ran thought...

That he was really hiding out in his old home, only his parents – who promised to show up soon (whatever that meant in their language) – and Kaito knew.

Lying on his bed he enjoyed the warmth of the rising sun, chewing on a pencil while reading through stolen classwork that he had copied from Ran, as well as several textbooks that were now occupying more than half of his bedroom floor. It was hard to waste so much time in elementary school and still keeping up with the schoolwork of his actual age. He was sure that if he hadn't been ahead of the rest of his class back when he had still been in his old body, he would fare much worse now. As it was, he was convinced that his classmates and he were now about the same level, since he hardly found time to actually work through the stuff, even if he probably still learned it faster than most of them.

At least schoolwork was distracting him (a little) from the itching sensation of running off and doing something stupid. That and his phone that just went off. Curious he leaned over and snatched it off his nightstand.

[06:05] Arsene Lupin: „Urgh. Sun.“

Conan rolled his eyes in exasperation. While he himself was not a morning person per se, if he had coffee at hand he woke up relatively fast.

[23:08] Sherlock Holmes: „Quit complaining. It's weekend, it's early and I have to revise.“

[23:08] Arsene Lupin: „Sucks to be you.“

Conan snorted and rolled his eyes again. Like that wasn't old news.

[23:08] Sherlock Holmes: „You are only realizing that now?

[23:08] Arsene Lupin: „So... what's the problem then?“
Sherlock Holmes: „More that I have to piece together whatever I could get from Ran to guess at the schoolwork... it would be easier to have the complete notes.“

It was troublesome, his books helped of course but they also had a lot of – while interesting – unnecessary additions. He valued knowledge, but he also wanted to keep up with his grades and in his situation that sadly meant compromising. Even if he was often itching to know more, but those things he could look for afterwards. Right now he had to get the basics into his head, so that he would be able to do the tests his mother arranged for him somewhere in America. It was someone his father trusted, and had involved pulling a lot of strings to keep that quiet, since he had to play dead in Japan.

Arsene Lupin: “You know... maybe I could help you out... Let me get back to you later about that.“

Conan's ominous feeling at those words was well founded, because he had a visitor about 3 hours later. On his window ledge. Of his second story bedroom.

Another knock sent him scurrying over to let Kaito in, lest he had to explain why here was a dead teenager in the front yard of his home (that wasn't really his home) and where his parents disappeared to.

“Couldn't you have taken the door? You know, like a normal human being??”

Kaito shrugged and looked around the room curiously, noting all the papers sewn over the floor and books piling on the desk and bed.

“Been busy? And really... the door? Where is the challenge in that...”

Conan resisted the urge to roll his eyes again, instead he picked up the papers on the floor and set them on the table to make room.

“I really don't want to have the police come over because someone thought you were breaking in...”

A scoff behind him told him what Kaito thought about that.

“Besides, what are you doing here?”
Kaito put a few books to the side and settled on the edge of the bed. “It seemed like you needed some help?” he half asked and pulled his bag closer, opening it and taking two folders out. Puzzled Conan raised an eyebrow and took them when Kaito handed them over.

After opening them, his eyebrow climbed even higher and he pressed his lips together. School-notes. In handwriting. A quick look back at Kaito showed him that the thief was watching him carefully. A slight tension in his shoulders told Conan that this was a big deal.

Yes, the notes were only copies. But now he had Kaitou Kid's handwriting. He could probably find the school Kaito attended. And yes, Conan was sure Kaito was still going to school, they had to be about the same age. Never mind that there were probably finger prints all over those folders.

Weighing his options and more watching Kaito than looking at the gift, he let out a breath he hadn't noticed he had been holding.

“Thank... you... I guess.”

A bit of the tension left Kaito's form, probably because of the unspoken 'I-won't-use-that-as-evidence' and a grin spread over his face “What are friends for?” he asked and Conan felt a little strange hearing that said out loud. Because they were. Kinda. Friends. Who would have thought?

Besides, explaining to the police how he had come to get Kaitou Kid's school notes (never mind explaining why he had needed them and why Kaitou Kid had handed them over to him) would probably not get him far at all. The folders would only be useful if he himself wanted to find Kaito. And he didn't. Not using this method at least.

meye

It was evening now, and Kaito had left shortly after their talk. Conan was glad about it, since he did have a lot to catch up on and only so much time for it. The notes Kaito had given him were a great help so far. But even he needed a break and with a sigh he put away the stuff and headed to the kitchen. The bad thing about living in this house was, that he couldn't make light at night or else someone could get curious. He had therefore made himself comfortable in the cellar, but he still needed dinner. Taking some snacks – because he was too lazy to really cook (especially not in the dark), he went downstairs this time.
Munching on a sandwich he contemplated his future plans, especially concerning the Organisation. He needed to get inside that research facility and take a look around, see what they were working on. If Haibara was right, and if he was really, really lucky, he might get a chance to actually get the poison that had shrunk him to that body. He was convinced that Haibara would be able to make the antidote then. Yes it would still take time, but it would no longer be a question if or if not she would find it and only a question of how long it was going to take.

The thought alone made him restless, to have his own body back... it had been so long. It's not that being a kid was all horrible, and he would probably miss the friends he had made, but... he was older! And it was aggravating to be treated like a kid all the time.

Without himself really realizing it he had grabbed onto his mobile phone and had selected Ran's number. He … wanted to call her. The last phone call had been horrible, having to refuse to come to the tournament over and over again, Ran being frustrated that he wouldn't give her a better reason than 'I've got a case' and himself struggling to find a suitable excuse. He wanted to make it up to her somehow, for not being there all the time.

Chewing his lower lip he thought about what he could do. He couldn't go see her, it was simply out of the question and Haibara wouldn't give him a pill for that. The only interaction they could have was over phone and you couldn't do much with that.

Looking for inspiration he let his gaze wander around the room, until it landed on his laptop. Standing up he went over and turned it on, an idea sparked. It took some searching, but he finally found what he wanted. Grinning he rushed to get his bow-tie, then got around to call Ran. It rang several times before she picked it up.

“Yo, Ran!” he greeted her, and winced at the menacing “Shinichi.” he got in return. Okay, so maybe she had not forgiven him.

“So you finally deign to call?” oh. Yes. That could also be a reason why she was mad at him. He had congratulated her as Conan. And totally forgot to repeat it as Shinichi.

“Ah...” sheepishly he coughed a little “Sorry, sorry. I was... busy. I got the video from Conan though and watched it!”

A small pleased sound came through the line and Shinichi grinned when she finally let out an impatient yet eager “And?”
“You were amazing!” he was as sincere in that declaration as he had been as Conan, then he chatted a bit about the tournament, glad that they seemed to be over their argument. Mostly he let Ran talk and listened patiently, when she mentioned her shoulder he asked how long it would take to heal and told her to rest it and that her father should make the food for now, so that she could keep her arm as immobile as possible.

Finally he got to the reason he called.

“I know I’m not around enough, but I think you mentioned something about a movie you wanted to see? It’s... well, it’s not the same but if you want, we could... maybe stay on the phone and watch it together?” he tried to sound nonchalant but grimaced when he realized there was a very obvious hopeful tilt in his question.

For a moment it was quiet on the phone and for once Shinichi was rather insecure about what to do. He had thought the idea had merit, he wanted to do something with Ran as Shinichi, however... it really was not much, was it? He begun to get nervous, when a very soft “I’d like that...” came over the phone.

Then he was beaming like an idiot (and rather glad no one was around to see it.).

He knew from being Conan that she had just bought the film herself. He had simply bought it online and had just now finished loading it on his laptop.

They started the film together. It was not the same as going to a movie together, but nevertheless Shinichi enjoyed just trading comments on scenes with Ran while watching the movie.

When the film ended and they hung up he was very hopeful that maybe soon he would have the antidote in his hands and could return to being Shinichi full time.

Chapter End Notes

Okay. I actually thought this would take longer to update. However I did get some really nice reviews and just couldn't resist writing a little each time. And today I just got really into it and finished the rest.

I should probably do other stuff though T_T More not-so-much-fun-stuff. But yeah.

Anyways, I know this chapter does not have a lot of Kaito/Conan interaction but you will just have to live with it. I am really curious how you like the chapter and any interaction between Ran/Shinichi :) I don't write a lot as Ran and I am trying to make
her likable.

Other than that: I have no idea how a Karate tournament works. At all. I tired to google it and lost my patience and if anyone feels bothered by my vague tournament, feel free to educate poor me. Also: I've never had a sprained shoulder. I googled that too. So if anything with that one is amiss, well... again, feel free to educate me :P

Well, can't tell you when the next chapter will come out, however I have made plans for the next few ones. Let's hope I manage to keep to them and we might get to the end of the serial killer case this year xD
Kid? Meet my other Stalkers.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

After school he had separated from his friends to take a slightly longer route and come by place where the last serial killer victim – and coincidentally the research facility of the Black Organisation were both stationed. He spent some time on the square, eating ice cream even though he didn't like it very much (he had selected lemon but it was still too sweet for his tastes), just to have an excuse to linger and watch the entrance of the building out of the corner of his eyes. But even after he spent around two hours loitering around, nothing very interesting happened and while he itched to go inside and explore, he knew he couldn't. Better not attract attention, not to himself nor his interest in the facility. With heavy heart he turned away to head back home, if his plan was to work he would have to wait.

Humming a song of Two-Mix new album he put his skate-board on the ground and lazily made his way in the direction home, deep in thought. About half way home he felt himself being watched and after making several turns, he was sure he was being followed. Tensing slightly he discreetly took his time to look at a toy-store window, alarmed after his evening of watching something connected to the Black Organisation that he had somehow drawn attention. Catching sight of the person staring at him, he once more decided to take the longer route home. His real home this time.

☆★K★☆

There was a dark clothed figure, trailing behind an unsuspecting child-detective. Kaito narrowed his eyes at him and seethed. Whoever that creep was, he would rue the day he decided to make Conan his target. For a while he followed them, changing disguises was as natural as breathing while continuing to keep an eye on both Conan and the man following at a good distance behind the child. He couldn't interfere in a street this open, without possibly pulling innocent bystanders into a situation. How Conan could attract such bad luck was beyond him.

When Conan took a turn into an empty street Kaito was not sure if he was relieved or wanted to shake the child-detective for being reckless. That Conan had to know by now that he was being followed was not even a question to Kaito, it was not like the man was very stealthy and if Conan could pick him out in no time, this should be no problem for him either.

Getting ready he appeared between them with a poof of smoke, throwing two egg like devices at the stranger who swiftly stepped out of the way. Growling he readied another one, but a small hand grabbed his sleeve and pulled, nearly tripping him sideways in surprise. Glancing down he saw a horrified Conan hanging there.

“Would you stop that?!?” the high pitched voice split his attention, one part focused on Conan, the other at the man, that was so far not doing anything that could be seen as threatening. That's why he turned a little more to Conan to frown down at him.
“That guy was following you! You gotta be more careful!” he still didn't trust that person, despite the man not making any move that would seem threatening.

A moment or two Conan's mouth worked silently, before a pained expression crossed his face and he pinched the bridge of his nose.

“Dear god... Kaito, that's my dad!”

And that's when Kaito got a better look at the suspicious person. Well, could anyone have blamed him for reacting that way if a male in sunglasses and dark trench coat was trailing Conan who attracted trouble unlike anyone else Kaito knew? Besides, Kaito had an averse reaction to trench coats. And hats. Way too much like a certain snake for his comfort.

“Uhm.” there was still the problem of explaining his reaction to Shinichi's father now, who had at least taken off the sunglasses and stared at Kaito in a way that made him uncomfortably nervous. First order of business was to make his pellets disappear and innocently looking back at the man, while his mind whirred at the new turn of events. How had he himself come to be this reckless?? How would he explain this? His only excuse was that he still felt a little on edge for the last time Conan had put himself in some kind of danger by almost facing those two man in black in the research building.

And then Conan's dad smiled, eyes curving and stretching a hand out towards him. Cautiously Kaito took it and wondered why Kudou-san was eyeing him with an 'I-know-something-you-don't-know' look while his lips turned up in a mischievous smile. Even Conan seemed to eye his dad suspiciously. It couldn't be that Conan's father knew who he really was? Well, it was not so far fetched. As far as Kaito knew it was Conan's dad who came up with his acronym Kaitou Kid. So he had at least some contact with his father. Probably.

“Always nice to get to know Conan's friends.”

“Uhm... pleasure?”

Conan scoffed beside him.

Then they proceeded to the Kudou mansion, while Kaito for once felt really uncomfortable in this situation, especially since every time he looked, Kudou-san was watching him. It was creepy.
Finally arriving at the house Conan opened the door with his key, holding the door open and raising an eyebrow at Kaito “You want to come in for tea?” Kaito shook his head, seeing this as his chance to escape and get his bearings back. Besides he was sure they had a lot to tell each other. From what he heard Shinichi’s parent’s rarely came back to Japan.

✿ C ✿

“And where is your beautiful wife?” Conan asked sitting on the couch in the living room, swinging his feet and holding a cup of coffee. His eyebrow was raised and he kept looking around. Where was his mother? Did his parents argue again? He needed her for his plan to succeed.

“Your mother is very enthusiastically preparing.” Yusaku said and Conan thought he was laughing at him, if the small upturn in the corner of his lips was any indication “You offered her a lifetime opportunity, of course she is not going to waste it.”

Dread. He should have known. Maybe it wasn't too late to run yet? Already he was eyeing the door with longing, but he shook it off. He would endure the indignity for his plan to succeed.

“After all, when she tried to -” even Yusaku needed a moment to find the right word, mouth still twitching slightly in amusement before he settled on a pronounced “- teach you when you were younger and you refused her almost violently.” Conan shuddered and rubbed his arms. Those were memories he had always tried to block out. They simply hadn't happened. Ever.

Except now it would be useful to have the know-how.

“That had nothing to do with teaching.” he groused out sullenly “She just wanted to play dress up and thought I was too young to protest.” well, he had to admit that maybe some things would be useful to know. But only because of his situation right now. Back then he had been totally in his rights to refuse to take part in that madness. Not that he had escaped unscathed.

“Well, now that you... reconsidered, she is totally going wild. I don't think I have seen her in such a shopping madness since we found out you regressed in age.”

Yes, he had gotten a lot of clothes and even a few games and other stuff once his parent’s had agreed to let him live at the Mouri's. Rubbing his brow in an attempt to stave off the coming headache, he wondered again if it was too late to back out. But still, he did think it would be useful to refresh what
he had tried to repress before: Any acting training. His mother had tried to teach him once, but he had thought it unimportant, more interested in crimes and mysteries and solving those than learning how to act and disguise. Now though he could use it, if his mad plan was to succeed, he needed to learn how to act and disguise. At least to have the rudimentary skills in them would be essential. The better he was able to act and disguise, the more successful would his (probably incredibly risky) plan be.

When his mother returned three hours later, he called Ran to tell her he would spend one more night sleeping at with his parents in Beika-Hotel, so she didn't need to worry. Meanwhile he was eyeing his mother warily as she had an unholy gleam in her eyes and several very big shopping bags in her arms, more waiting just outside of the door.

He had been right. This would be hell.

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Two days later he was once more meeting Kaito after school. He was exhausted so he didn't immediately notice Kaito staring at him strangely.

Kaito squinted down at Conan, mouth working wordlessly in a rare display of uncertainty of what to say. Conan stubbornly glared back. Finally he seemed to get his courage up to a level where he managed a very faint question to the small (but possibly only a minimal distance from a psychotic breakdown away) child.

“Is that Mascara?”

“Don't ask.”

Chapter End Notes

Heeey, yes I know. I've taken a long, long time to actually update this story. I admit I got distracted writing my other story BC which is almost finished now. (Of course just at the last chapter my inspiration is failing me.)

Well, this chapter turned out shorter than I liked, but I can promise a longer and more exiting chapter next I think. This had to be done and I've fiddled with it for a long time, so I guess I'll just post it before I actually work it to death or simply delete it in a fit of insanity.
Anyways, yes I'm still alive. Already working on Chapter 18-21, you can see the progress I made in my profile. :)

**Reckless Rescue**

Chapter Summary

"I confess that I have been blind as a mole, but it is better to learn wisdom late than never to learn it at all."

- Sherlock Holmes

**TRIGGER WARNING: This chapter contains a description of attempted rape!**

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

“Shinichi! It's just a school festival... besides, you have already missed enough school as it is, how do you expect to finish school after such a long time...?" Ran sighed into the phone in exasperation. Conan couldn't really fault her for it, he had been absent for a long time and his excuses were flimsy at best. It was tiring to think up new ones all the time so right now he was simply outside of Japan and thus had an excuse for not coming back for a long time.

“I can't just come back.” He reiterated for the umpteenth time and resisted the urge to rub his eyes. He was outside in the telephone-box and holding the bow-tie with his other hand.

“I wish I could, really Ran. But I'm not even close to Beika right now.” he felt bad lying to her but after all this time, being far away was his only 'good' excuse for not visiting her “Don't worry about school, my parents arranged something for me.” true enough. If he got away, he did have his study sessions in his old home and recently he had Kaito's notes, which were a great help. Much better than the parts he managed to copy from Ran in secret, while having panic attacks of being caught and having to explain himself. Would be hard to do, so he had stuck to trying to copy things only when Ran was known to be out of the house. Then all he had to do was hide the evidence and hope to get another chance soon.

Of course his parents tried to help too, occasionally, sending him books and other stuff, but self-study was a little harder than sitting in class, especially if you didn’t have much time for it in the first place.

The silence on the phone was telling: She was not at all happy about it and running out of patience with him.

“I'll... I'll try to visit someday...” even as he said it his stomach twisted. He had no surefire way to 'come back' without Haibara giving him an antidote, and she wouldn't give it to him for such a petty reason as visiting his childhood-friend and romantic interest.
Another sigh came through the speaker in his hand “Okay. Okay, Shinichi...” she seemed to hesitate before adding “I'm sorry for pressing the issue... I just...” he waited patiently for her to find the words “I... I miss you. Terribly.”

Feeling the heat crawl up his face (and knowing that Ran was probably resembling a tomato by now), he swallowed. If his voice was a bit thick he hoped it couldn't be heard through a phone-call.

“... me too. I mean... I miss you too. I'm working on it... I don't know when but... I'll come back.”

The silence was this time was not filled with tension. Clearing his throat he looked out at the street to distract himself a little, feeling his cheeks glow from his admission.

“Uhm. I have to go now.” he said reluctantly, but also to cut off the now embarrassing phone call “I-I hope your shoulder get's better soon. Say 'hi' to Conan from me!”

“Ah, yes! Yes, I will. Have... have a good day!” Ran sounded just as relieved as Conan felt at the change of topic.

Smiling a little he ended the phone call and let his shoulders slump in relief. Calling Ran was proving harder and harder to accomplish. He hated their situation and he didn't like lying to her. It was necessary but sometimes he wished...

No matter now. Shouldering his bag he headed for the agency and stepped in.

“I'm hooome!” he shouted and pulled his shoes off in the entrance-way.

“Welcome back. How was school? And your time at Professor Agasa's?”

“Fine, fine! The Professor had some cool new stuff to show me and the others...”

“Shinichi called. He said to tell you 'hi'. ” smiling Ran stepped out, carrying a duster in her hand that had Conan scowling at her.
“You shouldn't do that. Rest.”

Rolling her eyes she waved the duster around a little, before quickly stopping as dust swirled around her “I'm handling it with my good arm. Don't worry.” but all the same she put it away with a slight smile at Conan’s concern.

“You want to come with me to the doctor again?” she asked as she absentmindedly stacked a tilting staple of newspapers on the desk.

He shook his head.

“I'm heading out meeting Ayumi and Mitsuhiko. Genta has a stomach ache and we want to visit him.”

* ~ * ~ *

Several days later he was meeting Kaito again, though he was reluctant to admit it to Ran, as he didn't want to make Kaito Ishikawa into a regular appearing person in his life. There was still no telling how Kaito and him would continue to meet. And Ishikawa was a fake persona, that could very easily be dangerous to his secret identity. How would he explain a fake family friend? Someone like Hattori would look through that excuse easily, and one misstep (not that he actually thought Kid would make such a mistake but it was still a small risk) and Ran could easily get suspicious again. It was always a coin-flip if he could throw her off his scent again... and each time proved more difficult than the last. So far he had been lucky. That didn't mean he could continue to squirm his way out of it...

So for now he would try to make Kaito Ishikawa into a rare visitor. Trusted, due to being a family friend but not around too often. That should do. If Kaito didn't have other plans, which Conan thought was entirely possible.

Their's was a normal outing this time. Well, normal for them. Conan had to admit he was getting comfortable being around Kaito, safe in the knowledge that the thief knew how to keep a secret (much better than Hattori at least.) and having someone to hold an intelligent conversation with.

It was easy talking to Kaito, who always had something funny to impart or another magic trick to show. Even though he could really overdo it with those tricks, especially in front of children or an audience. Or when he got bored. It was a little amusing to watch, but keeping still was just not Kaito.

Conan was convinced it was the amount of sugar that Kaito had to work off somehow, that kept him
from sitting still.

This time though they were in the park, lazily enjoying each other's company, bantering back and forth. And it was enjoyable, if he ignored the niggling in the back of his mind that Kaito was a criminal (which was sometimes a little hard to do since – as long as they were alone – Kaito seemed to enjoy bringing up stuff from his heists too). His eyes still sought out any piece Kaito touched, knowing there could be fingerprints all over it, but so far he had managed to repress the urge to put a sticky tape to it. It's not like he could go to the police and tell them 'Hey, I've got Kaitou Kid's fingerprints right here' as he had no way to explain or proof it.

He was not entirely sure if he still wanted to or if he just pretended to go through the motions to satisfy himself.

Currently he was kicking a ball Kaito had conjured for him from whatever black hole he was hiding under his clothes (by now Conan refused to continue to break his mind trying to find out the trick behind it, he was sure he would find out one day), thinking about his case and the Black Organisation and whatever else was occupying his spare time. His plan for the Organisation was frustratingly slow going, but his acting training – while unmentionably horrible and if his mother ever showed the photos around, he would bury himself gladly to escape the shame – was coming along. He was far from being a pro, probably would never be and never really like it as he preferred the truth, he could conceal his emotions and probably fake them a little better too. As being Conan had schooled him unconsciously already in the art of faking being a child, it had actually not been all that difficult to apply it in other ways too.

The hard part was the disguising bit. He was not very creative and very, very slow. Compared to his mother, or better yet Kaito, he could be likened to a snail while they were as quick as a flap of a hummingbird's wing. He was... getting a little better. Not much but it would have to do.

On the other hand his father and Professor Agasa had banded together for Conan's second request. That project – a virus – actually was almost finished. If Conan found the time he would soon look it over and hopefully be able to see if there was anything wrong with it or if he needed any other adjustments for his needs. He would have liked to show it to Kaito – the app he had created was indicating enough that he had an understanding in programming – but, as he did not want to make Kaito suspicious or even in any way involved with the Organisation, he refrained.

Looking back to where Kaito was seated on a park-bench he nearly swallowed his own tongue. Because where Kaito had sat a moment ago was now a girl with a skirt, long legs crossed (did Kaito shave himself?!) and being in the process of applying make-up.

“What the hell?!” looking up and down the figure Kaito portrayed, he felt hot, curling... anger, surely it was anger welling up inside him (as well as a healthy amount of embarrassment). Was the thief
mocking him?!

“What do you think you are doing, dressing up as Ran. Badly at that!” the skirt was too short and Kaito’s legs... and... looking like Ran...

Grabbing the bridge of his nose he took a deep breath in, his cheeks already felt warm. Whatever insanity had infected Kaito now, he wanted an explanation.

“Explain. Now.”

Kaito meanwhile had frozen, the amethyst on his armband dangling from an aborted movement. He had dressed up as a woman, that looked startlingly similar to Ran with the dark brown, long haired wig. But his confused expression cooled some of the anger Conan felt.

“What...? I didn't dress up as Ran...” Kaito looked down at himself and frowned “I was actually thinking of maybe playing bait for that serial killer, even though the chance is low that he will bite. We don’t even know where he picks them up. Or why. Or at least try to get a picture of what he went after, I do that best by thinking myself into a person and...” shrugging his shoulders he made a gesture towards his outfit “… that just came out... you have been talking about that case for the last few meetings and I thought I might try to help...”

While Kaito was talking Conan felt dread pool in his stomach. How could he have been so oblivious? All the women, they all fell into the same profile. And Ran, if she actually put on some make-up, would also fit perfectly.

Suddenly he froze completely, blood draining his face. His mind went into overdrive, connecting more and more pieces that would also fit Ran. Several – maybe even all victims participated in a tournament.

Every single victim had practiced some kind of sport. They had all participated in tournaments – different ones but they still took part in them. And had all gotten injured during it.

Just like Ran.

That was the serial killers pick-up method, the victims came to him. A doctor.
Thinking back to the one visit he tried to recall his surroundings from back then, blending out anything in his immediate vicinity – like Kaito – to concentrate solely on his thoughts. Didn't Ran's doctor have a picture of a woman on his desk that had an uncanny resemblance to all the victims? A woman that had bright make-up, but if Conan tried to imagine her without it she did resemble the rest of the victims.

Or Ran.

Of course he could not be completely sure about it until he looked up the doctors or hospitals the victims had gone to.

But... but if he was right... didn't Ran just have a check-up a few days ago? Surely it was too much of a coincidence, right?

Then again... when had they not somehow gotten involved in whatever dreadful circumstances seemed to cross their path?

With a churning stomach he pulled out his phone and before he could think much about it called Ran's number. He needed to make sure she was all right.

“Moshi-moshi?” breathing out in relief he relaxed.

“Ran-nee-chan.” he said, then realized that he had no idea what to say.

“Conan-kun! Something the matter?”

“Uhm... uh... n-no I just... I just wanted to call to tell you I'll stay a little later with K-Kaito.”

He heard her hum into the phone.

“Is that so? What about dinner? I just went shopping and wanted to make some of your favorites...” in the background Conan could make out the rattling of the trains. He smiled a little, knowing that Ran had probably been shopping with Sonoko and decided to take the time after to get the things for dinner. Then he frowned.
“You went shopping? What about your shoulder?”

“Don't worry! I've got two arms, you know?” she laughed easily into the phone but apparently got distracted by something – Conan could barely make out someone talking to her. It was not Sonoko, but Ran only said “Be home before eleven though, and if you do get home that late, make sure Kaito-kun feeds you! I'll see you later Conan-kun!” and she hung up.

Bemused he stared at the phone. She seemed all right but Conan felt... still unsettled. Shaking himself he frowned at the phone, the soft beeping of the hung up call still going on.

“She's okay... I just... I just realized how similar Ran is to the victims...” he explained to Kaito and clutched his phone.

Maybe the realization had shocked him? But... no, it was not the first time Ran had been in danger and she seemed well, so why was his heart still pounding like a scared rabbit's?

He was missing something? Again. Frustrated he closed his eyes and tried to concentrate, he knew he was almost at the point where he connected all points.

Shushing Kaito he picked up the ball, kicking it absentminded from one foot to another, to his head and back. His mind was whirring like crazy, picking at the clues he had and sorting through them.

Sport. Gymnastic, yoga, tennis, sport teacher, athlete. Ran was doing Karate.

Dark, long hair. Similar height, similar age, similar build.

They did not use make up? At least from the pictures of Satsuki Honodera she had been without any kind of make-up. It was the serial killer that applied it.

Flowers.

Tournaments.
Injuries.

The doctor. And the picture in the doctors room, startlingly similar to the victims and especially similar to the way the serial killer put on the make-up.

...

Who was the person Ran had been talking to? The ball rolled to the ground as Conan lost interest in it, trying to remember the voice barely heard in the background. Conan had believed it to be a male, a stranger due to the ‘Excuse me Miss...?’ he had barely caught. But the voice... it was blurred due to the phone call but... but there had been something that reminded him... of Ran's doctor. A small lisping that was distinguishing enough for Conan to make the connection.

Suddenly he felt sick. It might be nothing but-

With shaking fingers he pressed the call button again and waited for Ran to pick up. He waited until the mail box picked up to record a message. He tried again, with the same result.

Cursing he snatched up the skateboard. It might be nothing, Ran might just be in the subway and not have any signal... but...

Better safe than sorry.

“Call the police! Tell them Ran might be the next serial killer victim.”

Jumping onto the skateboard he activated the turbo engine, before Kaito had much of a chance to jump at him and prevent him from disappearing.

His mind was in a state of panic that came with having one of his friends in danger, knowing he was on a time limit to save them, but calm enough to pluck at the evidence his mind had collected and try to deduct in a clinical cold way where the killer would take Ran. As it was he neglected to tell Kaito much else, especially since he only had little to go on himself. He knew where Ran had most likely went get her shopping done – especially shopping for dinner. He had heard the subway-station she had passed in the background, just before Ran had hung up. That meant she was probably at the next station, or one of those after that one. If the killer did try to lure her away, he would need a secluded place for setting up the murder. But close enough to satisfy his need for attention to his crimes. It was evening, the subways were full, but Ran knew the doctor. Who knew what he was using to lure her away?
Leaning forward he yelled out warnings to passerby's as he speed up as much as he could, already having a good guess where to go.

The station before Ran would normally get off there was a construction site nearby. If Conan had to guess, that would be where the killer would take Ran if he wanted a secluded space for the murder but still be near enough to make a presentation out of it. At this time of the day, late afternoon and early evening, it would be abandoned.

It was still possible that Conan was wrong, but his gut feeling seldom led him astray.

Taking as many shortcuts as he could and speeding over a street with a red light – almost causing a traffic accident with his haste – he jumped down the stairs of the currently abandoned part of the subway-station. His skateboard made enough noise to make him wince, but if the killer knew someone was here, he might abandon his plan. The sound carried in the empty halls and Conan frantically looked around.

Spying an unlocked door he turned his board in that direction, passing through it – and having the air driven out of him by an elbow appearing in midair.

The skateboard skittered over the ground and smashed into the wall before clattering to the floor, the wheels turning uselessly in the air as Conan himself fell to the ground gasping for air. Disoriented he shakily tried to get up. Footsteps came closer and he scrambled, trying to raise his arm and get to his watch. Before he could a foot came down on his arm, grinding down until Conan let out a scream. With anxiously fluttering heart he heard the watch give a cracking sound, as the foot raised and smashed into his side, causing him to slide over the floor until his back met a wall.

Coughing and trying to get any air into his lungs he instinctively curled up, protecting his stomach and sides as best as he could, before uncurling and trying to at least get up to his knees.

“S-stt-op”

Another kick and he felt his ribs protest, maybe even crack, as he was forced down again, his cheek pressing against the cold, dusty floor of the construction site. The killer was showing no mercy, probably enraged that someone had interrupted him. There was a foot pressing down on him, driving the air out and forcing him to take shallow gasps to get any air into his lungs at all.

Finally his sight cleared enough to make out the slumped form of Ran on the other side of the corridor, lying deadly still. His heart skipped a beat in fear. He could not tell if she was dead or alive.
Already there was make-up on her face and-

The weight on his back disappeared and he greedily sucked in a huge breath. The leather shoe stepped into his view and blocked the sight to Ran.

“You little brat!”

This time Conan managed to roll away a little, but with a wall in his back he had not much space to evade the next kick, but he managed to block it with his arms instead of taking another hit to his side. His watch was useless, the skateboard probably broken too from the impact. But he still had his shoes and his ball – if only he could get up to his feet.

Scrambling he managed to get to his knees again, but while he avoided another kick he was not fast enough to escape the hand that grabbed his hair and pulled. It had the benefit of getting him to his feet, but it hurt like hell and prevented him from reaching the switch on his shoes as he uselessly kicked out, sometimes hitting the man but mostly doing no damage at all. A knee drove the air out of him for a third time, leaving him spluttering and weak in the grip of the man as a hand closed around his throat.

“I'll show you, daring to intervene! I'll make you watch and kill you slowly!”

Gasping for breath he clawed at the tightening hand around his throat, trying to pry the fingers away and get some oxygen into his lungs. Already black spots were dancing in his vision and he kicked and struggled but with the strength of a six-year old he was in no shape to fight off an obviously trained, healthy adult.

An adult that had just taken out a... a syringe and as Conan's movements went sluggish from the lack of air he plunged it into his carotid artery. The effect was almost instant, as Conan was in a child’s body and the dose probably to strong, even though the doctor had not used all of it, clearly intent on keeping Conan alive for a little while.

Conan could feel his body going numb, his movements that already lacking strength stilled until he helplessly hung in the grip like a broken doll. Though the doctor allowed him to breath again and even chuckled as he laid Conan down, almost carefully turning Conan's head to look in Rans direction as Conan was unable to do anything.

He had never been so terrified before as he realized just what the killer had planned.
Make him witness the rape and murder of Ran.

After which he would be killed too, if whatever he had been injected with would not stop his lungs from working before it came to that. But right now he wanted to scream, wanted to curse himself for not being more careful. Not calling the police or... or waiting just a moment to explain more to Kaito. Never before had he felt so stupid, though he also knew that had he been a moment later, Ran would surely be dead. If she wasn't already.

“pl..S.. on't........” he tried to talk, tried to beg. He could barely form words, his tongue felt alien and thick and heavy. His body felt disconnected, no matter what he tried it would just not move. Not even a finger.

He was ignored as the killer turned back towards Ran.

Helplessly enraged and terrified he watched as the serial killer begun to undress Ran, caressing her almost tenderly like a lover as he slowly opened her blouse. Conan felt sick, trying to force his body to move but failing as darkness threatened to overtake his vision and breathing became harder and harder, until it was a struggle to simply breath in and out, as well to stay awake.

He fought and fought but it was a loosing battle and as tears prickled in his eyes darkness claimed him.

Chapter End Notes

A very, very, very big thank you to SeleneMoon for all her reviews! Wow. It was a lot of fun to answer all of them and muddle through my own story again... and is actually one of the reasons why I sat down again and wrote chapter 18. Thank you! Not only that but you also read over the chapters, corrected mistakes and threw in some ideas that are currently giving me a headache because I'm itching to write some but wanted to concentrate on the next chapter (by now you know how easily I get distracted :P)

Another thing: Chapter 18 suddenly spawned and took a life of it's own. It went on and on and now I've had to split it :) Second part sadly is not finished yet and I'm going on a holiday. Sooo... Happy belated Halloween and I can't say when the next update will come :( Hope you enjoy the chapter and leave me a review with your thoughts on it :)
He woke up with his body feeling like it was filled with lead. Slowly his fingers twitched, feeling the soft material beneath him. The next thing that penetrated the fog in his mind was the clean smell of the air around him. Slowly the fog receded a little, as a gut wrenching feeling of wrongness replaced the steady peace of his sleep. Unconsciousness. Drug induced?

With a gasp he opened his eyes. Rolling to the side was accompanied by a tempered spike of agony through his side, that nearly made him collapse again.

Now that he opened his eyes and blinked away the haziness he slowly realized that he was in a hospital room.

That's when the memories returned, and despite the muted pain – probably pumped full of pain killers – he heaved himself up on shaking arms, looking around wildly. The room was spinning due to his fast movements and he felt a little sick, so he stopped, if only for a moment to collect himself.

Ran. Where... where was...

In a panic he ignored the beeping machines and ripped out the IV connected to his arm. He had to find Ran, where was she? Why was she not here?!

Just as he was struggling out of his bed, several nurses rushed into the room. His heart was galloping in his chest and he felt overwhelmed by those many strangers suddenly surrounding him while he still felt disoriented and out of it. One nurse tried to calm him down, as he begun to hyperventilate but he backed away, trying to put some room between himself and the strangers.

Ran...?

He realized he was hyperventilating but he just could not stop. He had to know! Didn't they understand? He had to know! What … what happened … where was Ran?

A tingling sensation spread through his body, starting at his fingertips and toes before a numb feeling replaced it. His limbs suddenly felt like they were made from a foreign substance, that his body was unable to control. He felt dizzy.
A hand appeared in his vision, another nurse taking the place of the one before, carefully grabbing his chin and forcing him to look in startlingly familiar indigo eyes.

His heart-rate slowed. Little by little he felt he could gain back control, logic replacing the panic clouding his mind and gripping Kaito's arm – dressed as a nurse – like it was a lifeline. Conan could feel himself shaking, trembling while he clung to Kaito.

“R-ran?” his voice sounded pathetic, raspy still from being choked and desperately hopeful, but still so very scared of actually knowing the truth. What if... what...

“Your sister is all right. She's sleeping in another room. Nothing happened to her.” he could read he truth in Kaito's eyes, the promise in the soothing voice and felt himself relax. A knot in his chest loosened and his heart-rate finally settled back into a normal rhythm. With it his strength disappeared too, leaving him to slump to the floor in near boneless relief only to be safely caught in familiar arms. He didn't even mind that Kaito picked him up and settled him back on the bed, so very careful as if he was made of glass. He still felt dizzy still, maybe from his panic attack or from still being drugged.

This time he didn't fight the darkness that overcame him again.

☾ ~ • ~ ☽

The next time he woke up the room was mostly dark, a little light passed through the window on the side of the room.

At least this time he was thinking a lot clearer, only feeling the normal level of groginess that came from waking up and having no access to coffee. His thoughts were clear. There was no fog or the cloying dreamlike state of being drugged to heaven that hindered his thoughts.

Slowly and carefully he sat up, wincing in the process as his side gave a painful throb and rubbed his gritty eyes. His glasses had been placed on the nightstand. A movement in the corner startled him to full awareness, but his pounding heart slowed down again when he recognized the figure sitting in a visitors chair, next to the door where the shadows were hiding him.

“Kaito...” there was a sound of a card-deck being mixed “What are you doing here so late...? What if someone sees-”

“You were damn lucky.” Conan closed his mouth at the sharp tone in the usually mirth-filled voice. It was very rare that Kaito sounded serious and he knew why. What he had done had been beyond
reckless. He had very nearly gotten Ran and himself killed.

“I know.” he knew probably even better than Kaito. After having seen so many murders and having solved so many of them... maybe it was because it had been the first case where the victims had been raped. Maybe he had been so scared to have that happen to Ran that some part of him had... had just rushed recklessly ahead to spare her that. Still, if he had just thought about it for a minute...

Then again, considering the state he found Ran in, the minute had probably been what had saved her in the end.

Not himself directly though. He had been helpless to do anything to help her.

“What happened?” something about Kaito's behavior made Conan choose his words carefully, his tone taking on a hesitant, soft edge. Part of him almost shied away from the truth, feared that maybe, just maybe something had still happened to Ran, despite Kaito's reassurances. Another thing was his personal failure at protecting her that weighed heavily on his mind. He had rushed in like an idiot and gotten himself caught, got his ass handed to him and had been drugged insensate.

Again the card deck made a frrrt like sound as Kaito mixed the cards again, apparently unable to keep his hands still.

“Followed you. Slower, since I had to steal a bike first to keep up with you.” Kaito was looking down at the cards as he spoke, his voice seeming detached but... Conan could detect a hint of anger and winced. He supposed that it was well deserved. Already he could guess who had helped them out. There was only one person after all.

“Came just in time. Followed the sounds you made.” that elicited another twitch from Conan. By the time Kaito had caught up to him he must have already been beaten and drugged. If Kaito had heard anything at that point, it could have only been his attempts at pleading with the criminal.

“I saw him over Ran and gassed him before he had a time to react. Called the police... told them where to go.” Kaito looked at Conan then, the indigo colored eyes churning with a maelstrom of emotions.

“So... Ran?”
“Fine.” came the clipped reply that startled Conan. The card deck was placed hard on his nightstand.

“You were barely breathing...” the words came out between clenched teeth, sharp and... scared. Kaito was scared. Standing ramrod straight, his posture rigid and tense and his breathing coming out in harsh gusts of air as he struggled to gain composure again.

“... so I called the ambulance next.” Kaito continued more softly, frowning down at the cards, probably trying to pull up his poker-face again full force. And failing. It was eye-opening to Conan to see the usual controlled unflappable Kid struggling to keep his emotions in check. Finally Kaito looked elsewhere, hiding his expression away physically.

“Your girlfriend is fine. Aside from a nasty shock and a new, healthy dose of paranoia I would guess. She was drugged and barely remembers anything...” Kaito muttered, his arms crossed defensively. Conan suddenly felt at a loss at what to say. For a long time there was an awkward silence hovering between them. Finally Conan rasped a throat-clearing cough, Kaito tensed.

“I'm... sorry.” Conan said, his voice sounding smaller than he intended, but sincere. Slowly Kaito lowered his arms and turned a little to chance a look out of the corners of his eyes at Conan, who made a 'come here' gesture. Reluctantly the thief drew closer, still frowning and glowering even more as Conan beckoned again. When Kaito obligingly leaned in, Conan grabbed him around his neck and dragged him down, giving him an awkward hug that Kaito clearly had not been expecting and obviously didn't know what to do with.

“Thanks.” he squeezed Kaito a little closer, residual trembles shaking his body as he was feeling the echo of the terror he had felt back then when he thought himself helpless to get Ran away from danger. He didn't even mind that Kaito had to steal a bike in order to do it. If they would have still been keeping count, he would have owed Kaito big time for helping him out this time.

“Really. Thank you. I... I made a mistake.” a bad one, that could have cost more than he would ever be willing to pay. Drawing back a little he hesitated as he was unsure if he could satisfy his curiosity right now.

“Uhm...by the way... how did you find me??” he asked when Kaito pulled back himself, looking a little ruffled and embarrassed and almost adorably shy. The question made him hunch his shoulders though, which instantly drew Conan's suspicion.

“Uhh....” narrowing his eyes at the thief Kaito relented “The App in your phone might be able to... you know... track you down. Just in case.” at Conan's outraged gasp he unrepentantly grinned.
And Conan didn't really feel angry about it if he was to be truthful. Might have been if he had known about it before, but right now? Not at all.

Sighing Conan swung his legs out of the bed, shutting off the alarm before reaching up to remove the IV a second time.

“What do you think you are doing...?”

Looking up he paused in his actions, then looked down at the IV.

“I... I need to see Ran.” he admitted.

“She's fine...” Kaito repeated, though there was a note of resignation in his tone that told Conan that Kaito had already expected him to react like this. He did not say anything else as Conan took out the IV and slipped to the floor.

Instead a pair of slippers appeared in front of Conan in a small puff of smoke.

With only a small glance in Kaito's direction Conan slipped into the children-sized shoes and softly padded to the door. Without a word Kaito stepped up next to him and pulled it open, before continuing to lead the way to the next room. Silently he pulled the door open and held it so Conan just slipped through.

Ran was lying on the bed, curled to the side with her hands tucked beneath her face. She looked rather peaceful, but Conan who slipped closer could see the slight smudges of make-up that was still clinging to her eyelashes. It sent a ugly feeling through him, one that twisted his insides. Kaito stayed near the door – just in case Ran woke up so he could slip away without having to explain his presence – while Conan hovered near Ran's bed.

Slowly Conan reached up, but stopped himself shortly before touching her, his gaze running over her face. A heavy knot in his breast unraveled once he assured himself that she was breathing.

She was alive. And mostly unharmed.

His mistake could have horrible consequences. Him being in a child's body... without his gadgets he was useless. He had realized that quickly, once he had been turned into a child and had gone through
his first beating at a criminals hand. Ran had saved him back then, before the man could bash Conan's head in.

Conan looked down at his small hands with a heavy feeling, like a weight on his back that made it difficult to breath freely.

So utterly useless, this body... unable to protect the things most precious to him.

Usually his mind was weapon enough, but if he made one mistake...? Just one small misstep and look where it's gotten him. If he had just stopped to think about it a second longer... how suspicious that open door was, how inviting...

He had been a fool. Something like this should never happen again, he would have to tread more carefully.

Again he looked Ran over, raising a hand to very carefully stroke a strand of her hair behind her ear. She snuffed into her pillow in response, humming slightly and Conan smiled.

She was strong... she would get over it in time, but he wished he could have prevented the incident before it even reached her. She saw enough of the ugly world, without getting directly involved.

He wanted to protect her...

Slowly he backed out of the room, feeling lighter and at the same time more tired than before. He yawned and grumbled at the chuckle Kaito let out when he rubbed his eyes in a sleepy demeanor, while they traipsed back into Conan's room. He didn't even complain when Kaito helped him back into the bed, nor when Kaito got a new sterile IV-needle and carefully hooked Conan up again. He was feeling too tired to protest, exhausted emotionally and physically.

“Sleep well, tantei-kun...” he heard and grumbled something like 'not a child' in Kaito's direction.

* ~ * ~ *

Ran was not okay. No matter what she tried to claim otherwise, it was obvious to those who knew
her that she was more withdrawn. Conan could see her flinch away if someone didn't announce his presence and startle easily if someone accidentally surprised her. Every time she did, it felt like a painful, burning slash across his heart. She was scared and rightly so. Conan had heard the doctors talking with Kogoro, who agreed to get Ran some therapy to help her through it. Conan coincided that it was for the best, but right not it didn't make him feel better with the situation.

For Conan, Ran tried to act strong. She had thanked him for trying to save her, and scolded him for his reckless behavior, stating that it was better to get an adult in a situation like that. It hurt a little to have her belittle his strength, no matter how right she was to point it out. He had smiled and nodded anyways.

They were released rather quickly, since they didn't have any wounds – besides being drugged and in Conan's case having a 'slight' overdose that had actually been really dangerous. Conan was unsure if maybe him being poisoned with the APTX had maybe saved his life, because he had heard a doctor mutter that it was actually a miracle Conan was still breathing with so much of the drug in his system. It was a discomforting thought.

Just before leaving the hospital he caught Ran talking with the doctors before looking in his direction. Maybe he should have put more thought into that moment, but he dismissed it when Ran didn't say anything to him when she had said goodbye to the doctors.

He should have. If he had he might have prevented the situation that occurred only two short days later.

* ~ * ~ *

He still couldn't believe he was actually here, sitting in a chair that seemed to want to suck him in, swallow him whole. A therapist. Ran had gotten him to a therapist. Because he had been 'depressed' which probably connected to all the murders and victims he came across, or so she thought. Not because of his very first more or less breakup with the girl he had for the last... ten years or longer envisioned growing old with. And of course not because of an identity-crisis. No.

Looking at the therapist, sitting in front of him and studying him with a comforting smile, added as a benefit because he was a child, he wondered just how much he would have to offer to bribe her.

Then he remembered that he was in elementary school. And elementary school kids didn't have the money to bribe people. And most didn't even think of the possibility of bribing adults. Darn.

Heaving a long-suffering sigh in his mind, he decided to get on with the torture and get it over with. Hopefully this would be his first and last session.
In the end he was sure that he had successfully given the impression of a mentally stable child.

But apparently not stable enough to convince her to leave him be.

It might have been his detailed explanation of how blood drops look like when falling from different heights. She had caught him off guard with that one. His shaky explanation of him doing an experiment with watercolor might have worsened the situation instead of helping as he had thought.

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Aside from that though he had learned that his reckless stunt had another unfortunate consequence: Ran being overprotective.

Especially concerning strangers.

“Conan-kun, you have been sending a lot of stuff over your phone lately.”

“Uh.” trying to be cute and innocent he nodded with a smile. *Don't suspect me now, Ran.*

When she came to him and settled on the other side of the table he swallowed. Oh dear. She couldn't have found his phone and read the texts, right? Or seen him using two phones? Thinking back he couldn't really remember anything that could have given him away but Ran had already suspected him several times. Maybe this was another one, but if so he had to act fast to shake her off.

“I think we need to talk, Conan-kun.” perspiration was beginning to gather on Conan's forehead. Good talk? Or bad talk? She didn't really seem angry but what could she want to talk about? Had he slipped up somewhere? Frantically he tried to remember any instance where he had made a mistake or had mentioned something about Shinichi. Nothing came to mind so he had to wait for her to spell it out, which was… frightening. He didn't think she would stay calm if she really found out. Actually he would want to tell her somewhere with a lot of space and have at least a five minute head start to run. And lot's of hiding places.

What followed was a mortifying hour regarding internet safely and not knowing the other person who it really was and that person could be anyone from kidnappers to stalkers. Him, trying to brush it of and trying – desperately – to change the subject only made her more stubborn and was dragging it out until he resigned to fate and answered like a good boy after listening to her earnestly worrying about him.

After promising to be careful and on the lookout for any stranger-danger, as well as several promises on informing her or Kogoro right away if anything seemed even the least bit suspicious he had been
finally released.

All in all, this made it harder to get his plans further along. The therapy sessions were eating his precious little time he had available. Not that he didn't need the therapy, it was just that he could not talk to the therapist due to his circumstances which made the sessions redundant.

Finding time for acting lessons under Ran's watchful eyes was even harder.

And then there was the newest Kid note tempting him. As if Kid knew he was planning something reckless again and tried to tie him up in something else, distract him from his careful plans that were slowly evolving...

Chapter End Notes

Back from my holiday and already another chapter! I couldn't help myself, and I'm really glad I finally got the serial killer case out of the way. Which means I can concentrate on other stuff now!

And yes, this chapter still features Conan being in love with Ran, as I said it's a slow process. It's not like Shinichi would just give her up from one day to another, so bear with it for a little longer.

Other than that... I think SeleneMoon is working her way towards being my unofficial-official Beta. So a big thank you for being patient with me spamming her with my chapter parts...!

Do leave me a comment on your thoughts please! :)}
The train-incident

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

This time Kid didn’t sent a riddle, instead a declaration of his intent was mailed right to the starlight diamonds owner. That in itself was a little disappointing, but Conan was glad he didn’t have to lead the Task Force to the answer of the riddle again. He might lose his sanity and start throwing things at them if he had to listen to them walking in circles around the obvious answer that Conan had already pointed out five times to them!

With subtle nudging it had been easy to get Kogoro to want to 'help protect the diamond' (all the while leering at the beautiful owner's wife), and thus he was on his way to the heist, despite Ran's protests that it was a week-day. Conan's earnest begging might have helped convince her to let Kogoro bring him along, but she herself had begged out, while threatening her father to better keep an eye out for Conan and bring him back home in a timely manner. After all Conan had school tomorrow.

As if he couldn't sleep in class.

(Well, he probably really couldn't even if he wanted to, because either the teacher would wake him or his friends in their helpful attempt to keep him out of trouble. But he could ignore reality in that regard. A little. Wishful thinking?)

Anyways, this led him to being able to attend the newest heist. It was a little uncommon for Kid, who preferred showy heists to... this kind. The one where it was more about taking the gem.

Maybe he was mistaken and Kid would pull off something Conan did not expect? That was not something Conan was looking forward to, but without a riddle and with the silence from Kaito, he had very little to go on.

It didn’t sit well with him.

He had been partly right. Kid had pulled a quick one. Unusual for him, but he had not left without triggering the fire-alarm and drenching the task force in water, which he had somehow coloured to be pink. Conan really hoped it was not permanent, but at least he had managed to get out in the nick
of time. Which was why he was now following hot on Kaito's heels. Which was by no means an easy feat.

He had actually managed to follow Kid to the train station, and was now wildly looking around for his prey. Kid had to be around here somewhere, he was sure of it because he hadn't lost track until that stupid train came and the people swarming around him had blocked his sight. Damn it, he wouldn't let Kid disappear again! It was a matter of pride! Shoes, shoes, being a kid sucked but you just had to improvise (though looking for heads would be a damn lot easier than looking for shoes that could more easily be changed... then again, Kid was a master in disguise so both of them were unreliable).

There! Shoving through the people, he followed Kid with a one track mind and lost him again when someone nearly ran him over. Right now Conan was really not in the mood to listen to the man that was cursing down at him, instead he stumbled past him and looked around again. He had lost sight of Kid. Again. Regardless he begun to search for the thief, but when he didn't see him in front of him (he was sure Kid had stepped onto the train, but maybe he had slipped into another compartment?) and felt watched, he twirled around. Just in time to see that stupid grin in front of him before he was pushed gently backwards.

“W-wha~!” getting his balance back, he saw the doors close and Kid wave through the window of he train with a giant smug smile on his face. Angry he put a fist against the now closed door “Damn you Kid!”

And then he realized just what being behind closed doors meant.

....

Slowly the train begun to move.

.....

Clenching his teeth he looked up to see which train he was now on and groaned. Great. High-speed rail. It would be a long time until the next stop. Slumping down on a free seat he put his head in his hand and calculated his new problem. After taking in account the movement speed of the train and the distance to the next station he let his head fall back against the window behind him. He would... maybe be home at about 3 am. If he was lucky.

Ran would kill him.
His phone dinged and he glanced at it. It was a message.


Yes. Oops. He was so going to kill Kaito. Before he got killed by Ran.

[23:06] Arsene Lupin: “Would you believe me if I said that I only saw which train it was after you boarded?”

Boarded my ass! Conan’s hands constricted as if he could reach through the phone and strangle Kid with them through it. It was a tempting thought.

[23:08] Arsene Lupin: “Are you ignoring me?”


Conan sighed and started to message back. It probably really had been an accident...

[23:10] Arsene Lupin: “It’s hilarious though, if you really think about it…”

…and deleted what he had written when he felt a vein start to throb. Stupid Kid. Way too soon to forgive him yet after all.

[23:12] Sherlock Holmes: “Right now you are the last person I want to talk to.”


Arsene Lupin: “Or wait here to get you home?”

It sparked an idea. He didn't much fancy telling Ran just where he ended up and why, which he would have to if he actually got home as late as it would get to travel the whole way back and the rest of the way home.

Sherlock Holmes: “You are going to call Ran.”

Arsene Lupin: “I am?”

Sherlock Holmes: “Yes, you are. And you will tell her I'm sleeping over at your place. I do not care which excuses you use but you better make it believable.”

Arsene Lupin: “Consider it done O_^”

Conan eyes the smiley Kid sent with his teeth barred. That the thief even now joked around and sent that monocle smiley that Conan always reminded of that stupid outfit he wore when he was risking his neck to lead the police around on a merry chase...

Breathing deeply he tried to calm down. Keep that anger for later when he could kick something at a moving target for practice.

Well, at least he had around two and a half hour of train travel and waiting time. That would give him time to calm down.

And plan revenge. Smirking at the phone he gave a deep chuckle that caused several people in his vicinity to sent him weary looks.

♣ ♦ ♣ ♦ ♣ ♦

Three hours later (no, he didn't have the luck to actually get the return train right away and had to wait for about 40 minutes for the next one), a very grumpy elementary school kid was escorted out of the train by a security agent.
He was tired, he was hungry and he was sore from sitting so long.

After pointing out Kaito (now in his Ishikawa Kaito disguise), the security guard let him go after a stern talking to Kaito about watching over your charges.

Walking silently to a car, Kaito very slowly looked down at Conan, trying to judge just how pissed of the child-detective was.

“So... why a grab and run?” Conan had shoved his hands in his pockets, not looking at Kaito.

“Would you believe me that I wanted to get it over and done with to meet up with you?” Kaito batted his eyelashes as Conan snorted before trying to repress his amusement.

“Yeah, right.” awkward silence.

“I was actually serious. I do enjoy going one on one with you.” that made Conan at least look at him, then roll his eyes and quickly look away again.

“I really shouldn't encourage you.” Conan grumbled.

“Are you... okay?” he attempted to start a harmless conversation (and holding in his laughter. Conan's expression when the train had pulled out had been hilarious but if he laughed now Conan would jump him like an angry cat and try to claw his eyes out for sure...), and was ignored. A hungry grumble interrupted the silence.

“Want to eat something?” getting a glare in return was better then a soccer-ball, but not really an answer “Hey, it really wasn't intentional...” Kaito coughed, trying to hide his chuckle “… it was just really bad timing and you were standing just right and it was just so tempting and before I knew it my hand already moved...” Kaito could feel the corners of his mouth twitch in spite of himself. Traitors!

The smile fell when Conan turned to him and smiled that creepy innocent angelic I'm-Just-A-Cute-Kid Smile that hid his You-Are-So-Busted and Will-Recieve-A-Socker-Ball-To-Your-Nuts expression. It never boded well for him.

“I'm not angry at all, Kaito-nii-chan!” chirped the child, sending shivers down his back. Creepy.
“Why would I be? It's not like you pushed me into the train, that was Kid, right?”

“R-Right...” clearing his throat he contemplated whether it was strange that he felt scared and threatened by a kid half his size. Maybe he should put some thought into having more backup plans for his next heist...

“So, what excuse did you give Ran-nee-chan?” Conan was still smiling, and Kaito just couldn’t tell him just what he had told her. Because he had survival instincts. Sometimes. And right now they were blaring at him to keep his mouth shut.

“Ahaha, she didn't need much convincing... so it was all right.” he couldn't tell Conan the excuse he had told to Ran without risking severe bodily harm. *Uh,* looking at Conan's suspicious gaze he firmly decided: *No. Not telling him about that, yet.*

“Then, where are we going now?” it seemed Conan also had his doubts if he even wanted to know. Or was just too tired to care anymore, since he was badly trying to hide a yawn. It was no wonder, the guy had a child's body and it probably was way past his normal bedtime. Again he had to work to suppress his mirth. Conan was cute when he was trying to stifle a yawn and try to seem more awake than he really was. As it was Kaito had to keep the urge to pick him up or ruffle his hair under lock and key. Even if Conan looked like a child, he wasn't one and Kaito would not insult them both by forgetting that fact.

Even if it was tempting if only to see Conan's expression...

“Hotel.” he said, shrugging his shoulders. It was not like he didn't trust Conan enough to get him to his home, he was just still... cautious.

When they arrived and Kaito got the keys to the room he had booked while Conan was traveling, they headed to the room in companionable silence. Once there Conan didn't even bother to undress more than prying the shoes from his feet, before gratefully crawling on the bed and sprawling there. A hand plucked off the glasses and blindly set them on the nightstand. Then he curled up.

Kaito chuckled at the sight.

“You should at least pull off your jacket...” he commented while he rummaged through the cabinet and pulled some take-away food out that he had stored here before. It was mostly cold now but it would have been hard to find any food at this time (and explain why a child of Conan's age wasn't already in bed).

“It's probably cold but better than nothing I think..” he said and tried to hand Conan one container. It took a few tries and prodding the detective with the chopsticks to get him to turn over, sit up and
accept the meal.

“There is only one bed...” Conan yawned, while shoveling the food in his mouth on autopilot.

“Problem?” raising an eyebrow Kaito shrugged “It doesn’t bother me, the bed is big enough and you are half-sized anyw-aowtch!” rubbing his leg he coughed and without missing a beat corrected himself “And we have both enough space to sleep and two duvets so I don’t really see why it should matter...”

“True...” Conan gave another yawn and couldn’t really bother to make a fuss about it. He was a bit uncomfortable to share a bed with Kaito, but they were both boys and it was more along the lines of 'Am-I-Really-Sleeping-Next-To-Kaitou-Kid' than having an aversion to sleeping next to another man. Glancing at Kaito he saw that the disguise was still intact. Frowning he reached for Kid's face, who flinched back a little before holding still and looking sceptically at the hand that was hovering by his face.

“Mh.” rubbing over a spot at Kaito's chin he could feel the Latex that Kid used to even now hide his exact features from him, even though he already had a good idea what Kid really looked like anyways. One could only dress up as Shinichi Kudou so often after all, without the real deal learning a lot about the perpetrator.

“Must be uncomfortable....” unsure about where he was even going with this he stole another glance to Kaito’s eyes, that were looking at him with... with... a look that made him a bit more uncomfortable. A little hastily he retracted his hand and looked away, rubbing his eyes. He was probably tired, is all. Hesitating for a moment more he added quietly “You can take it off if you want. I won't look. This time.”

When Kaito didn't immediately react Conan tried to shrug it off and crawled out of the bed. He deposited the take-away boxes into the as-of-yet empty wastebin and went on to the bathroom to get ready to sleep. When he got back out, he was dragging his feet in exhaustion and it was already dark in the room. Crawling onto the bed he heard Kaito get up and go to the bathroom himself. It was only then that he saw – mostly covered in the dark of the night – something on the nightstand next to his glasses on the side where Kaito would later sleep. Curios he crawled over and took it in the hand but as soon as he touched it he felt himself freeze. It was a piece of latex.

Kaito had actually unmasked himself.

For a moment he stood still, warring with himself.

Then, very slowly he put it back, though his fingers itched to put it in a plastic bag as evidence. There could be some skin on it, which would make it possible to compare a suspects DNA to Kid
and thus be sure of the thief's identity.

But... this wasn't how he wanted to catch Kid. Not that he wasn't curious but something just stopped him. It didn't feel right, and the only thing Conan listened to more than instinct and logic would be his heart.

Going back to his side of the bed he crawled under the duvet and put his back to the evidence, not even feeling all that guilty for not acting and knowing that even if he did... he had no evidence to back up his claim that this was from Kaitou Kid. He could make sure for himself but it was not admissible evidence anyways. And he did not need this to find Kid, he would catch Kid on a heist or not at all.

★☆★ K ☆ ★

Kaito had watched Conan through a gap he had left when he had entered the bathroom. Seeing Conan putting it back he leaned back against the wall. He had put it in a spot that was visible due to the light that fell through the window on purpose, curious how Conan would act. He had actually thought the little detective would be tempted. He had seen the little hesitation but... it had only lasted a few seconds before Conan had set it down and turned his back on it. A part of Kaito had been weary how much to trust Conan, another part had been convinced that he could trust Conan this much. Smiling to himself he got ready for bed himself and silently slipped back to the bed and under his covers. A glance to his side showed that Conan had curled up under his duvet and was barely visible at all.

Taking off the disguise had been... unplanned. And risky. Sitting in the dark Kaito listened to the quiet breathing of his rival and felt... surreal. Rubbing the spot where the small hand had reached he wondered about Conan's actions.

A body turning attracted his attention and he studied the sleeping child that sprawled next to him, deep asleep.

Reaching over he pulled the duvet that had slipped down over Conan's shoulder again and froze when Conan turned to his head and snuggled up against his hand. Blinking he took a moment to gaze at the peaceful and young expression Conan showed while asleep, looking much more like a child then when awake. It was certainly strange how they just seemed to fit so well together. Even while he had kept his distance there had never been a question to their ability to work together when necessary. But now that they actively sought each other out and spend some time together outside of the heists? It was ridiculous how much he enjoyed Conan's presence. He had already been looking forward to heists where Conan attended, even if he had to be especially careful on those because Conan was really someone who might be able to catch Kaito. Would have already on some occasions, Kaito thought, if there hadn't been more important issues to handle. That, or Conan had let him go for one reason or another. They were equals, and Kaito really regretted that he had not
known Conan back when he was Shinichi. They would have become fast friends, he was sure, but then again Shinichi would have probably noticed right away who Kid was, if that had happened.

Finally he noticed that his hand was still cradling Conan's face and he carefully took it back, straightening the covers in embarrassment. Shaking his head he lay down and pulled the covers up. He was tired. That's all.

★☆☆ K☆☆★

The next time Kaito woke up was when something cold – almost freezing – pressed against his legs. Instantly his eyes were wide open and looking for the source. Confused he looked around the room, that was barely beginning to brighten from the rising sun. He had maybe... slept two to three hours then. Blearily he searched for Conan and found the boy a lot lower and... his icy feet pressed against his own. Leech.

As quiet as possible he stretched, feeling the burn of a good workout the night before in his muscles. Looking at the kid he suppressed another chuckle. Conan was curled around his pillow – clutching it like a stuffed toy – the duvet had mostly slipped off of him, which would explain why his feet were so cold and had decided to leech warmth from the next best source: Kaito.

Since he was awake anyways he decided to get up, he would have to disguise before Conan woke up anyways. Putting his own blanket carefully over the sleeping teen-child he watched as Conan happily nestled into the warmth that was still lingering there and smiled a little. Then he got ready to start the day, deciding to let Conan sleep a little longer.

♠♤• C♤•♠

Conan's day started with Ran calling for him.

“Conan-kun! Conan-kun! You have to get up or you will be late for school. Conan-kun?” Pulling the covers more over himself he groaned.

“Fif mo min..... Ran-nee......” he muttered into his pillow and tried to hide from the world in the bed under the covers.

Wait... bed...? Pulling down the duvet he blearily blinked. How he hated mornings. Now more than ever, since he didn't even get coffee. But something was not right.
The... fuck?

Looking around in confusion he tried to get his brain to work out where he was, before the answer slowly came to him when he woke up a little more. Or maybe because he saw a silently laughing Ishikawa Kaito next to his bed, clutching at his side.

… he was being laughed at. That thought alone needed some slow seconds to be processed. So what if he was not all there in the mornings...?

Blinking blearily he pulled the pillow and half-heartedly threw it in the approximate direction of Kid, not even caring if it hit the stupid thief or not before flopping back down on the bed, tugging the blanket over himself again. The pillow did not reach the target but Kid was still grinning and had grabbed it with a mischievous look.

It took Conan just a few seconds more than if he had been awake, or he would have seen the move – and pillow – coming half a mile before it reached him.

As it was the pillow came back with accuracy to hit his face.

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When he got home the next day he wondered why Ran made his favorite dish, and kept sending him looks he couldn't really interpret. He had thought she would still be angry, whatever Kaito had told her seemed to have worked wonders.

When he had a spare minute, his curiosity and confusion got the better of him and he pulled out his phone:

[07:21] Sherlock Holmes: “What exactly did you say to Ran again? She keeps sending me weird looks and is... trying to be awfully nice to me...”

Back in Edoka Kaito just swallowed his breakfast when the message arrived and grimaced. No way he would tell the pint sized detective he had told Ran that Conan's first crush had turned him down and he had offered the kid a man's night at his place.
Imagine that, two chapters (one for my hobbit story and one here). You don't know how long I've waited to be able to show you this chapter. It's been stuck in my head for ages! Anyways I hoped you enjoyed the after-heist play. I was thinking of pulling a full heist but I admit real life was putting obstacles in my way and my imagination is just... crappy these days, so I think I'm going to safe writing out a heist for another day then. It's not like I won't have plenty of opportunities with Kaito hanging around :D

Tell me what you think! Hope you have some nice days and enjoy the gift-giving (and getting), have a merry christmas and stuff :) This is my gift to you! (Well... I could wait for another three hours to midnight but I just... argh. Okay. My mind is weak, sue me :P)
“Shin-chaaaaaan!” the words ripped Conan out of his peaceful sleep in a matter of nano-seconds.

“I'm up! I'm awake!” Conan flailed about him, trying to put some distance between himself and the crazy. Only slowly did his surroundings filter through his sleep addled brain. He was at the Mouri’s and... and what was his mother doing here, calling him by his name?

Wait. Why was Kaito on the floor holding his stomach?

… his mother wasn't here.

“You... you ass!” Conan colored and threw his pillow at the thief who scrambled a little to get out of the way but was too busy laughing himself silly to manage it.

“Out! Out!”

“Conan-kun? Is everything alright??” Ran’s voice filtered through the door and suddenly Kaito was up and scrambled to climb out of the window, closing it behind him with a rather quiet thud.

Not a moment too soon as the door opened and Ran peeked inside.

“Are you okay? Did you have a nightmare? I heard shouting...”

“Uhm...” crap. “Y-yeah I'm fine!”

* ~ * ~ *

After school his mother was waiting for him next to her Harley.
“Seriously? You come to my school like that?” Conan scowled up at her as she swooped down and drew him into a hug that threatened to break his ribs. That was... that was an awful familiar sort of hug.

“Of course! I haven't seen you in such a long time, I missed you!” and only then did Conan realize that there was no amethyst bracelet dangling from the wrist and this was actually his real mother.

“Oh god, you are really here!” he blurted out in horror and struggled in her grip. Of course, she had arrived days ago and had already made good on her promise to help him. He had asked for it after all, asked her to train him how to act. Now he had to suffer the consequences because his mother would put him through hell for her own amusement and to make up for the time when he was a child and had violently rejected even the notion of following in her footsteps.

Who could blame him. He had been, what, five years old? And his mother had looked at him with beseeching doe-like eyes while holding up a monstrosity of a princess dress.

He had refused to leave the wardrobe. He didn't want to be put through the humiliation. He knew his mother would make pictures. He knew his mother would use the pictures against him, if given the chance and she wouldn't mind using them against him ten years or even twenty years later. He had known that even at his small age and had – rightfully – sought to protect himself from that.

It had been a smart decision back then. Conan still held onto that.

But now... now he needed to learn to act and his mother was every bit the she-devil he had predicted back then, if not even worse. He could only hope to reign in the damage. Maybe get a virus into her phone and laptop and hope all evidence would be destroyed. Even if he had to pay for a new laptop and phone after that.

He hoped Kaito never found out about this torture.

☀ ● ● ☀

“Now, take this and change!” Yukiko beamed down at Conan and held out a rather cute dress. Cute – Conan amended – if you actually were a girl. Which he was not.

Decisively he crossed his arms and frowned.
At a quelling, dark look from his mother he snatched the dress out of her hand and fled to the bathroom. He dressed himself quickly and only looked into the mirror when absolutely necessary. Why his mother thought this would help him in his acting training.... okay, maybe it did, kinda, but he also knew she was doing it for her own evil-spirited amusement as well.

Taking a deep breath he tried to get into his role. His mother would do worse than a dress if he came out and still acted like 'Conan'. No, he had learned in the first one and a half hour that if he wanted this acting training to work, then he would have to live and breathe as the character he was portraying.

“I want you to study the character.” She had told him when she had first created a role for him. He had looked at the paper and then stared up at her in quiet bafflement. After all, she hadn't given him lots of information, mostly just writing down some basics. He snorted and quietly thought it couldn't be so hard.

Half an hour later he revised that thought while his mother scowled down at him.

“You haven't thought about who you are at all.” she had shaken her head and put her arms over her chest, scowling as she obviously sought the right words to explain it to him.

“What I want you to try is using your own experiences in life, and mold them to fit your character. That is called 'affective memory'. You use the experiences of your life, to give life to the character you want to portrait.”

Yukiko turned around towards his wardrobe and begun searching for something in the very back of it.

“You immerse yourself into the character completely. You need to be fully invested, especially emotionally if you want this to work.”

She turned around, holding out a small dress that had Conan shrinking back in apprehension.

“Acting is not just saying a dialogue, or remembering the correct lines. You have to get into the role. Into his or her head. What has she experienced before, how would they act due to their upbringing.
You have to think of having lived a whole different life, and how your experiences would influence your decisions. You need to think of the environment the character is currently in and how she would react at any given moment!"

She crouched down and tipped a finger against his chest, smiling in what Conan would describe to be in reminiscence and passion.

“You have to feel it. If what you feel matches the character's, then nobody will be able to tell it's fake.”

Yukiko pressed the dress into his hands and stood up again, adopting her 'teacher's persona' again.

“It's called method acting. Very popular in the USA, and Sharon swore by it.”

Conan wouldn’t have noticed the falter in his mother’s voice on the name if he hadn’t been a detective. But Yukiko soldiered on, ignoring her own feelings like the perfect actress.

Conan did his part and didn’t mention her slip. But if it was Vermouth’s favored acting, it had to be the best one for what he was trying to do.

It had been disconcerting at first but he was getting better. But females were more often than not, a mystery to him. He only knew he was doing something wrong when his mother made the small tsking sound in the back of her throat. And since that was his biggest problem, of course his mother had pounced on the weakness like a hungry cat on the crippled bird. He knew it was an excuse for her to force him into dresses, because she had always wanted a daughter too but found it more convenient to simply have Conan fill the role to her satisfaction than to actually get pregnant again. Women. A mystery. One he would have to at least crack a little to manage female roles.

Besides that: His mother had taken photos of various disguises. She had blackmail material now. He couldn’t quit or she would send them to his elementary school. Conan was not desperate enough to humiliate himself like that if it wasn't necessary.

Ariko. Age six. Daughter of a small business-woman. Easily excited, overly curious but shy, especially with strangers. It was his 8th female role he was trying out, over the past five days. Ran knew he was with Yukiko, so she didn't ask where he was all the time.

Conan took a deep breath and nodded to his mirror image, feeling ridiculous in a dress. His mother
had given him some hair-extensions as well, so he was staring at a stranger.

But he could do that. Somehow. He thought back to his childhood, and then thought about his friends, his elementary school friends right now and tried to study their behavior from a actors perspective and make use of that knowledge.

Breathing slowly he smiled at the mirror. Not his usual smile but one of Ayumi's sweet smiles when she was excited about something. He pulled a few different expression and watched his face in the mirror, trying to burn them to his memory.

This might just work. After all he had a plethora of experiences, memories and observations to draw from.

☀～☀～☀

Ariko wandered into the nearby park. Most of the morning had passed by riding the train. Her mother would pick her up later, so for now she had to keep herself busy. It was nothing new. Her mother had a meeting, so she had been asked if she wanted to play inside, so long as she stayed quiet and didn't disrupt her work or visit a playground nearby. Being cooped up from traveling here, Ariko had been very eager to get some fresh air, so her mother had brought her to the park, given her a hug and told her to have fun. She would be back in about an hour.

Conan thought that a normal parent shouldn't leave their child alone in a strange park but-

Ariko blinked and shook her head, looking around the playground. A few children were sitting in a sandbox, while some boys played football.

Conan wanted to head over, he could-

Ariko stumbled and came to a stop, flushing at the weird look she got from some of the parents who had been curiously watching her and saw her grind to a halt. She hated attention, shifting uncomfortably on her legs she quickly looked away and tightened her grip on the small bag she carried with her, taking another look around the playground. She wanted to find some playmates. Make some friends, even if she had to leave soon again.

Conan was so bored, he wanted to turn back and-

A rustle in the bushes drew Ariko's attention away. Interest piqued she cautiously made her way
over, shifting some of the branches out of the way and sinking down to squat on her haunches.

“Aww.” a small cat stared distrustingly back at her, flinching back when Ariko held out her hand. After some time the kitten came closer, sniffing the fingers with caution. Ariko smiled when the kitten decided to nude her hand and carefully scratched the ears. They were very soft.

“Found a friend?”

A voice behind her startled her and she jumped, scaring the cat into running away.

“You scared her!” she told the stranger accusingly, frowning over her shoulder.

Conan nearly choked at the amethyst eyes blinking at her – him – no her. Oh god what was Kaito doing here?! Did he know?! Did he, was he- wait. That was not … where was the disguise? Was that a disguise? That looked terribly similar to Shinichi, but there were differences. Was this some kind of joke?

Scrambling to his feet he nearly stumbled over his own feet and would have crashed to the floor if not for a steadying hand on his upper arm.

“Careful there, little Miss.”

Conan nearly choked again. Little what?!

Ariko blinked up at the teenager. He was much bigger than her, but looked friendly enough. Her mother however had told her to stay away from older people, stick to her own age-group.

Now that she was steady again he had released her and she took a cautious step to the side. She didn't like how he cut her off from the rest of the playground, however unintentional. It seemed like he realized it too, for he gave her a sheepish grin and shuffled further out of the way, until she relaxed again.

“Sorry for scaring you and your friend.” the young man crouched down to be at the same level as her. He held out his hand to her and in the next moment there was a rose popping up to her face.
Conan was nearly frothing at the mouth. He knew that trick but still! How could-

“You okay?”

“U-uhm... y-yeah...” hesitatingly she reached out and took the offered rose, offering a shy, uncertain smile. Kaito returned it with one of his own, nearly blinding ones.

“That’s good. Well, if you are interested, I’m going to do a small performance later on. Stick around, yeah? And tell me if you think it was good or totally terrible!” with that Kaito rose to his feet and winked and then walked away.

Ariko stood still where she was and watched the teen go. Conan was undecided what he wanted to do now. For one: He never wanted Kaito to realize this was him. Ever. For another? This was not how he wanted to find KID. It was something different to catch him at a heist but to stumble upon his identity on accident while he pretended to be someone else, that just sat wrong with him.

It took Conan a moment to realize he was staring at Kaito intently enough to make the teen twitch. If that wasn’t confirmation enough, Conan did not know what. He could see Kaito raise his head from whatever he had brought to the playground to make his magic show and quickly averted his gaze.

He looked towards the gate, then let his eyes trail over the playground in indecision.

Finally he took a few hesitant steps in Kaito’s general direction. Despite the risk he was too curious about the show, because if there was one thing Kaito KID knew about, it was how to make a performance. And while Conan thought about magicians as tricksters and con artists, he couldn't help himself for actually wanting to see Kaito in his element, without the police and drama added to the show. It was a silly notion, and if he had been 'Conan', he would have turned around on principle and scoffed, if only to pretend he wasn't interested in the going ons.

But right now... he was Ariko. A curious little girl that could sit back and watch the magic unfold in awe, while Conan and Shinichi took a backseat and dissected the tricks presented to them.

Just in case he left a little distance between them. He didn't want to draw attention, so he couldn't be too far away, but sitting in the back between two other kids was fine. Close enough to see, yet far enough to not be drawn into the action.

It was halfway through the show that his mother in her own disguise showed up and put a hand on his shoulder. A quick look up made him pause, as she watched Kaito with a strangely fond look, but
then again one of her teachers in disguise had been a magician too, so maybe Kaito reminded her of that time.

After the show his mother took his hand and drew him away. Conan cast a last glance over his shoulder and watched as Kaito mingled with the kids and gave a few flowers to some of the girls. It was kinda cute.

Hastily he looked away and tried to get back into being Ariko before his mother commented on it.

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“Hey dad.” Conan stumbled into the kitchen, finally allowed to slip back into his own clothes after an exhausting day with his mother. They had went shopping for other disguises and Conan had begged his mother to not put any of the female stuff into his wardrobe. For all he knew Kaito would visit and the last thing Conan wanted to explain was when and why he had acquired woman articles. Or what for.

“Evening, son.” Yusaku evenly replied and just as smoothly moved his cup of coffee out of Conan's reach, much to his son's displeasure. Grumpily Conan went to the fridge to get some juice before settling into his own chair.

“So...?” he asked when his father finally put down the newspaper – an English one – to questioningly look over the rims of his glasses.

“So, what?” His father needled back, despite knowing exactly what Conan wanted to know.

“How is the project with Professor Agasa coming along?” Conan felt an excited spark nearly explode when he saw the smug satisfaction crossing his fathers face.

“Splendid. We are almost finished.” then his father turned and looked at Conan with his I'm-serious-about-this-don't-you-dare-argue expression “I won't give it to you until your mother agrees that you are ready. You understand, right?”

In this Conan reluctantly agreed. It wouldn't do to get hasty and let his chance to finally get the antidote slip past him.
Omg. I am SO sorry it took so long and even more sorry that I can't promise the next chapter will be out at some point in the near future.

Let's just say I had a massive writers block and then got distracted by another story I am currently writing and then I needed to find back into this one. I am quite happy how it turned out, even if I didn't put everything I had originally planned into this chapter. But I thought you might appreciate a sign of life.

Many thanks to so many reviewers who reminded me regularly of this story and encouraged me to continue, as well as SeleneMoon who came out of her self-imposed exile and gave me the last push to finish this chapter that has been sitting half ready for an eternity.
A plan in motion

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

It had been a few days since the heist. As per usual Kaito had returned the gem without a problem after a few days of letting the police sweat over it, disappointed only a little bit at having stolen another jewel that wasn't Pandora. Still, he had been successful and that alone made him happy, besides it was one more gem checked out and that meant one less to go for. Aaand he had found a new amusing hobby: Waking Conan. The creative way, of course.

Last Saturday for example. Kogoro had once more met up with his... acquaintances for a game of Mah Yong. From previous stake-outs Kaito had been pretty sure that Kogoro would play until well into the night and would most likely crash on the couch of the place instead of driving home drunk. Meaning it was the perfect opportunity to sneak into Conan's and Kogoro's shared room the next morning, since Conan had the room to himself.

Since the night in the hotel he had found out a simply hilarious fact about Shinichi Kudou: He was not a morning person. And it was adorable watching the detective wake up, still hazy from sleep until a few minutes afterwards. It was like his brain needed a little while to boot up, before he became the calculating little monster that Kaito was becoming so fond of.

Kaito had contemplated for a whole three seconds on the moral of sneaking into a – currently preteen's – room in order to wake him up with different voices just to see his reaction. Actually, he was pretty sure that made him into a really weird creeper and if it had been anyone but Conan, he would have seriously thought about asking his mom for therapy. Or maybe Akako to check him over for a strange curse. Or something at least.

As it was, Kaito simply couldn't resist as he grinned down at the sleeping child nestled into the futon on the ground, nearly buried beneath the blanket so that only some tufts of his usually neatly combed hair stuck out. Adorable, and so much more relaxed than during any hours the little detective spend awake. The hard calculating edges smoothed out giving him something much more childlike and soft, the missing glasses were also a stark contrast as they tended to hide Conan's face. Right now though he looked so much like his real self, that it was no wonder he kept the glasses on nearly 24/7. Especially around his almost-girlfriend.

“Wake up, Kuuuu-dou-kun!” Kaito nearly sang in his best Kansai-dialect as he hunched down next to the futon to poke in the most annoying way he could imagine at the bundle representing Conan. It was, he imagined, something that Heiji would do. The annoyed groan, thought muffled by Conan trying to hide himself even deeper into his bedding, he managed to elicit put a smirk on his face.

“Nhhg, what'cha doing here, Heiji.” Conan whined. Kaito had never heard Conan whine like a child, and he was pretty sure that Hattori Heiji knew who Conan really was. It was adorable as well,
the thief decided as he poked at the hidden figure again, making Conan squirm and let out an annoyed grumble as a small hand sneaked out from the covers to bat Kaito's away.

“Common, Kudou, up and at them!”

“Go away.” Conan grumpily pulled down the blanket to frown at... Kaito. He blinked several times in incomprehension, then frowned for a few seconds too long before he made a grab for his pillow. Kaito laughed as he quickly dodged the projectile and made his escape out of the window in a move that looked way to practiced for Conan to be comfortable with it. Meanwhile Kaito left in a merry mood to meet up with Aoko, as well as do some... scouting. He would see Conan later. When the little grump was awake. And hopefully less inclined to hit him for this stunt.

After all, Conan was having another therapy session in the afternoon and Kaito had plans to get some time with Conan as well.

☀ ☀ ☀

Conan hated therapy sessions. This had absolutely something to do with his therapist who was convinced he was more suited being locked into a mental hospital since he had somehow made her think he was a sociopath. How was he supposed to know how utterly perceptive she had been and back when he had started the sessions... well, he had still played it by the ear. Now with acting training he knew he had messed up several times, something his psychologist had apparently picked up. Now she spend every session trying to trip him up into making him show his true colors and it had become a rather frustrating game of playing innocent child while she was acting the benelovent and helpful guide back to the light. Yeah. Right.

With a sigh he got up from the waiting chair when his name was called, smiling at Ran's encouraging face – maybe he should tell her that this just wasn't the right psychologist, it seemed everything must be better than sitting through another session with that person. But Ran? Ran adored this psychologist and it helped her. He wouldn't mess that up for her, knowing she would be angry if he told her of the psychologist suspicions and even worse, he had no proof other than his observations.

Well, the psychologist was good, sort of. Now he just needed to convince her that behind his mask wasn't a budding serial killer.

With another suppressed sigh he stared at the wood door barring his way and crushed any feeling of dread. No. He was cheerful. He was normal. He was an elementary school kid. He would not attempt to bribe the psychologist. Smile and bear it.

Raising a hand he knocked softly on the wood and waited for the cheerful response inviting him in before opening the door.
“Conan-kun!” the psychologist was good, but Conan saw how she tracked his movement and reactions and as always felt like he had stepped onto a petri-dish below a microscope.

“Good evening Fujiwara-san!” he replied and closed the door behind himself, climbing on the comfortable couch across from her chair, swinging his legs in childish excitement.

After getting the usual small-talk out of the way she encouraged him to some games which Conan always found the hardest part. They were simply not... engaging for him and faking enthusiasm had been hard and was becoming harder every time. He thought he did much better with his mother acting training but was uncomfortable using his new skills to trick the people around him. He did prefer to stick as close to the truth as possible. And building an impenetrable mask, while useful, felt even worse than lying to them all the time. Even though it was only a slight difference. Before he at least knew he was being genuine even if things got more complicated and he needed to improvise to hide his identity. Now? Now he was faking a part of himself and it made him feel hollow. As if his person – Shinichi Kudou – was fading away ever more. Being erased, by time, by his own actions, by the threat of the Organisation and all the lies he was forced to keep track of. Already he was an entirely different person, not as arrogant as before and dreading spotlight while at the same time carving it.

Lying though felt like he was twisting himself to become something he simply... wasn't.

He could do it now... but did he want to?

Should he?

In between his therapist was trying to insert innocently formed questions. About his friends, about his family, what he felt about his parents being away for work so much, how he felt living with a different family. This time though, after a few questions she really did take him by surprise.

“What about your first sexual experience...?” the psychologist continued and Conan's mouth opened in embarrassed horror. It was then that he noticed something wrong. His eyes narrowed as he took in his therapist, but there were no faults. Whoever it was before him was a master in disguise. Or maybe he was wrong? Conan was hesitant to trip his hand too early.

This was just too strange now, no way his normal therapist would ask such questions.

His hand gripped the pen he was holding tighter, as if it could defend him.
“Who...?” he knew that despite trying his posture had become more defensive. He only knew of three people who could act and disguise this good and he hoped his mother had no reason to test him like this.

“What are you doing here??” his tone came out harsher than he meant to but as a cloud of smoke obscured his vision for a moment, a very, very familiar voice said “Gathering information!” when Conan's hand twitched as if he wanted to stab the intruder with his pen, he continued “my, my, homicidal tendencies at such a young age...” accompanied with a tsk of a tongue clicking in disappointment and the scribbling of a pen. With a twitching eye he turned around and stared at the grinning psychologist, then sighed.

“Kaito.”

Without meaning to his body relaxed and his face turned into a scowl. While Kaito had no clue how deeply he had scared Conan for a moment (something the detective wanted to keep that way...) he was simply glad that it was not truly Vermouth sitting in the therapists chair.

“I thought I would give you a free afternoon from your torment.” Kaito shrugged as he grinned at Conan repentantly “You don't seem to enjoy these sessions at all.”

“Understatement.” Conan sighed and allowed himself to slump back into the comfortable chair “this is torture of the highest degree. Did you have to wait so long and ask so many questions though?” Conan glowered at the thief “The session is nearly over now.”

“Eh, I honestly expected you to pick up on it earlier that I had replaced your therapist.” well. Maybe Conan had been too distracted to try and fake being a harmless, normal child to wonder about the occasional strange question Kaito had thrown in. For all he knew it could have been his therapist trying to trip him up once more. Not that he would tell Kaito that, the thief would have a field day if he knew that Conan's therapist was thinking he was a disturbed child in much need of help.

Rolling his eyes he rubbed the bridge of his nose, ignoring Kaito's good natured chuckles as they descended into some playful banter. When after a short while the session ended, Kaito said goodbye to him at the door, leaning down and whispering so that Ran who was beaming at them happily couldn't hear, that he would wait outside for them.

“I'm so proud of you...” Ran said as she gently pulled a hand through his hair “I know you didn't want to go to the doctor, but I think it is helping you... so thank you for indulging me?” she smiled
gently down at him in a way that made him helplessly grin back. If it calmed Ran down, the sessions
no matter how torturous were at least worth something.

“I guess it's okay.” he mumbled and Ran chuckled, one of the rare ones since her scare and Conan
was glad to hear it.

“How about we go to the aquarium later this week, hm?” Ran suggested and thinking of how she
had been fascinated at their last trip to the Aquarium – as Shinichi and Ran – he readily agreed if it
gave her something else to think about and maybe get her to sleep through the night again.

Once he stepped out with Ran they were greeted by Kaito Ishikawa, whom Ran immediately invited
to their outing too.

Conan speculatively eye Kaito who seemed to pale a little as he regretfully declined.

Hm...

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A day later found Conan at his parents house. His mother had reluctantly agreed that his acting had
much improved, enough for his plans to go forward even if she wasn't happy about it. Currently she
was sitting on the couch in the library, her arms crossed and looking away with an unhappy
expression that Conan was sure was at least in part acted, though mostly genuine but still pulled at
his heartstrings enough that he kept casting her slightly guilty but determined looks.

His father, looking grim and stoic was sitting behind the desk, his hand gripping a small usb stick
while he stared at Conan as if he was about to disappear into smoke.

“Are you sure about this, Shinichi?” he asked and Conan nodded.

“This could be my chance to finally get the poison and if we have that, I'm sure that Haibara can
make the antidote.” Conan replied with conviction “I will do this.”

“You will be breaking the law. This isn't like the other times where you stumble across a crime and
set out to right it, son.” Yusaku sighed “This is premeditated breaking and entering, as well as stealing. Never mind that if you are caught...” a deeply troubled look passed his fathers face and that alone showed him that Yusaku was just as against Conan's idea as his mother. But he had promised his help, in any way and he knew his son enough to know Conan wouldn't pass up this chance. It was better to equip him with what he needed to make him succeed then regret it later when it went wrong and they could do nothing about it anymore.

“You know your mother and I will help you in whatever way you want us to, but we are your parents. We don't want to lose you and ever since you came in contact with that... that Organisation you have come close to death several times. This is a reckless plan, there is so much that could go wrong. Are you really sure you can do it?”

With the steely gaze of his father Conan hesitated for just a moment, contemplating the pro's and con's about his insane idea of breaking into the laboratories to get the antidote. With a deep breath he took the USB-device from his father and stared at it for a moment.

“I... can't let this chance get past me.” he looked up at his parents “I'm as prepared as I can be. It will have to be enough.” hearing the hitch of a breath from the couch behind him his grip tightened around the USB-drive “Trust me. I will make it.”

His father nodded, then gestured for Conan to come around the desk.

“In that case...” he muttered “I better explain how this virus works to you. It's simple, once you implemented it in the system of the complex, it will worm itself into the security feed and create a loop in the cameras so you won't be seen...”

Conan stared fixedly at the computer as his dad begun to go into detail about the virus. Conan had to know if the virus worked or not, otherwise his plan was going to fail before he even got close to the laboratories...

⭐ ~ ⭐ ~ ⭐

A day after visiting the Aquarium with Ran, Conan was standing in front of Haibara, explaining his plan in detail.

It took a lot of convincing, but finally he left, two small white pilled of temporary antidote safety tucked away in his pocket.
It was time to finally act against the Organisation and once Conan was back in his old body, he would finally be able to actively work to take them down.

This time he would succeed.

Chapter End Notes

I have no words to say. I'm so sorry it took me almost a year for this update, but you guys were always encouraging me to continue and I'm so thankful for that. I'm not sure when I will get the chance to write some more on my story but I hope this will tide you over until I get around to it.

I still feel like some parts of this chapter are awkward but before I rewrite it again after the several times I've already been over it... well, I thought I would better just give it to you instead of changing my mind another 50 times.

I'd love you hear your thoughts on the chapter :)

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There is no table or diagram in the document.
It was once more a night where Kogoro stayed out, probably playing Mahjong with his friends. While Conan got ready to go to bed, he actually wondered if Kaito would once more visit and wake him in the morning. Even though it was a reappearing occasion now, that Kaito would break in to wake him with different voices, and he knew about it the evening before... or at least there was a strong likelihood that it would happen, he still got caught off guard in the morning. Kaito apparently found it hilarious. Conan didn't know what to think about it. It's not like it harmed him, and mostly he was just way too out of it to actually register Kaito being there before he disappeared again. Maybe he should be creeped out by it. A... stranger-friend-rival... something was breaking in while he slept and kept waking him up to see his reaction.

Okay, maybe he was weirded out. A little. But this was Kaito Kid, he had known from he get-go that being involved with him would lead to spreading the insanity. He had probably already caught it, if he wasn't all that alarmed by this situation.

So what if Kaito Kid was breaking in for a wake-up call? He could do worse. A lot worse. Hell, his mother was scarier, and he had been forced to live with her until he was old enough to stay at home alone anyways. Where had been the law that would have saved him back then?!

Crawling in the futon he shoved something lying there to the side and lay down. Then he proceeded to drape the blanket over himself, straightened the pillow and closed his eyes.

* ~ * ~ *

The next morning didn't at all go like planned. At first, there was someone tugging on his blanket, which he unconsciously tried to hold on. Then there was a loud shriek, and a crash that had Conan sitting up with an alarmed sound himself. Clutching to the nearest things he wildly looked around and stared wide eyed at Kaito, who pressed himself into the corner, pointing at him.

“F-F-fish!” Kaito whimpered while Conan stared uncomprehending back, still clutching the Shark plushy Ran had gotten him in the aquarium to himself.

Outside the door loud footsteps could be heard getting closer at a fast pace.

“Conan-kun?! What was that? Are you all right?!”
One Ran Mouri rushed through the hastily thrown open door to see her confused charge still hugging the push shark to death, while staring out of the window. The room was a mess, a shelve had fallen down, spilling things all over the room.

“Huh?” was the only answer Conan gave when he turned those wide eyes at her.

It was only later, when he was actually awake, that he managed to process what had actually happened that morning.

Bemused he stared at his phone, before slowly typing a message.

[07:16] Sherlock Holmes: “Fish?”


[07:29] Arsene Lupin: “… am not.”


Conan's lips twitched. Kaito had trashed Kogoro's room just because Conan had a plush Shark in his bed. Well, it would seem as if Kaito's visits in the morning would for now be set on hold. If he really had ichthyophobia then he would probably not be keen on having a repeat meeting.

[07:33] Sherlock Holmes: “I think I'm going to call him Sharky.”

Feeling a little evil he snapped a photo of the plushy with a sign right next to it, spelling out the newly christened sharks name. Not a really imaginative name, but who cared. He was seen as a child anyways. It would probably cause more stares if he called it Galeocerdo curvier. Hell, most wouldn't even know the latin name of a tiger shark.
Next moment he sent said picture to Kid.

A few minutes after a new message arrived.

[07:42] Arsene Lupin: “You are evil.”

[07:52] Sherlock Holmes: “Yes. Well, part of my being evil could stem from the fact that Ran is now convinced that some pedophile tried to break into our home to kidnap me. Thanks for that. The next few weeks I will probably not be allowed to go outside alone. Want another picture?”

[07:57] Arsene Lupin: “Would you stop sending me fish pictures if I promise you I will get you out from under the observant Karate-Master?”

[08:02] Sherlock Holmes: “I’ll consider it. Time to serve the next few hours in purgatory, aka school. Joy.”


- Bling -

Kaito looked down at his phone. It had to be lunch break now. Opening the file he flung the phone away from him.
Oh. My. God.
I'm so sorry. About half a year since my last update? Well, I was busy... still, I'm sorry how long I let this story lie on the side. As I said, it's not dead, I'm still working on it :) This is a small chapter, A scene I had for quite a while and finally finished off. I'm also working on the next chapter already, which will be longer than this. I'm not entirely sure about when I will have it ready though, so bear with me.
You can klick on the pictures to see them fully if you want. First one drawn by myself, second one a photo that I edited with photoshop. Enjoy :)

FISH!

Chapter End Notes
Ready, Set... Crime Time

Chapter Summary

It is hopelessness even more than pain that crushes the soul

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

To say that it was easy going after he had all the materials to work with, would be going to far. No, his operation of breaking into the labs required a ton of research, stakeouts that were needed to gather the information of the comings and goings, careful hacking and deliberate planning. This time he tried to keep every angle he knew about in view. He tried to go over every possible scenario in his mind and tried to find as many exit strategies as possible. Currently his parents were taking over watch-duty during the times in which he had to attend classes. There even was a bit of hacking involved, to gain access to the cameras across the street. Honestly, Conan wasn't great at the skill, but with his fathers and the Professor's help he was learning more about the finer inner workings of computers and their systems and programs with rapid pace. He felt a bit guilty because he knew he was breaking a lot of laws right now, but the thought of finally getting his hands on the antidote and getting his life back – and with it the influence to actually do something about the Organisation with people taking him seriously – was enough to make him pull through despite it. It would be the only time, he promised himself. Once back in his old body he could finally rely on his connections again and would be taken seriously. There would be no need to sneak around.

His mother insisted that he still make time for some more acting training and with everything going on in his life, he was being kept so busy that apparently not only the detective boys were becoming suspicious, but a certain thief who was showing up at random times, was eyeing him with weary distrust too. According to Kaito he had a certain vibe to him that just seemed to spell out trouble. Conan privately thought it probably was that familiar to Kaito, because he must see it every time he looked in the mirror.

Finding excuses to disappear for Ran had become a challenge too, but in that regard Kaito proved useful for once. Several times he had simply alluded to spending time with his friend from overseas and since Kaito had charmed Ran thoroughly (bastard!), she was happy to let him spend as much of his free time with him as he wanted. Provided he was back in time for dinner.

After another two weeks that Conan had to keep himself from simply rushing through, they finally were as prepared as they ever could be. A week before his mother had told Ran that she wanted to take him on a holiday, so he would miss some schooling, but would make up for it. It was a family event that they had to attend, so surely they could make an exception, just this once. Ran had readily agreed, telling Conan how happy she was that he got to see his parents again over a nice dinner and telling him to pack some of his things for the trip.
He said goodbye to the detective boys, feeling a little nostalgic despite knowing he would have to return to being Conan for some time yet, until Haibara found the final antidote. Still, for the first time in a long, long while he had hope. He felt incredible. Relieved to finally be able to return to Shinichi, to make Ran stop waiting for him and be able to take her on a real date and confess his feelings. He would have to revise a lot but it was doable, he had kept himself updated as much as possible and he wasn't too far behind.

He could finally have a life. Well... he would have to keep a low profile of course, but he would be grown up. He could travel without worrying about his identity being found out as fake. He could solve cases with his own voice, without hiding behind other peoples back and borrowing theirs. The connections he would finally be able to pick up and use...

Oh, how he burned to finally go after the Organisation, contact the FBI and make connections, pull them together until they were a cohesive unit instead of the broken fractions who kept getting into each others way. Those criminals would be brought to justice. He would bring them down. So many plans were spinning around in his head, ideas ready to be picked up. Talking to Jody, the CIA, the police...

But first... he had to get the antidote.

His final preparations done and several escape-ways prepared he got ready at the Kudou mansion. Changing into non-descriptive clothes, taking off the glasses. Anything that could be used to identify him had to be gone. He would have to be extra careful to not leave any fingerprints behind, but some gloves solved that.

With two pills in his pocket and a small backpack with the barest minimum of what he needed to get inside, screwdrivers, adult clothing, USB-stick, some useful inventions and so on, he gave a hug to his mother before he set out to finally get his real life back.

But of course, things just couldn't go the simple way for once.

He was only about half way to his destination, when he heard the suspicious sounds of a struggle happening. As he rounded a corner towards his destination, he saw an older woman dragging a struggling girl into a van. Maybe he reacted maybe a tad to hastily, but as always Conan couldn't help himself but act when he saw a crime happen right in front of him. His hand flew to his belt and
released the soccer-ball, then he took aim after he loaded his boots in an all too familiar motion. It was an unfortunate incident that the girl managed to almost slip out of her captors grasp and thus the ball flew over the captors head, dented the side of the car before bouncing harmlessly off to the side to disappear between some bushes. However it didn't do any damage at all to the kidnapper. It did somehow manage to throw off the cap the woman had worn, and for the first time both Conan and the girl got to fully see the criminal. She had light brown hair, bound in a pony tail and thick rimmed glasses that covered the dark-circled eyes of a person, who might have met a lot of misfortune recently.

For a swift second everyone froze, the woman in shock and the girl in her arms because she was terrified. He would have preferred to knock the criminal out with one hit, if only so he didn't use too much of his resources and needed to reschedule his original plans. Instead the woman had finally managed to subdue the girl – with a white tissue pressed over her mouth and tossed her carelessly into the car, before whirling around to deal with him.

Raising his arm on the advancing woman, he instantly shot her with one of his sleeping darts and released a sigh of relief when she knelt over, now lying still on the floor deeply asleep. For a moment he contemplated calling the police with the voice of a stranger and continue with his previous plans, but felt instantly guilty about even contemplating leaving the unconscious girl in the van. There was no guarantee that the woman who had attempted to drag the girl off would stay out cold, after all. A small sound in the car distracted him. Cautiously he got closer and stepped past the unconscious body of the would-be kidnapper to check on the little girl, crawling half into the car to look her over. Worried he realized her breathing was irregular and raspy, small coughs passing her lips every now and then. Quickly he got his phone in hand, better to call an ambulance and the police to solve this. Even if it derailed his original plans for some time. First he would have to wait for the police to arrive, stay until they secured the crime-scene, answer whatever questions they had and then they would insist on checking him over and bringing him back home to Ran and Kogoro, telling them everything that happened and after that he would be under the watchful hawk-eyes of his childhood friend. Looked like he would have to find another day to break into the laboratory. He pressed the numbers for the police, but before he could connect the call a hand grabbing his wrist in a painful grip forced him to release the phone, which clattered noisily to the floor. There it disappeared beneath the drivers seat.

“And who might you be?” a male voice menacingly growled, and Conan wanted to curse himself for not checking if the woman had an accomplice. Just for a second he raised his head and tried to turn around in time.

Instead something heavy hit his head and the world faded to black, the last sound was his glasses clattering to the floor.

When he awoke again, his wrists had been painfully bound behind his back and his head throbbed in dull pain from where he remembered that the hit landed. Carefully he pried his eyes open and winced when he saw something hovering directly above him.

“You are awake.” the little girl said, half relieved, half in tears and still struggling to breath. He
couldn't really see her though. The room was dark and Conan had to take several seconds to adjust, before he even could make out anything in the darkness. He could see the door, which was up some stairs and light beneath it showed that their kidnappers probably were out there. Well, that and the voices. Angry loud voices.

“-seen... face! Ca-” the words barely made it down to them but Conan struggled to sit up.

“... should ..-ve waited th-..!” slowly he pulled himself up, his head was pounding like crazy and made Conan worried that he might have a concussion of some kind. It would be terrible inconvenient right now. As would vomiting all over himself, because every movement caused bile to rise to his mouth, making him gag. Despite that he still tried to shuffle closer to the door, barely able to move due to being bound and- a sniffle distracted him and he turned back to the girl that he could only make out a little in the dark.

“Hey...” he was unsure what to say to her, but he knew he had to avoid her going into a panic, especially since he feared that she already had problems with her breathing. He could hear her heavy, rattling inhales.

“What's your name?”

“Ts-Tsukiko...” her voice wavered and another cough interrupted her. Conan felt another spike of worry.

“Are you okay?” instead of going closer to the door to listen to their kidnappers argue, he now robbed over to her to try and reassure her. It seemed more important right now to get her to calm down.

Narrowing his eyes he thought he saw her shake her head and heard a panicked hiccuping sound.

“It... I need my m-mama. Sh-she has medicine for me.” it felt like a rock settled in his stomach when he heard that. Quickly he deducted what he knew. Labored breathing, that sounded almost like whistling... no, like wheezing. Her coughing... she was not trying to get more air, she was trying to get air out. It was an Asthma attack, at least the beginning stages. In the most inopportune time ever.

Trying to sound calm and trying to remember what little he knew about asthma attacks he tried to sooth her. “Do you remember your doctor teaching you any way to make it easier to breath?” he was not sitting beside her, and it was almost too dark to see if she was doing anything along the lines already.

“I think you need to sit straight and lean forward...” he shuffled closer, barely seeing her shape
follow his instructions in the dark room he hoped he made the right choices.

“That's right... now let your head fall- right...” she already knew how to sit, but reminding her in this situation had been necessary. Her breathing changed, she was trying to breath in through the nose, and breath out between her lips. It was the best they could do.

A heavy thump, followed by another made both of them jump. The man was cursing. It didn't sound like an argument any more, much closer to panic. Next to be heard was the opening of the door, before it got slammed close. And then silence.

“W-what a... are they d-doing?” the girl was pressing into his side, her panic having interrupted her concentration and her breathing speed up again.

Conan had the uncomfortable feeling that the first heavy thump had been something hitting one of their kidnappers and the second one had been the body hitting the floor. Which was... bad. But he could hardly tell the girl that. Besides, if what he thought happened, did happen... then he had no idea how their second kidnapper would now react. Add to that that he had no idea where they were, except in some kind of dark, musty smelling and dank cellar.

“I don't know... but you need to calm down. Breath with me.” first of all he needed to avoid the girl going into a full blown panic attack on top of her asthma attack.

It took several minutes, that felt like eternity in the darkness that surrounded him. When she was more or less calm he nudged her carefully.

“I'm going to try and get out of these bonds. Maybe there is something useful ...”

Feeling her shake her head he continued in a soothing calm voice.

“Don't worry. I won't leave you alone. I'm going to talk to you all the time while I look around, okay?”

Slowly he moved away from her, after he was sure she would not panic at being alone. It was awkward to search around without really seeing anything. His glasses were gone, and so was any night vision he could have used them for.

During the time he had calmed down Tsukiko he had realized he had been stripped of pretty much anything useful. His watch, his boots, his bow... the only things remaining where his clothes. Socks, Trousers and Shirt. They had even taken his jacket. He could have really, really used his watch light now. Or better, his phone.
While moving around slowly, he kept up a constant chatter. He asked her questions, about her favorite color, her parents names, what her favorite food was, which ice-cream she liked best and everything else he could think of to distract her. If possible he would have liked to remain at her side, to keep her calm, but there was no telling what would happen when the kidnapper returned. And Conan would much rather get out and take her to a hospital sooner than later.

His voice was almost raw from talking, and he was thirsty too, when he finally found an empty glass bottle.

Breaking it carefully so as to not hurt himself or spread the glass around in the dark was easy enough with the rag he found. He wrapped the bottle inside the rag and smashed it. Then he carefully picked up one of the bigger shards and begun to cut his robes until he could finally slip out of his bonds, before helping to do the same to Tsukiko, making it easier for her to sit.

Carefully he rubbed his own wrists, before taking her hands and repeating the process to get the blood flowing in their limps again. Taking a break from talking but keeping his promise to not leave her alone in the dark.

“I'm thirsty...” she murmured, clearly exhausted “And I feel sick...”

For a second he contemplated lying to her, to make her feel better for a few seconds but sighed instead.

“Me too.” children were perceptive and he hated not telling the truth anyways.

They kept talking, him reminding her several times to continue breathing and trying to think up stories or just recounting funny facts of his life. He tried to keep anything scary, like cases and murders out of them, because she was scared enough already. When her breathing calmed down enough and she fell asleep only coughing every now and then he breathed a sigh of relief, then started to circle the room to try and find a weak spot or anything useful. The door was sturdy, and he would not be able to break it down with his child's body. His face twisted a little as he was once again rendered helpless by his physical appearance. He wondered about Ran. How much time had already passed and was anyone already looking for him? He had no idea how long he had been unconscious, and how much time had passed since he regained it.

It was at least several hours later, after checking every nook and corner, that Conan came to a horrible realization.

There was no way out.

Not without help.
And all he had been able to find was a bottle that had only a little bit of liquid inside. Taking a sniff he gagged, it was stale water.

Maybe a day (or had it been two? He had no way to tell..) later the realization that no help would be coming followed.

He had tried to make loud sounds, by shouting and by hitting the door. Nobody seemed to be around to hear them.

Tsukiko's breathing was getting worse, probably because of the stress just as much as the environment. She had vomitted several times, which left her even weaker than before. He had stopped his shouting as it had upset her and he needed to keep her calm. The worst thing that could happen to them was if she would get a full asthma attack. It was a miracle she hadn't already succumbed to one.

The thirst was not helping them at all, neither was the hunger. The little cellar they were stuck in smelled terrible, because they had to relieve themselves and had selected a corner to do just that.

When his words were not enough to calm her anymore, and she started to panic, Conan felt terrified in a way he had never felt before. It was horrible to sit by and clutch to a child, that was struggling to breath and be unable to aid in any way. He tried to talk her, even forced her to drink some of the water, even stale was better than nothing at all and hopefully it would alleviate her thirst. It wasn't too bad, if you were in a desperate situation like they were and it seemed to calm her down a little. Not that he had told her how bad the situation really was. But maybe she had guessed, he was not sure anymore.

No matter that he himself had a pounding, steady headache that was worsening, as well as feeling weak and dizzy the more time passed. He recognized the symptoms of dehydration but there was nothing to do. No water. That he had kept for Tsukiko, there simply wasn't enough for two and she needed it much more. No water. And no way out.

He had tried to calm her through contact, hoping that rescue would come. Stroking her hair, sometimes muttering, though his voice broke more often than not and his throat felt as if he was rubbing sandpaper over his vocal chords. When that became too taxing, he tried humming. No matter that he had the musical talent of an ox.

He had thought he had seen a lot of crime. Had thought the new horror of the serial killer case that still haunted him with the possibility of Ran being raped and killed in front of him would be the high of the horrors he could face.

It was nothing against the realization brought when the cellar descended into silence.
It was nothing when Tsukiko, whom he had held in his arms to offer warmth and comfort as much as he could slowly stilled. Her shivering stopped and her uneven breathing stuttered. She felt clammy, then cold and he didn't even have the strength to cry, to weak and disoriented himself to help. He just kept lying next to her, to tired and too exhausted and too thirsty to do anything more than stare blindly into the darkness.

He was sure he was dying. Slowly he closed his eyes as time ticked by for an eternity.

Maybe he was already dead.

Chapter End Notes

Honestly, this chapter had caused me endless grief. I've rewritten it so often and deleted stuff, changed stuff, switched things around.... I'm done. I'm so done with this chapter. If I don't post it now it will forever change into something else. I actually had to cut it in three parts (two are half finished), because it was growing way too long and I wanted to give you an earlier update than having to wait half a year again!

So.... Conan's big plan of getting his antidote got derailed a bit... but don't worry, we will get back to that soon! Tell me what you think, because I'm endlessly curious :)


Ai was sitting in her lab, staring at her phone. She had been sitting here for hours on end. Her palms felt sticky with cold sweat, the limbs held stiffly in her lap. Her tea had gone cold somewhere between now and yesterday. She couldn't get it down anymore.

Two and a half days ago Kudo had gone off in a rather well-planned suicide mission. She had been against it, he had been adamant. She knew how important it was to him, to finally get his hands on the antidote, especially since he seemed to have more and more arguments with Ran lately. But it was just so risky.

A look to the clock showed that another 5 Minutes had passed.

Nervously she scrubbed her flat palms against her leggings before rubbing tiredly at her eyes. She hadn't slept a wink in the time Conan had been away, too scared, too anxious, too much food for thoughts better left in the past. Had Conan been caught? He had alluded to maybe hunkering down somewhere, if he felt he was being followed. Where would he go though? He had promised her he would contact her as soon as he thought it was safe!

Again she checked her phone. Conan knew her number by heart now, a security measure in case something happened and he didn't have a phone.
Like right now. He had left it behind so the organisation would find no additional clues on his person.

She knew they wouldn't need it. Conan was already too well-known, and once they realized he was actually Shinichi Kudou...

Shuddering she pressed her eyes closed, trying to ignore the wetness sticking to her lashes.

When she opened her eyes, she looked back to the phone.

[17:38]

It would ring soon.

[17:41]

It had to.

~ ♠ ~ Kaito ~ ♠ ~

When Conan had disappeared, Kaito had honestly not thought all that much about it. At first at least. He had been a bit suspicious about Conan's recently shifty behavior and he was dead curious about why Conan had sometimes worn cosmetics lately, but decided to wait the little detective out and see what happened. After all his parents were back, there was bound to be some different pattern in his daily routine. If Conan's mother was anything like his own, he had a right to be cautious and secretive and evasive. And Conan's dad was... well. Very sharp. When he was not stalking his son. But otherwise very sharp and the questions he had asked the one time Kaito did – politely – knock on the door to inquire about Conan, had been very specific and very hard to wiggle out from without outright lying. Somehow he didn't think that Yusaku Kudou would be very easy to fool, and Kaito honestly, kinda, really liked Conan and wanted to make this friendship work. It didn't mean he had to
tell Conan's father who he was but... he didn't want to lie outright. He kinda suspected that Conan's parents might already have a hunch about who he was and so far they didn't seem inclined to mention it or call the police. Kaito still stayed cautious but it was... nice. Different but nice. Like he didn't have to hide who he was all the time, something that he had to even in front of his best friend and mop-fighter Aoko. Especially her.

With that situation in mind Kaito honestly concluded Conan's parents had something to do with it, after all Conan had warned him of the possibility that he would disappear a little while to spend time with his family. He had even managed to glean that Conan had taken off time from school, and wouldn't be staying with the Mouri's during the time. So Kaito honestly didn't want to interrupt whatever family reunion was going on.

When his Conan-App (as he had come to calling the thing since he only used it for his favorite detective) bleeped indicating a message he was basically vibrating with restless energy. Conan hadn't really answered his messages lately, and Kaito really didn't like that. But when he looked down at his screen... it was not a message from his detective.

[19:23] Poison Ivy: “Little Sherlock found another case. Could be dangerous. Here is his location, if you want to help, you need to be careful. Try not to be seen. Bullet-proof vest advised. If medical aid is required, call back.”

He frowned. Someone had hacked his app. This was bad. It shouldn't have been possible, at least not without access to either his own or Conan's phone. And then, why would anyone create a new address instead of simply using the existing one? What danger and... bullet proof?! What had Conan got into now?!

A quick look into the programming showed that this one was another phone entirely. Who knew if they spoke the truth? Was it a trick? A trap?


Kaito shuddered as memories of paralyzed limps and horrible sounds invaded his memory. He had tried to block that out. As far as he was concerned, it had never happened. Nope. No memory of that day at all.

Quickly he almost ran up to the portrait of his father, lightly pressed the painting and slipped into the secret tunnel behind that would get him to the Kaitou KID hideout. There he packed and dressed quickly. Bullet-proof vest, glider, card-gun and some extras in case he encountered trouble and needed some distractions. It wasn't like he knew what he was going into, so he would rather be overly prepared than be caught unaware because he grew overconfident.
Not when it could be Conan’s life on the line.

… again.

If Science-san hacked his phone-app, she might have Conan’s cellphone and that meant the detective was likely in a sticky situation without a way to call for help. He had a little tantei-kun to get out of trouble.

It was two long hours later when he arrived at the bunker on the outskirts of the city. With his monocle he had scanned the area, zooming in on likely spots anyone could be lying in wait if this was some sort of trap or … or whatever. It was deadly silent and Kaito moved very careful, still unsure what could be waiting for him. So far he had seen nothing suspicious and that just made him more paranoid. Was he missing something? The darkness was hiding him and he was able to see a small light in one of the buildings. The only light around, as this seemed to be a rather abandoned area of empty buildings mostly used for storage.

He carefully edged closer, rounded the building and sent one of his doves to the window with a microphone. He got nothing. It was like it was really abandoned. He checked the location on his phone again, just to be sure he was in the right place.

Still a little unsure about the situation, he decided to enter from top of the building, where hopefully nobody would expect help to arrive. When he finally got to the hall where the light was burning through a gap in the door, he covered his nose and gagged as the smell of rotting flesh hung cloyingly heavy in the air. Heart pounding he dreaded to see just what was emitting the smell, half afraid that he would find Conan on the floor. Instead it was a woman, flies crawling over her body, a dried puddle of blood around her head. Gagging again, from the sight alone, he had to clear his throat several times. At least he was pretty sure now that the building was abandoned. He hated seeing crime-scenes. There was nothing magical about a dead body.

Looking around he saw another door on the side and went over there, carefully stepping around the corpse so he wouldn't move anything in the area around it. That much he had learned from spying on his detectives. If they wanted to find the murderer, it was better if he left any clues that could be found alone for the police to find and not add his own to muddle the picture of the crime-scene.

The door was a sturdy, thick metal door. Trying the handle he sighed, a little annoyed that it was locked, but opened it in less than 5 seconds flat once he had his lock pick at hand.

Opening the door slowly he froze, as he could see two bodies lying close to each other on the floor of the dark room, illuminated only partly by the light that was falling through the doorway. Children. And one very, very familiar.

“Conan!” he almost choked on the whisper and without further thinking about it he rushed over to the child, taking in his appearance with something akin to panic surging through body.
Slightly shaky hands reached out to his friend and brought fingers to the chilled throat. Pressing his lips together and taking a shaky breath he waited, and heaved a sigh of relieve when he found a very weak pulse.

When he tried the same for the girl he almost thought her dead. The pulse was so weak and slow that he could barely find it. Not waiting a second longer he pulled out his phone and called the hospital and the police.

Then he rushed out of the room to get something, anything to help. The sight of Conan's small form, chapped bloody lips and pale form would forever be burned into his memory. He would have to deal with that later though.

Quickly he returned with some blankets to try and warm them up, raise their body temperatures to something slightly more normal for a human being. The scarves he had put under a tab of water and tried to get Conan and the girl to swallow even a little of it by dabbing their lips and letting the wrung out water tickle in their mouths. He repeated it several times, scared to choke them if he gave them too much at once, before pulling away when he heard police and ambulance arriving. He had no way to explain his presence and could do no more now, no matter how helpless he felt.

With a bitter feeling he retreated and watched as policemen and ambulance-workers swarmed the area. He watched as two stretchers were brought out and put in two ambulances, before the doors shut his sight off and it drove away, lights blinking and sirens screeching. He almost didn't notice the third stretcher being carried out. It was covered.

With one last look around from the roof he had hidden himself on, he unfolded his glider and hesitated about where to go now. His mind was churning and he felt restless. He needed... he wanted...

Kaito closed his eyes and rubbed a hand over his face, suddenly feeling tired.

Hospital. He needed to go to the hospital and see for himself that Conan survived.

And he would survive. He always did. Conan was way too stubborn to just... what?

No. Conan had to. He had to survive.
Swallowing hard and breathing in strictly controlled, deep breaths, he took out his phone.


He would look in on Conan, just to see that he was well. And then he would keep an eye on him, since Conan was apparently trying to scare him into an early grave and he still had Pandora to find and an organisation to take down... he couldn't die due to stress right now.

And Conan would survive. Kaito still needed an explanation for what the hell just happened.

With that thought firmly repeating in his mind he stepped off the roof and headed towards where the ambulances had disappeared to...

Chapter End Notes

... whoops. I totally forgot I kept you guys hanging. I didn't want to take this long to get a new chapter out but RL kinda made it nearly impossible to write (and I needed some time for myself to be honest)

Anyways, here you go. Conan got saved! Yey! Well... sort-of saved, but better than not saved at all, right? :D
Chapter Notes

In all honesty, Conan never expected to wake up again. Something was wrong. The darkness of the past days had become familiar, but even so he couldn't help but shudder at the feeling of near blindness. His hands ran over the gritty, dusty ground until he weakly reached the clothing of the little girl that was imprisoned with him. His throat burned.

“T....Tsss...” he wished he had something, anything to drink. If the little girl was half as bad off as he was, she would need it. He cleared his throat painfully.

“Tsu...kiko?” his voice was whisper-dry, like brittle parchment, as he tugged on her sleeve and carefully rolled over to his side, until he could get his feet under him. With shaking arms barely supporting him, he crawled closer to where she must be sleeping. Once he bumped into her, he felt for her little shoulder and gave her a small shake. A feeling of dread settled in his body, a feeling of deep, utter wrongness.

“Tsukiko??” he tried again, weakly. She was probably exhausted, just like him, he just had to shake her again to make her wake up. He wasn't even sure why it was so important to him that she woke up, sleep after all would keep her from having an asthma attack, would restore a little energy, might give her some peace.

… only he couldn't hear her breath.

It was utterly silent. Silent and dark and his shaking fingers slowly brushed past her shoulder to her throat, his heartbeat so loud that he was sure it must echo in the darkness.

Her skin was cold. So cold. His fingers were shaking too much. He couldn't find a pulse, because his fingers were shaking. Conan felt the need to cry, a burning sensation in his sightless eyes but even that wasn’t in his capabilities anymore. He felt himself give out, slumping to the ground and gathering the small form in his arms as if he could warm her up, even though the small, tired, rational part told him that it didn't work like that.

He closed his eyes. For once he didn't want the truth, so if he only closed his eyes for a moment-
With a start Conan opened his eyes again. His whole body was soaked in sweat and was breathing as if he had just ran a marathon, his heart racing and his limps shaking. It was dark, but not the almost all encompassing darkness of their prison. There was a window, the curtains half closed, but still open enough to spill what little light the night had to offer into the room.

A quick look around made him realize that he was still in a hospital. The room he had woken up in was small, but someone had placed some flowers on the night table and a pitcher of water with a glass next to it in a thoughtful attempt of trying to create a soothing atmosphere for what they thought would be a traumatized child.

“A... a dream.” he whispered hoarse and shakily brought a hand to his face, swiping at a few damp curls sticking to his face. It was nighttime and he was in a hospital room. Again. A tiny lamp had been burning too, but all the niceties had not helped him when he had woken up, thinking a little girl had died in his arms while he had been helpless to do anything.

Conan was not sure if the nightmares of that horror would ever leave him. When the nurses had come in after he had first woken up he had been frantic, fighting weakly against everyone in his vicinity, starting to cry until they had put him back to sleep. Then again, that had probably been shortly after his rescue and Conan was not sure he had been all there at that time, given that they were just trying to give him the IV-dip.

The next time he woke he had felt hallow. Exhausted and numb with disbelief. Then he had gotten violently ill, when his mind had turned the events over and over in his memory. He had blinked and looked at Ran sitting next to him on the floor and stroking his head and keeping the hair out of his way with tears in her eyes. She had brought him water, and if it wasn't for her expression he might have refused to drink it. He felt sick. Another death he had been unable to prevent. A child, a small, helpless child had died in his arms and he had been unable to do anything to get them out, to get her help. Another time he had been a weak child when he should have been an adult, able to kick the door in.

Ran had asked him how he was and he opened his mouth but no sound came out. As if his voice had been shut inside his body. He didn't know what to say. What was there to say right now? Everything felt wrong and so out of place.

Ran had hugged him as he had started to cry again, hugged him until he went back to his restless sleep. She hadn't even asked him why he was here, what happened to his parents and why nobody put forth a missing person report. Thankfully, his parents had a fake ransom note, a just in case plan had Conan been caught by the Organisation. They would deal with the police.

Still feeling sick, Conan curled up under the blanket and pressed his eyes closed.
For once he didn't want to see.

For once he didn't want to face the truth.

Sleep took a long time to claim him.

♠ ♠ ♠ ♠

It couldn't have been more than a few hours of sleep before he jolted awake again. It was still dark outside, but movement in the room made him flinch and focus on the familiar nurse was checking over his hospital information. Silently he watched, not really in the mood to deal with Kaito at all. In the end, he closed his eyes and turned away, curling in on himself. Of course it didn't stop the thief from talking to him anyways.

“You know... the little girl is alive.”

With a jolt he turned back, staring at Kaito wide-eyed. Hopeful. He knew Kaito would not lie, not about something like that, but it was still hard to believe him. He had been there, in that cellar. Even if he had been dehydrated and confused... could he have been mistaken?

“w...w-what?” he choked out, his voice breaking from disuse and pent up emotion.

Kaito put down the papers and turned back to Conan, taking a chair and sitting on it so that the backrest was on his front where he crossed his arms on while he stared at Conan.

“You get into way too much trouble, Tantei-kun... the little girl was alive when you were found. Unconscious, but alive. Barely.” Kaito looked uncomfortable and Conan had a hunch just who had found him. Never mind how Kaito had done it, he couldn't have used the GPS-function in his phone again, as Conan had left that with Haibara.

He also didn't look like all was well. Conan closed his eyes and took a breath, opening them in resignation. It seemed like Kaito had waited for this moment because he regretfully continued.

“She's in a coma now. It was too much for her weak body. But she might recover yet...”
A coma. She might recover, but... but she might also not. Conan closed his eyes in pain. There were silly maybe's and what if's that were haunting him, despite him knowing better. How – if he had not interfered – the parents might have paid a ransom and the girl would have been brought back to them save and sound, if a lot more scared about strangers.

They were not based on reality, he knew he would never be able to turn away from a crime.

“T-the woman? She's dead, right?” he asked dully, already knowing the answer. He had thought he had been able to smell her. It was probably imagination too, but stuck in a dark cellar, your imagination played games with your senses. What he had overheard had been enough confirmation for him.

“Yes.”

Conan's shoulders slumped at the answer. He felt old, and weighted down by an invisible force. Sometimes the crimes he stumbled on made it seem like there was nothing beautiful in this cruel world.

He took a breath, then another and lifted his head.

“Then there is only the man left.” he said, eyes burning with determination as he looked on Kaito. There was no way he would not catch the bastard who not only killed his accomplice but also left what he thought were two children to die in a cellar.

He scratched at the bandage on his wrist, frowning in concentration.

Then he reached over to the night-table, rummaging through it. A hand with a notepad and a pen appeared on his bed in a puff of smoke.

“Oh. Thanks.” He took both, for once not even thinking about fingerprints and other evidence and wrote down a few letters and numbers.

“This...” he ripped out the paper “Was the number plate of the car we were taken in.” he explained, then on another paper he wrote down several key points he could remember from the kidnapper. He had only seen him for a very short time, when he had looked up and saw the reflection in the window of the car.
“It's not much but... it might be enough to give the police a lead.” the grip on the pen went bone-white at the thought that it might not be enough.

If it was not... there was not much to go on, but if Conan ever saw that man again, found any hint of his presence... there would be nothing stopping him from dragging the bastard to the police himself.

By now though there was not much he himself could do. It was not a fresh murder scene. The kidnapper could have left the country already, for all they knew.

A few days later, while he was still recovering, a newspaper appeared on his nightstand next to his breakfast. If the title page showed a man trussed up like a christmas-present with tape and fairy lights, hanging head down from a police building that it took 2 hours to get the man down safety, well.

Well.

Apparently KID took it personally if you attacked and nearly killed one of his detectives.

That and Conan who was bored out of his mind and feeling a little closer to normal (especially after visiting Tsukiko, pale and unconscious but alive), finally had some reading to occupy his mind...

Chapter End Notes

I kinda wanted to wait longer before posting the chapter but I can't be bothered. Still not a very big chapter, but eh, whatever, right?

End Notes
I have started another Fanfiction called Beautiful Carvings. It's a soul-mate AU with also Kai/Shin paring, if you are interested!

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